



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 1978

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MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS TO SOCIAL SECURITY

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FIVE MAJOR SOCIAL SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED THIS MONTH AND THREE OF THEM ALONE BENEFIT AN ESTIMATED 55,000 PEOPLE, THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, MR. THOMAS LEE, SAID TODAY.

SPEAKING AT A LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF KOWLOON EAST, MR. LEE SAID THE RECIPIENTS BENEFIT IN THE FORM OF LONG-TERM AND OLD-AGE SUPPLEMENTS, AND EXTENSION OF THE WELFARE ALLOWANCE SCHEME TO INCLUDE THOSE LIVING IN INSTITUTIONS.

THE OTHER TWO IMPROVEMENTS, HE SAID, ARE THE DISREGARDED INCOME PROVISION IN WORKING OUT THE AMOUNT OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, AND THE SETTING UP OF AN INDEPENDENT BOARD TO HEAR APPEALS AGAINST OFFICIAL DECISIONS ON SOCIAL SECURITY APPLICATIONS.

MR. LEE DESCRIBED THESE INNOVATIONS AS +ANOTHER STRIDE FORWARD+ IN HELPING THOSE LEAST ABLE TO HELP THEMSELVES.

THEIR IMPLEMENTATION WOULD COST ABOUT \$49 MILLION IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR, AND COVER MORE PEOPLE IN NEED OF WELFARE ASSISTANCE, HE SAID.

+THERE ARE OTHER DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ARE NOW UNDER STUDY, NOT ONLY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY, BUT FOR OTHER AREAS OF SOCIAL WELFARE AS WELL,+ HE SAID.

ALL THESE REPRESENT THE GOVERNMENT'S ENDEAVOUR TO SUSTAIN A VIGOROUS RATE OF PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT IN HONG KONG, HE ADDED.

THE DIRECTOR NOTED THAT THE NEW PROVISIONS INEVITABLY INCREASED THE WORKLOAD OF THE STAFF WHO WERE ALREADY WORKING HARD TO PROCESS ELIGIBLE CASES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

OUTLINING DETAILS OF THE IMPROVEMENTS, HE SAID THE LONG-TERM SUPPLEMENT WAS AN ANNUAL PAYMENT OF \$500 FOR A FAMILY OR \$250 FOR AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAD BEEN RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FOR MORE THAN 12 MONTHS, IN ORDER TO HELP THEM REPLACE HOUSEHOLD AND DURABLE GOODS.

AN ESTIMATED 17,600 PUBLIC ASSISTANCE CASES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THIS SUPPLEMENT, HE SAID.

THE OLD-AGE SUPPLEMENT, MR. LEE EXPLAINED, AIMS AT HELPING NEEDY OLD PERSONS WHO ARE NOT YET ELIGIBLE FOR THE OLD AGE ALLOWANCE, FOR WHICH THE QUALIFYING AGE IS NOW 75, TO BE REDUCED EVENTUALLY TO 70 BY APRIL NEXT YEAR IF PROPOSALS ARE IMPLEMENTED.

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+IT IS PAYABLE EACH MONTH TO THOSE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS AGED 60 AND OVER UNLESS THEY ARE ALREADY RECEIVING A DISABILITY OR OLD AGE ALLOWANCE. THE AMOUNT IS EQUAL TO THE OLD AGE ALLOWANCE WHICH IS NOW \$100 A MONTH,+ HE SAID.

AN ESTIMATED 35,000 PUBLIC ASSISTANCE CASES ARE ELIGIBLE, HE ADDED.

AS TO THE DISREGARDED INCOME PROVISION, MR. LEE SAID IT WAS INTENDED AS AN INCENTIVE TO ENCOURAGE SELF-HELP AMONG THE NEEDY BY UNDERTAKING SOME PART-TIME WORK.

+UNDER THIS NEW PROVISION, IN WORKING OUT THE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE FOR THOSE AGED 60 AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT REQUIRED TO REGISTER WITH THE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AS A CONDITION OF RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, THEIR FIRST \$50 EARNINGS WILL BE DISREGARDED ENTIRELY AND HALF OF THEIR NEXT \$200 EARNINGS WILL ALSO BE DISREGARDED.

+THIS ALLOWS A MAXIMUM TOTAL OF \$150 IN DISREGARDED INCOME A MONTH. ANY EARNINGS ABOVE \$250 WILL BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AS ASSESSABLE INCOME,+ HE EXPLAINED.

AS REGARDS THE WELFARE ALLOWANCE SCHEME, PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE DISABILITY AND INFIRMITY ALLOWANCE SCHEME, MR. LEE SAID IT WAS NOW EXTENDED TO INCLUDE THOSE ELIGIBLE WHO WERE LIVING IN INSTITUTIONS. THIS BENEFITS ABOUT 2,240 PEOPLE.

THE SETTING UP OF THE APPEAL BOARD AIMS AT PROVIDING A SPEEDY MEANS OF REDRESS FOR ANYONE WHO IS DISSATISFIED WITH THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S DECISIONS ON APPLICATIONS MADE FOR HELP UNDER THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE OR THE WELFARE ALLOWANCE SCHEME, HE SAID.

HEARINGS OF THE BOARD WILL BE INFORMAL AND CONDUCTED IN CHINESE, HE ADDED.

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HONG KONG EXPORTS BY AIR RISE
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MORE THAN ONE-FIFTH OR OVER \$7,600 MILLION WORTH OF HONG KONG'S DOMESTIC EXPORTS WERE SHIPPED BY AIR LAST YEAR — AN INCREASE OF 5.5 PER CENT OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

ACCORDING TO TRADE FIGURES RELEASED BY THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT TODAY, AIRBORNE IMPORTS AND RE-EXPORTS WERE VALUED AT \$8,144 MILLION AND \$2,902 MILLION RESPECTIVELY IN 1977. IN TERMS OF PERCENTAGE SHARES, ABOUT 17 PER CENT OF IMPORTS AND 30 PER CENT OF RE-EXPORTS WERE HANDLED BY AIR LAST YEAR.

ABOUT HALF OF THE AIRBORNE EXPORTS, OR \$3,713 MILLION BY VALUE, WENT TO THE UNITED STATES.

AIRBORNE EXPORTS TO F.R. OF GERMANY AND CANADA DROPPED SIGNIFICANTLY, WHILE CONSIDERABLE GROWTH RATES WERE RECORDED FOR JAPAN AND THE UNITED KINGDOM.

THE MAJOR COMMODITIES EXPORTED BY AIR WERE NON-FUR CLOTHING, WHICH SHOWED A CONSIDERABLE DROP FROM \$2,990 MILLION IN 1976 TO \$2,632 MILLION LAST YEAR AND WATCHES AND CLOCKS WHICH INCREASED TREMENDOUSLY BY 38 PER CENT TO \$1,499 MILLION.

OTHER MAJOR COMMODITIES EXPORTED BY AIR WERE ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS AND PARTS FOR COMPUTERS (\$676 MILLION, +46.3 PER CENT), JEWELLERY AND GOLDSMITHS' AND SILVERSMITHS' WARES (\$449 MILLION, +10.6 PER CENT), TRANSISTORS AND DIODES (\$378 MILLION, +8.9 PER CENT), SEMI-CONDUCTOR INTEGRATED CIRCUITS (\$248 MILLION, -6.4 PER CENT), PERAMBULATORS, TOYS, GAMES AND SPORTING GOODS (\$215 MILLION, +11.4 PER CENT), SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL AND OPTICAL INSTRUMENTS (\$203 MILLION, +59.8 PER CENT), AND FUR CLOTHING (\$190 MILLION, +31.9 PER CENT).

FOLLOWING IS THE TABLE SHOWING HONG KONG'S AIRBORNE EXPORTS TO ITS FIVE MAJOR MARKETS IN 1977 COMPARED WITH 1976:-

MAIN MARKETS	AIRBORNE EXPORTS IN 1977 (HK\$ MILLION)	PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN VALUE 1977/1976
U.S.A.	3,713	+ 9.5%
F.R. OF GERMANY	819	- 6.9%
JAPAN	444	+ 8.8%
UNITED KINGDOM	403	+16.8%
CANADA	249	-28.1%

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IMPORTS BY AIR IN 1977 INCREASED BY 26.9 PER CENT OVER 1976, HAVING REGISTERED A MUCH FASTER GROWTH THAN THAT OF TOTAL IMPORTS.

THE MAJOR COMMODITIES IMPORTED BY AIR INCLUDED WATCHES AND CLOCKS (\$2,069 MILLION, +39.6 PER CENT), PEARLS AND PRECIOUS AND SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES (\$656 MILLION, +26.4 PER CENT), ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS AND PARTS FOR COMPUTERS (\$589 MILLION, +33.6 PER CENT), SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL AND OPTICAL INSTRUMENTS (\$350 MILLION, +40.6 PER CENT).

THE MAJOR SUPPLIES OF AIRBORNE IMPORTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:-

MAIN SUPPLIERS	AIRBORNE IMPORTS IN 1977 (HK\$ MILLION)	PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN VALUE 1977/1976
U.S.A.	1,957	+22.1%
JAPAN	1,758	+30.0%
SWITZERLAND AND LIECHTENSTEIN	873	+21.3%
UNITED KINGDOM	409	+38.6%
REPUBLIC OF KOREA (SOUTH KOREA)	408	+38.8%

AIRBORNE RE-EXPORTS TO JAPAN DROPPED BY 8.6 PER CENT TO \$732 MILLION IN 1977. THIS DECLINE WAS OFFSET BY GROWTH RATES RECORDED IN THE CASE OF TAIWAN (\$410 MILLION, +22.0 PER CENT), SINGAPORE (\$398 MILLION, +15.4 PER CENT), THE U.S. (\$321 MILLION, +16.7 PER CENT) AND SOUTH KOREA (\$129 MILLION, +59.3 PER CENT).

AMONG THE COMMODITIES RE-EXPORTED BY AIR, WATCHES AND CLOCKS (\$717 MILLION, +19.3 PER CENT), SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL, OPTICAL INSTRUMENTS (\$163 MILLION, +31.5 PER CENT), AND ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS AND PARTS FOR ELECTRICAL MACHINERY (\$153 MILLION, +29.7 PER CENT) REGISTERED THE MOST FAVOURABLE RATES OF GROWTH.

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LEGCO MEETS TOMORROW

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TEN OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WILL REPLY TO POINTS RAISED BY THEIR UNOFFICIAL COLLEAGUES AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE TOMORROW AND ON THURSDAY.

TOMORROW'S SPEAKERS ARE THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, THE SECRETARY FOR HOUSING AND THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

BEFORE THE DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1978, THE CHIEF SECRETARY WILL MAKE A STATEMENT ON THE REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE ON THE DRAFT ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE 1978/79.

AT THE SAME SESSION, TWELVE BILLS WILL ALSO BE INTRODUCED IN THE COUNCIL.

ON THURSDAY THE COUNCIL MEETS AGAIN TO CONTINUE THE BUDGET DEBATE. THE SPEAKERS WILL BE THE SECRETARY FOR THE NEW TERRITORIES, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, THE CHIEF SECRETARY AND THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY WHO WILL WIND-UP THE DEBATE.

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DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING VISITS PWD WORK SITES
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THE DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, MR. DAVID STEAD, THIS AFTERNOON TOURED PWD WORK SITES ON HONG KONG ISLAND TO INSPECT THE PROGRESS OF VARIOUS PROJECTS.

HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE PORT WORKS DIVISION, MR. HOWARD CHAMBERLAIN= CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE HIGHWAYS (HK) DIVISION, MR. HO KWOK-YU= CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE DRAINAGE WORKS DIVISION, MR. CHAN YAN AND CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE CONSULTANT MANAGEMENT DIVISION OF THE HIGHWAYS OFFICE, MR. CHOI YU-LEUK.

ONE OF THE SITES MR. STEAD VISITED WAS THE \$280 MILLION ABERDEEN TUNNEL, ONE OF THE BIGGEST AND MOST AMBITIOUS HIGHWAY PROJECTS EVER UNDERTAKEN BY THE P.W.D.

HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE PROGRESS OF WORK ON THE TWIN-TUBE TUNNEL, WHICH WILL RUN NEARLY TWO KILOMETRES THROUGH THE HEART OF MOUNT NICHOLSON TO PROVIDE A THREE-MINUTE EXPRESS LINK BETWEEN HAPPY VALLEY AND ABERDEEN.

+SO FAR, TUNNELLING WORK HAS PROGRESSED 20 METRES FROM EACH OF THE NORTHERN PORTALS,+ MR. DEREK BARTLETT, CHIEF RESIDENT ENGINEER, SAID.

+MEANWHILE, LARGE SCALE DRAINAGE AT THE SOUTHERN END OF THE TUNNEL HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED WHILE GROUND FORMATION AND EMBANKMENT CONSTRUCTION ARE PROCEEDING SATISFACTORILY.+

IN ADDITION, GROUT INJECTION WORK AT THE SOUTHERN PORTALS HAS JUST STARTED. IT WOULD TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS TO COMPLETE.

EARLIER, MR. STEAD VISITED THE FIRST STAGE OF WESTERN RECLAMATION NEAR WHITTY STREET TRAM TERMINUS.

THE PROJECT, WHEN COMPLETED, WOULD PROVIDE 10 HECTARES OF LAND FOR A CARGO-HANDLING AREA, THE WIDENING OF CONNAUGHT ROAD WEST AND FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF PART OF THE POK FU LAM/CONNAUGHT ROAD WEST LINK ROAD AND THE REPROVISIONING OF THE KENNEDY TOWN WHOLESALE MARKET.

OTHER SITES VISITED INCLUDED POK FU LAM ROAD WIDENING, ABERDEEN SEWAGE SCREENING PLANT, ABERDEEN RECLAMATION AND DEEP WATER BAY/REPULSE BAY SEWAGE TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL WORKS.

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