



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Government's response to statement issued by CMB on bus bill

In response to a statement issued by the China Motor Bus Company (CMB) yesterday on the Public Bus Services (Amendment) Bill 1995, a Government spokesman reiterated that the Bill which will be introduced into the Legislative Council on May 24 is aimed at strengthening the Government's powers to maintain franchised bus services in situations where a franchised bus company ceased to operate, and to reduce the scope for avoidance of the existing legislation by transferring title in the bus service related assets to a third party, such as a group company.

The Government will only acquire or possess assets used or kept by the bus franchisee which are needed to provide a public bus service, for example, buses, spare parts and depots.

In leasing or in purchasing depots or buses from the bus companies or third parties, compensation based on an open market rental or value would be paid to the owners.

Open market value in these circumstances aims to take into account the potential of the assets and the most favourable land use permitted under the Crown lease.

Refuting CMB joint managing director Irene Ngan Kit-ling's claim that the Bill is a "retroactive ordinance", the Commissioner for Transport, Mr Rafael Hui, stressed that this is not the case. Legal advice is also to that effect. After the legislation is enacted it will affect rights that exist when the Bill is enacted and this is not uncommon in the public interest and to prevent avoidance of legislation.

Government would like to see the Bill, which would serve the public interest, passed in the current Legislative Council session ending this July.

It is necessary for the Government to have adequate powers to maintain bus services to the public when a franchise is not renewed or is revoked. The four franchised bus companies in Hong Kong carry over 3.5 million passengers daily.

KMB has 3,360 buses, and is supported by 170,000 square metres of depot spaces. CMB has 940 buses and is supported by 35,000 square metres of depot spaces. Considering the size of operation, a longer period is needed to gear up for replacing their operation.

End/Saturday, May 13, 1995

\$98.5 million paid to traffic accident victims

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The Social Welfare Department (SWD) had paid out more than \$98.5 million from the Traffic Accident Victims Assistance (TAVA) Fund to traffic accident victims or their dependants in 1993-94.

According to the 1993-94 TAVA Fund annual report, a total of 5,791 applications were received during the period, representing an increase of 4.9 per cent when compared with 5,517 applications in 1992-93.

The TAVA scheme, operating since 1979, is one of the social security schemes administered by the SWD.

"It aims to provide speedy financial assistance to traffic accident victims or their dependants, regardless of the means of the family or the element of fault in causing the accident," a spokesman for the department said today (Saturday).

During 1993-94, the SWD had handled 32 cases of serious traffic accidents in which heavy casualties were involved.

The accident resulting in the largest number of casualties occurred on July 25, 1993, when a KMB bus overturned at Hung Tin Road, Tin Shui Wai.

As a result, 43 people were injured, of whom 17 were found eligible for assistance. A total amount of \$172,866 were paid to these victims.

"To be eligible for assistance, an application must be made within the six months of the accident which must have been reported to the police," the spokesman said.

He said staff from the SWD's TAVA Section would, in major traffic accidents, take the initiative to contact victims or their dependants directly to help them apply at an early date.

"In the case of injury not causing death, an applicant must obtain a certificate from a registered doctor requiring at least three days of sick leave.

"Beneficiaries under the scheme still retain the right to make claims for legal damages or compensation from other sources in the usual way," he said.

"However, those who receive compensation in respect of the same traffic accident are required to repay the amount of assistance they have received from the TAVA scheme.

"But in any case the amount to be repaid shall not exceed the amount of compensation awarded," he added.

Applications under the TAVA scheme can be made either in person or by post.

Application forms may be obtained at the Accident Investigation Units of Regional Police Headquarters, District Offices of the Home Affairs Department and SWD's TAVA Section at room 942, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai.

Enquiries can be made on 2834 7472.

End/Saturday, May 13, 1995

Late compensation costs \$60,000

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The Labour Department today (Saturday) reminded employers that periodical payment for an injured employee had to be paid within seven days after the due day for payment.

Two partners of Chuen Cheung Engineering Company at Connaught Road Central were recently fined a total of \$60,000 at Western Magistracy for failing to pay an injured employee periodical payments within the statutory period for three wage periods.

Labour Officer (Prosecutions) Mrs Tonia Leung said failure to pay periodical payment to an injured employee within the statutory period was an offence under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance.

When the defendants committed the offence, the maximum penalty was \$20,000 but it has increased to \$25,000 since August 1 last year.

Mrs Leung also urged employers not to dismiss an employee who had suffered incapacity in circumstances which entitled him to compensation under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance.

She quoted a recent case in which an employer dismissed a worker, who had sustained injury while at work and was granted sick leave by the doctor, on a sickness day.

The employer, Ngai Kin-chung, was fined \$20,000 at Western Magistracy.

The maximum penalty for this offence is \$25,000.

End/Saturday, May 13, 1995

Government committed to expand nursing education

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The Government is committed to expand and improve the quality of nursing education at all levels, the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, said today (Saturday).

Speaking at the Opening Ceremony of the Annual Conference of the College of Nursing, Mrs Fok said advancement of medical technology, advent of new clinical treatment, rising community expectations and demographic changes had called for the need to re-examine the evolving role of nurses and their scope of duties.

In recognition of these changes, she said, an amount of \$10 million has been reserved each year for the specific purpose of improving the post-registration education of nursing staff working in the Hospital Authority and the Department of Health since 1994.

"Furthermore, \$34 million has been earmarked in 1995 onwards to increase the learning component of Student Nurses by 22 per cent," she said.

"Plans are also in hand to expand the number of nursing degree places for matriculants from 40 to 180 by 1997-98."

Noting the increased emphasis towards "patient-oriented" or "holistic" care, Mrs Fok pointed out that nurses were now functioning as independent practitioners in the clinical setting.

"New initiatives such as pre-admission/pre-discharge planning and outreach medical services also presented the nursing profession with new challenges and exciting opportunities," she added.

End/Saturday, May 13, 1995

Town Planning Board publishes annual report

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The Town Planning Board has published its 1994 annual report.

Since the first annual report for 1990, the Board's annual report has taken an active and systematic approach in informing the public, planners and planning-related professionals of the Board's work in the year under review and the statutory planning and application procedures.

The 1994 annual report outlines the statutory planning process in terms of plan-making and implementation as well as the planning permission system.

It also contains a description and statistics of work undertaken by the Board in the year.

In the foreword of the report, the outgoing Chairman of the Board, the former Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Tony Eason, described 1994 as an eventful and busy year for the Board.

He said a record number of 1,005 applications under section 16 of the Town Planning Ordinance were processed by the Board last year, showing a 37 per cent increase compared with the previous year.

Similarly, 156 applications were reviewed under section 17 of the Ordinance, representing a large increase of 61 per cent compared with 1993.

In addition, over 400 objections were considered in the year.

The report is divided into three parts. The first part covers the establishment and functions of the Board; the second gives an account of its work in 1994; and the third explains its work on nature conservation, in particular that for the Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay area.

The English version of the report can now be bought at \$28 a copy at the Government Publications Centre, ground floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway.

The Chinese version will be put on sale once it is available.

End/Saturday, May 13, 1995

BEC presents certificates to its ambassadors

The Boundary and Election Commission (BEC) today (Saturday) presented certificates to some 60 young Voter Registration Ambassadors in recognition of their work to spread the "get-register" message.

The "Ambassador Scheme", an important feature in voter registration drive, is now entering its second year.

Speaking at the certificate presentation ceremony, BEC Chairman, Mr Justice Woo Kwok-hing, said in promoting voter registration, the ambassadors would be able to share the sense of achievement in contributing to community service.

He said the success of the scheme would not be measured by the number of voter registration forms collected.

More importantly, it is by the enhancement of civic awareness so that members of the public, particularly youngsters, understand their civic rights and duties in society.

"This will be a long-term mission which will not end with the close of our voter registration drive on June 1," the Chairman said.

This year's voter registration drive started in January.

He said the ambassadors worked at three levels: firstly, with their family, relatives and friends; secondly, at their workplace or school; and thirdly, through their own initiatives to promote voter registration.

Mr Justice Woo also said they could also join activities organised by the district offices on voter registration.

He reminds the ambassadors that the information of an elector is confidential which cannot be released to anyone apart from the authorities concerned.

The league of ambassadors comprise media organisations, enthusiastic groups, students, artists and public-spirited individuals.

Most of the ambassadors present today are secondary school students from various districts.

End/Saturday, May 13, 1995

Young violinist selected for international music camp

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An 18-year-old violin player, Cheng Ka-ming, has been selected by the Music Office of the Recreation and Culture Branch to represent Hong Kong to attend the 1995 World Youth Symphony Orchestra Interlochen Arts Camp in Michigan, USA, this summer.

Cheng has made remarkable achievements in music in the past few years. He was the Champion in Violin Sonata Class and Violin Concerto Class in the 1992 Hong Kong Schools Music Festival, the first runner-up in the 1993 Commercial Radio Prize, and the 1993 Student Musician of the Year organised by South China Morning Post.

Currently, he is the concert master of the Hong Kong Youth Symphony Orchestra and the La Salle College School Orchestra.

Cheng said he was delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the Interlochen Arts Camp and to meet young musicians from different countries in the coming summer.

"I am looking forward to staging concerts together with renowned musicians and I would do my best to introduce Hong Kong to other campers," he added.

The music camp, to be held from June 25 to August 21, is aimed at promoting friendship among young musicians aged between 14 and 18 through music.

The eight-week intensive training will include master classes and workshops conducted by renowned musicians. In addition, recreational activities such as sing-a-song round camp fires, canoeing and swimming will be arranged.

End/Saturday, May 13, 1995

Fresh water cut in Wan Chai

Fresh water supply to some premises in Wan Chai will be temporarily suspended from 11 pm on Monday (May 15) to 6 am the following day to facilitate water mains leakage detection.

The affected areas will include the Royal Hong Kong Police Headquarters, 38-72 Gloucester Road, 44-92 and 69-93 Jaffe Road, 33-85 Lockhart Road, 15-21 and 16-20 Fenwick Street as well as 15-23 and 20 Luard Road.

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	<u>\$ Million</u>	<u>Time (Hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative Change (\$ Million)</u>
Opening Balance in the account	2,453	09:30	+50
Closing Balance in the account	985	10:00	+50
Change Attributable to:		11:00	+50
Money Market Activity	+50	11:30	+50
Laf Today	-1,518	15:00	

Laf Rate 4.25% Bid/6.25% Offer TWI 119.2 *+0.2* 13.5.95

End/Saturday, May 13, 1995

\$8M given to launch 29 green projects

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Twenty-nine environmental and conservation projects have been given funding support from the Government's Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) and the Woo Wheelock Green Fund. The total funding allocation amounts to more than \$8 million.

The projects, to be carried out by environmental, academic and community groups, are financially supported by the two Funds. It is expected approval will soon be given to two more, and there are 26 other applications being processed.

Among the projects approved is one which aims at promoting public awareness through a campaign to reduce the usage of foam containers. Others seek to stimulate environmental concern among students and young people; conduct research into seafood contamination; and study the effects of air pollution on the health of school children.

"The range and variety of projects put forward for consideration by the Environment and Conservation Fund and the Woo Wheelock Green Fund demonstrate a high degree of interest in, and regard for, the protection of Hong Kong's environment," a spokesman for the ECF Secretariat said.

"In making our selection of projects to be funded we have been greatly impressed by the innovative ideas and the considerable amount of dedication and attention given to the ways in which various environmental problems can be addressed."

The spokesman said: "We are interested in achieving positive results of benefit to the community of Hong Kong. The initial batch of projects are expected to make a genuine contribution to further heightening awareness of environmental problems, and finding solutions.

"It is our hope that other corporations in Hong Kong will add their support to the protection of our environment by contributing their skills and helping to finance similar efforts."

The aim of the Environment and Conservation Fund and the Woo Wheelock Green Fund is to support practical, result-oriented projects designed to improve and sustain Hong Kong's environment.

The funding scheme is open to applications all-year-round. In considering applications, the Environment and Conservation Fund Committee, a statutory body comprising non-official members from a wide cross-section of society, assesses the merits of individual proposals, their benefits to the community and the ability of applicants to implement their plans.

Application forms together with information about the two Funds are obtainable from the Planning, Environment and Lands Branch, the Environmental Protection Department, District Offices, and Wheelock and Co Ltd.

End/Sunday, May 14, 1995

13th Annual Review Meeting between Guangdong and HK Customs

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A delegation of seven from the Guangdong Branch of PRC's Customs General Administration led by its Director, Mr Liu Wenjie, visited Hong Kong from May 8 to 12 to attend the 13th Annual Review Meeting on customs liaison arrangement with the Hong Kong Customs delegation headed by the Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Mr Don Watson.

The meeting reviewed liaison arrangements between the two Customs Administrations over the past 12 months. They also reviewed operational achievements attained through the co-operation and liaison of both sides.

Other topics discussed included smuggling and trafficking trends, anti-smuggling and anti-narcotic strategies, training assistance and future co-operation.

At the end of the meeting, both sides agreed to the following:

- * to strengthen their co-operation by formalising co-operative arrangements, convening meetings between experts of both sides, and assisting each other in the investigation of customs offences;
- * to consider more effective channels for timely exchange of intelligence on drug smuggling;
- * to explore ways to assist each other in the suppression of smuggling of articles infringing intellectual property rights;
- * to enhance co-operation and assistance in training;

- * to hold the 14th Annual Review Meeting in Guangdong in April 1996.

During the meeting both sides acknowledged that, according to the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, after July 1, 1997, the Hong Kong Special Administrative region would be an independent Customs territory, could participate in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and other relevant international organisations and international trade agreements including the World Customs Organisation (WCO), and would continue to be a member of the WCO under the name of "Hong Kong, China".

The co-ordination and co-operation between Guangdong Customs and Hong Kong Customs would progress even much better in future.

End/Sunday, May 14, 1995

More language projects receive funding

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Funds totalling \$18.07 million have been approved for 11 language improvement projects in the second round of the first allocation exercise of the Language Fund.

The Fund's Trustee, Director of Education, Mr W K Lam, accepted recommendations of the Language Fund Advisory Committee to award funding to the projects.

Of the 11 successful applications which are aimed at improving language proficiency of teachers, students and members of the public, six are English language projects, three Chinese language/Putonghua projects and two concerned with improving language proficiency in both English and Chinese.

"There is a good combination of research, teaching and learning resource materials, training as well as learning activity projects," an Education Department spokesman said.

"They all meet the stringent criteria set by the Language Fund Advisory Committee and should be a great help in raising language standards in Hong Kong."

The spokesman noted that among the successful bidders are two projects comprising activity programmes and other activities to promote the learning of English and Putonghua respectively at the community level through a two-year pilot project at six children's and youth centres.

There is also a project to improve the quality of written English and Chinese in the business community through research into the nature and dimension of present writing problems, with a view to developing practical suggestions to address the problems.

"Endorsement of these projects clearly show the Language Fund's support for projects at the community/workforce level," the spokesman said.

The successful applications were among 27 left over in the first round of the assessment exercise which needed further clarifications from applicants.

End/Sunday, May 14, 1995

203 Government sites cleared in seven months

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The Task Force Black Spots (TFB) of the Lands Department has successfully cleared 203 sites with a total of 52,659 square metres of government land in the Pat Heung Pilot Action Area in the New Territories, within the seven month period ending March.

Reviewing the achievements of the task force since its formation in August last year, the Government Land Agent, Mr Alan Hay, said this meant an average of 29 government land sites had been cleared each month.

Positive environmental improvement actions by the Task Force has resulted in 68 sites with a total area of 13,752 square metres having been landscaped. Landscaping on the remainder of the sites will be completed by the end of this summer.

In parallel with the works on government land, Mr Hay said the survey of private land had been completed and identified 391 undertakings which had potential adverse impact on the environment.

Of these undertakings, liaison with the Planning Department has ascertained 59 existing use cases and 57 unauthorised development cases.

"The TFB will concentrate on the 'existing use' cases, while the Central Enforcement and Prosecution Section of the Planning Department will deal with the unauthorised cases as a concerted effort with the TFB in improving the overall environment in the area," Mr Hay said.

"The TFB will spearhead an important programme of the 'existing use' undertakings through negotiation with the operators for in situ improvement works," he added.

A second action area at Ping Che and Ko Po has been identified and a preliminary survey indicates some 210 industrial undertakings.

"Most of these undertakings are situated on private land. Unlawful occupation of government land is not too serious.

"A detailed survey of all industrial undertakings will be further conducted with a view to sorting out the actionable cases.

"Based on experience gained in the Pat Heung Pilot Action Area, lease enforcement or regularisation subject to in-situ improvements will be instituted upon completion of the detailed survey at the end of 1995," Mr Hay said.

Mr Hay added that the investigation work in Ha Tsuen and Lau Fau Shan Container Study Area had been completed.

"The Task Force is now correlating these findings in relation to the nature of trade, tenure information, ownership pattern, zoning, holding capacity and planning status of these undertakings and are actively searching for alternative sites suitable for relocation of container-related and other open storage operations," he said.

The Task Force reports to a Special Committee which advises the Government on all matters relating to the environmental black spots and oversee the Task Force's work.

It was set up with a commitment to clean up the New Territories, where there has been a proliferation of conversion of agricultural land into open storage yards and other similar unauthorised uses in the rural areas.

End/Sunday, May 14, 1995

Guided walks for students and country park visitors

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The Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD) will organise a series of countryside educational walks for students and country park visitors in July and August.

An AFD spokesman said the main aims of the annual programme were to provide visitors with countryside education and to increase their awareness of the need for countryside conservation.

The spokesman said the guided walks were intended for students of primary four or above and country park visitors.

"Each walk will take about two hours, either from 10 am to noon or from 2 pm to 4 pm.

Among destinations of the walks are major country parks in Ma On Shan, Tai Mo Shan, Pat Sin Leng, Aberdeen, South Lantau and Shing Mun.

Other areas of special interest such as the Tai Tong Nursery, Shing Mun Aboretum and Lions Nature Education Centre.

The spokesman pointed out that each guided visit would have its own unique theme.

"By visiting the Clear Water Bay Country Park, participants will be able to know more about erosional coastal features and seashore plants.

"They are also expected to gain a more in-depth knowledge of the woodland ecology after going on an itinerary at the Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve," he said.

The guided walks to country parks is one of many activities organised under the annual Summer Youth Programme, sponsored by the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club.

These country park ranger-guided walks are only available to schools or organised groups of 30 to 40 participants with advance booking.

Those interested in taking part in these meaningful activities in summer should contact AFD's Conservation Education Unit, Room 321, Canton Road Government Offices, Kowloon. Telephone enquiries can be made on 2733 2121.