



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Monday, June 25, 1973

CONTENTS

	<u>Page No.</u>
Closer co-operation between government and voluntary agencies in planning social services	1
Computerised traffic system to be installed in West Kowloon to improve traffic flow	4
More readily available accommodation necessary to reduce rents to a reasonable level	6
Vessels requested to keep clear of main port approaches at night to reduce risk of collision	9
New beach cleaner will be tried out at Shek O beach	10
Five lots of Crown land in the New Territories to be put up for sale	11
Two robbers have been sentenced to three years imprisonment	12
Four RTV personalities will take part in the draw for the third government lottery	13
Floodlights to be installed at the Yuen Long sports ground	14
Water supply in Hung Hom will be interrupted for five hours on Wednesday	14
Senior Civil Service Council meeting discusses salary scales	15
New salary scales announced for nursing grades	16

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 1 -

GREATER GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION WITH
VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN PLANNING SOCIAL SERVICES

Changes that will result in a different relationship between the Social Welfare Department, representing the government, and the voluntary agencies were foreshadowed today.

This change will mean government taking a more active part in the planning of services provided by the voluntary agencies.

Mr. K.S. Hardy, Chief Executive Officer of the Social Welfare Department outlined the plan today when he presented a paper on "Government Subvention -- Present Role and Future Development" at the quarterly meeting of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service.

In his paper, Mr. Hardy spelt out the future lines the department was hoping to take in regard to subventing the voluntary agencies.

Dealing with the present situation, Mr. Hardy said "..... until now due to a large measure of self sufficiency the voluntary agencies have maintained that the Social Welfare Department subvention to them has largely been in the nature of a lump-sum grant in aid."

But he said changing attitudes towards Hong Kong which is no longer considered as an under-developed territory, has resulted in overseas donations to the voluntary agencies falling to about 30 per cent of what they were in the early post war years.

The voluntary agencies are now finding it difficult to raise sufficient funds to continue their activities at the established levels of efficiency.

/"Because

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 2 -

"Because this work by the voluntary sector is recognised as being of major importance to the community, the government is responding to a request from the voluntary agencies to increase social welfare subventions," he said.

He pointed out that this increase in government subvention has to be administered selectively.

"Against this background, it is also fairly reasonable to accept that as the proportion of government financial assistance to total annual budget grows, so must also the degree of joint consultation on operational plans and finance become more pronounced," he suggested.

Mr. Hardy said that as social welfare subventions become the major percentage in the agency budget, the government, through the Social Welfare Department, should be more involved in the voluntary agencies' position on where and how the higher payments are to be put to work.

He suggested that the government can best help the voluntary sector by developing subventions along the lines of a "discretionary" and "deficiency" grants system.

"The trend is set clearly towards a selectively expanding social welfare subventions policy in which the larger the proportion of government subvention to total expenditure becomes, the greater will be the obligation on the part of the agency to accept in exchange a wider, deeper and constructively critical scrutiny by government of its affairs."

/Flexibility,

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 3 -

Flexibility, Mr. Hardy said, is needed in determining each succeeding annual subvention budget, and is precisely the element being introduced with decision taking at operational level.

He told the gathering it is proposed to obtain Finance Committee approval to vote a set sum each year for social welfare subventions to be used as the Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) decides.

The size of the subventions vote will be determined each year in advance as a result of a review by the Social Welfare Department of its published Five Year Plan.

No sum had yet been fixed for 1974/75, he said, but hoped that it would be between \$30 to \$35 million compared to \$25.5 million for the current year.

In view of these expanding changes, Mr. Hardy said the question then arises in what new directions can the voluntary sector best redeploy a considerable free reserve of energy?

He contended that there were several areas in which they could expand. These were development of community centres, children and youth services, aftercare of young offenders released from correctional institutions, and family services including a practical "meals on wheels" scheme for the elderly infirm similar to that which is operated in Britain and adapted to local conditions.

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Note to Editors: Full texts of Mr. Hardy's speech will be boxed
this evening.

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/4

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 4 -

COMPUTERISED TRAFFIC SYSTEM FOR WEST KOWLOON

A computerised traffic system covering some 80 sets of traffic lights is to be installed in the West Kowloon area.

Tenders for the system are being invited from a range of firms in five countries.

Initially the scheme will cover Nathan Road, Shanghai Street and Reclamation Street and parts of Castle Peak Road, Lai Chi Kok Road and Cheung Sha Wan Road.

For some time the Public Works Department has been looking into ways of improving traffic flow on the roads.

Although a large programme of arterial road building has been put in hand, the department has also been aware of the problem of improving traffic on signal-controlled ground-level roads where the scale of high density building has made widening of the existing roads almost impossible.

The technique of controlling signals by a central computer has been used in many cities of the world and the government, after investigating many of the systems now installed, has decided to go ahead with a computerised traffic control system in the West Kowloon area.

A team comprising traffic engineers and computer experts was set up by the Highways Office of the Public Works Department to design and supervise the installation of the West Kowloon system. This team is located in the Kowloon Government Offices in Nathan Road, where the central computer will be installed.

/Information

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 5 -

Information on traffic conditions measured by buried cables in the road will be fed back to the computer which will then make changes to the traffic signals to help the flow of traffic.

Additionally, information on traffic congestion will be fed to the Traffic Police who will be able to take immediate action to clear traffic jams due to accidents and other conditions.

It is also hoped that the system can be used by the Fire Services to select fire routes whereby the computer will automatically influence the traffic signal in favour of fire engines on their way to a fire.

The scheme for West Kowloon will cost about \$10 million and should be fully operational by 1976.

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/6

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 6 -

NEED FOR GREATER AND FASTER SUPPLY OF HOUSING

The answer to reducing rents to reasonable levels lay in a greater and faster supply of more housing, not in rent controls, the Commissioner for Rating and Valuation, Mr. R.A. Fry, said today.

Addressing the weekly meeting of the New Territories Rotary Club, Mr. Fry described rent controls as "a very negative thing" which did not provide a real remedy but which was nevertheless necessary in a situation where landlords were taking "unfair advantage" of the imbalance between demand and supply.

While it had been necessary for the government to intervene again in the domestic sector, he hoped that with the 10 year housing programme and with the full participation of private enterprise "it will not be necessary for government intervention to become a permanent feature of our property market."

In putting forward new proposals for controls, he said, the government was duty bound to take into regard the position of both landlords and tenants although it was never easy to reconcile the different views.

Referring to suggestions for government intervention to reduce some of the very high rents agreed to over the past year, Mr. Fry said he believed that this should be left to market forces, as it was extremely difficult to administer and determine "fair rents."

One of the strongest forces in reducing prices, he said, was "consumer resistance."

"If tenants refuse to pay some of the very high rents demanded, landlords would have to lower their sights. I do think that sometimes tenants are too quick to agree to excessive rents or large increases," he added.

/Rent

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 7 -

Rent legislation in recent years, he explained, aimed at providing security against eviction and protection against unreasonable increases in rent, not in fixing rents. This formula had worked successfully before.

He said the government was aware that, in the long term, the provision of more land was a very important factor. However, in the short term it would have little or no effect on rents.

"The one thing that is going to bring down rents is the provision of more housing," he stressed. "If rents come down so will land prices, the converse is not necessarily true."

Commenting on claims that the new controls might affect future developments, Mr. Fry said this was not so as far as the government was concerned.

"Provided a developer can see a fair return on his investment, the fact that increased rents thereafter might be restricted is no real deterrent," he said.

He noted that the new legislation would provide for a three-year control-free holiday for new property and during this time "it should be possible for developers to establish rents at a stable level."

The Commissioner said it could be that controls would result in less property being available for rental, as had happened in Britain, but the trend in Hong Kong recently had been for developing companies to retain premises for investment purposes rather than to sell.

In his view, this trend would continue if the rents obtainable provided a fair return.

/"Even

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 8 -

"Even if there is some small reduction in premises for rental, this may be no bad thing as owner-occupation is the one guarantee against increased rents."

Mr. Fry also questioned the validity of arguments that large flats and premises let on three-year leases should continue to be excluded from the new controls.

Tenants of these types of accommodation, he said, had been the hardest hit over the past year or so and it was rents for these properties which were quoted outside Hong Kong and gave a generally bad impression of housing here.

"While there may be no good reason to subsidise people occupying expensive accommodation, I do think they, like all other domestic tenants, should be protected against extortionate demands at a time when landlords are able to take unfair advantage of the imbalance between supply and demand," he said.

"Why, in a situation such as this, should landlords of the more expensive type of accommodation be allowed to take advantage of high rents, while landlords of smaller domestic premises are restricted?" he asked.

It was because of this, he explained, the government believed that controls on rent increases must apply to all.

Referring to the concern felt by landlords of controlled premises about the large gap between controlled and free rents, Mr. Fry emphasised that the government did not consider these free rents as being fair or reasonable.

They were the result of an "abnormal situation," he said, and although the machinery to reduce them could not be provided it was felt that they would come down by market forces as supply improved.

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 9 -

REDUCING THE RISK OF COLLISIONS

The Marine Department has appealed to masters of vessels waiting to enter Hong Kong not to place their ships or crews at unnecessary risk by remaining too close to the main port approaches during the night.

Vessels intending to arrive within the port at first light, a spokesman said, should not approach closer than 25 miles of Waglan Island until such time as they can proceed at normal full speed, without undue danger, to the position where pilots normally board.

"Fog, mist and heavy rain can quickly reduce visibility in the approaches to the Tathong and East Lamma Channels, increasing the collision risk which already exists in those areas," the spokesman warned.

He advised masters of vessels to time their arrival in Hong Kong so that they could embark pilots immediately on arrival.

Vessels which did not engage the services of a pilot, he said, should proceed directly to a quarantine and immigration anchorage to await clearance if this had not already been obtained.

Notices have been sent to ship owners and agents requesting them to pass on this advice to masters of vessels for which they are responsible.

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/10

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 10 -

SHEK O BEACH CLEANING

The Urban Council's newly-acquired "Beemer" beach cleaner will be put through its paces on Wednesday (June 27) at Shek O Beach.

The \$30,000 machine is the first of a number of similar machines which the Urban Council intends to buy to help make Hong Kong's beaches cleaner.

The demonstration is scheduled for 4.00 p.m., and will be watched by Urban Councillors including Mr. Kenneth T.C. Lo, Chairman of the Recreation and Amenities Select Committee, which oversees Urban Council beaches.

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Note to Editors: You are invited to send a reporter and photographer to cover the event. Transport will be provided. Cars No. AM2329 & AM2330, have been laid on for your representative, and will leave the Central Government Offices Car Park for Shek O Beach at 3.00 p.m.

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/11

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 11 -

LAND ON PENG CHAU FOR SALE

Five lots of Crown land outside the urban area will be offered for sale for non-industrial and residential development.

Four of the lots are on Peng Chau Island and one at Pan Long Wan in Clear Water Bay Road.

Of the four lots on Peng Chau -- all to be used for non-industrial purposes -- three (lot numbers 453, 454 and 455) are in Wai Tsai San Tsuen, each with an area of about 700 square feet and an annual rental of \$4.

The other lot on the island (lot number 452) with an area of about 2,100 square feet is in Holy Family Road and has an annual rental of \$24.

They will be put up for auction on July 9 (Monday) beginning at 2.30 p.m. in the District Office, Islands, at International Building, 4th floor, 141 Des Voeux Road Central.

The other piece of land for sale at Pan Long Wan (demarcation district 238, lot 513) will be auctioned on July 3 (Tuesday) at 2.30 p.m. in the District Office, Sai Kung, at the San Po Kong Government Offices, 692 Prince Edward Road, 1st floor.

The land has an area of 15,000 square feet and an annual rental of \$172. Its use is restricted to private residential purposes only.

Full particulars and conditions of sale of the five lots can be obtained and their sale plans inspected at the New Territories Administration, North Kowloon Magistracy, Tai Po Road, Kowloon.

They are also available at the Yuen Long, Tsuen Wan, Tai Po, Sai Kung and Islands District Offices.

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/12

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 12 -

THREE-YEAR SENTENCES FOR ROBBERS

A 29-year-old man was sentenced to three years imprisonment by Judge Byrne at the Kowloon District Court today (Monday) after he pleaded guilty to charges of robbery and wounding a taxi driver.

The court was told that the defendant, Chan Wai-lam, threatened and later stabbed the driver, Mr. Chan Ching-suen inside his taxi at Wang Tau Hom Estate on June 6 with a pair of scissors, and then robbed him of \$96.10.

In another case in the same court, a 23-year-old man was jailed for three-and-a-half years by Judge Lau after pleading guilty to a charge of robbery.

The court was told that the defendant, Chung Wai-shun, threatened a man, Mr. Yu Yan, with a screw driver on May 20 outside 64 Tong Mei Road, Kowloon, and robbed him of \$2.60 and a wrist watch.

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/13

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 13 -

DRAW FOR THIRD GOVERNMENT LOTTERY

Four popular RTV entertainers will take part in the draw for the third Government Lottery this year.

They are Miss Angelina Leung Siu-ling, Miss Helen Poon Bing-sheung, Miss Eileen Lo Oi-lin, and Miss Violet Lee Ying.

This was announced today by Mr. David Wu Chung-shing, Senior Committee Member of the Government Lotteries Management Committee, at a press conference held at the City Hall Restaurant.

Tickets for the current lottery are on sale now and the draw will take place in the City Hall Theatre on Saturday, July 14, at 10 a.m.

After the draw, there will be a half-hour entertainment programme given by the RTV artistes and this will be followed by the public auction of special car numbers held by the Transport Department.

The proceeds from the fifth 'lucky numbers' auction in the series will again go to the Government Lotteries Fund.

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/14

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 14 -

FLOODLIGHTING THE YUEN LONG SPORTS GROUND

The Yuen Long Sports Ground will soon be fitted with floodlights to enable the facilities to be used at night.

Four steel towers for lighting the ground's grass football field, which can accommodate 4,000 spectators, will be erected.

The mini-soccer pitch and the basketball court will also be provided with proper lighting.

Work on the project, which will cost an estimated \$630,000, will begin in August and will take about three months to complete.

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WATER CUT IN HUNG HOM

Water supply to a number of premises in Hung Hom will be interrupted for five hours from 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. on Wednesday (June 27).

This is to enable the Waterworks Office to carry out leakage tests.

The area affected is bounded by Chatham Road, Winslow Street, Whampoa Street and Bulkeley Street.

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/15

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 15 -

SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE COUNCIL MEETING

DISCUSSES SALARY SCALES

At a meeting of the Senior Civil Service Council this afternoon a discussion on the salary scales of the nursing allied grades took place.

Discussion on this item was concluded at the meeting but it was not possible to reach agreement.

However, both the official and staff side of the council stressed that it is open to health auxiliaries and midwives holding a suitable Form V qualification to apply for training leading to a full nursing qualification.

Every encouragement will be given to qualified officers applying for such training.

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/16

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 16 -

NEW PAY SCALES FOR NURSING GRADES

Revised salary scales are to be implemented, subject to Finance Committee approval, for midwives, nursing auxiliaries and inoculators, to replace interim scales provided early in 1972.

These salaries are effective from April 1, 1971, and the officers will receive a further increase of about three per cent with effect from April 1, 1972.

The new scales for midwives and nursing auxiliaries will range from \$875 to \$1,650 per month on the male master pay scale. Until April 1, 1975 salaries for female officers are determined under the equal pay scheme by which female scales progressively equate to corresponding male salaries. For inoculators, the related male scale will range from \$550 to \$1,100 per month.

Announcing this today, a government spokesman said the new scales incorporated the interim increases granted in early 1972 and constituted substantial increases for the officers concerned. They also recognised changes in the level of responsibilities.

The decision to implement the revised scales comes after months of discussion in the Senior Civil Service Council, and was announced following a final breakdown in negotiations between the official and staff sides during the latest meeting this afternoon.

Commenting on the background to the discussions, the spokesman recalled that the salary scales of the nursing class were excluded from consideration by the 1971 Salaries Commission, because discussions were already at an advanced stage with staff representatives.

/The salary

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 17 -

The salary scale for nurses, a key grade in the class, was settled in late 1971. Interim scales were provided in early 1972 so that back pay could be given to the remaining grades in the class, and discussions continued in the Senior Civil Service Council concerning these grades.

Agreement could not be reached on four grades, midwives, nursing auxiliaries, health auxiliaries and inoculators, so in April 1972 the council set up a working party, representing both its official and staff sides, to examine the responsibilities and working conditions of these grades.

The working party completed its reports in November, and these were put to the council earlier this year. The council discussed these matters extensively at eight meetings held between February 26 and today, during which the staff side effectively put forward the case for improvements.

The official side revised its preliminary proposals in the light of these arguments, although it was unable to accept entirely the views of the staff side.

Compared with the scales before April 1, 1971, the revised scales to have effect on that date, represent, for midwives, increases averaging 30 per cent; for inoculators, increases averaging 27 per cent; and for nursing auxiliaries, increases averaging 80 per cent.

These figures, of course, include the benefit of the interim increases granted in early 1972.

The arrangements will continue whereby midwives are working regular hours and are not liable to on-call duty except in emergency.

/The position

Monday, June 25, 1973

- 18 -

The position of health auxiliaries was also reviewed, in the light of the report of the working party, but the evidence did not support a further increase for the grade beyond the interim increase of early 1972.

At that time, health auxiliaries received an average increase of 25 per cent with effect from April 1, 1971. They have already received the three per cent increase with effect from April 1, 1972. The working party's report pointed out that some members of the grade carry certain supervisory responsibilities. An allowance to recognise this will be introduced.

The spokesman said that differing duties and responsibilities in the grades of the nursing class called for differing qualifications, and meant that salary scales differed from job to job. For example, considerable changes in the level of responsibilities of nursing auxiliaries had taken place gradually since the grade was established in 1964, and this was now to be recognised in their new scale, which went beyond what the staff side had sought.

In addition to the information conveyed throughout the discussions, through the staff side of the council, the Director of Medical and Health Services, Dr. G.H. Choa, recently interviewed representative groups in each grade, at which time the proposals were put to them in full detail.

The spokesman said that a petition was received at Government House yesterday from representatives of the midwives, and added that this, of course, would receive careful consideration in case it threw any new light on their representations.

It is also expected that the Governor will reply very shortly to the petition received recently from the health auxiliaries.

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Release Time: 9.00 p.m.