



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

CONTENTS

	<u>Page No.</u>
Social security allowances and day nursery's subventions to be increased	1
Rice control scheme effective in checking profiteering	5
Public housing to be built at a faster pace	9
Temporary college for training secondary technical teachers	14
Medical and Health Department assumes active role in fighting drug addiction	21
Hong Kong will continue to press for equal treatment in the EEC	24
Tax exemption rate of interest raised to four per cent	26
New measures to ease shortage of first aid personnel in industry	27
Unofficials of Legco support legalisation of off-course betting	29
Firemen to receive long service medals	30
Multi-million dollar contract for Kwai Chung incinerator ..	31
Bills passed in Legislative Council	32
Six more Official Members to speak in the Legislative Council tomorrow	32

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 1 -

INCREASES IN SOCIAL SECURITY ALLOWANCES AND DAY NURSERY'S SUBVENTIONS

The scale of payments for public assistance and disability and infirmity allowances are to be increased by a further 21 per cent from January 1, 1974.

Also, subventions to non-profit-making day nurseries are being increased to \$65 for the current financial year and to \$80 for 1974/75.

These increases were announced in the Legislative Council today by the Secretary for Social Services, the Hon. F.K. Li, who was replying to points on social welfare raised at earlier sessions by unofficial members.

Mr. Li said both these payments were kept under constant review and the rates of assistance had already been increased by 11 per cent in July this year. Mr. Li said probably the most significant feature of the Five Year Plan implemented in this first year was the Disability and Infirmity Allowance Scheme.

"Under this scheme non-contributory, flat-rate allowances are paid without a means test to the elderly infirm and the severely disabled. This is a new departure in the field of social security and one that is specifically suited to the special needs and circumstances of Hong Kong. It has proved an immediate success," he said.

By the end of last month, there were 40,000 applications of which over 31,000 are already receiving payments. He said investigations of the remainder is proceeding as quickly as possible and payments in all cases will have retrospective effect to the date of application.

/Turning

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 2 -

Turning to the provision of day care nurseries for children, Mr. Li said this field was a good example in which both government and the voluntary sector work together.

At present, there are 66 non-profit-making day nurseries providing about 7,100 places. Of these, 47 with a total capacity of 5,700 places are subvented.

To meet the increasing demand for places, Mr. Li said, the Five Year Plan proposes that 1,000 additional day care places each year should be provided.

"It is important to ensure that there are enough places and that acceptable standards are maintained," he said.

Mr. Li said the increase approved for this current year and the one for 1974/75 include an element for the improvement of standards which vary considerably from one nursery to another.

"In this context, we are well on with the drafting of legislation to require all day care and residential centres for children under the age of six to register with the Social Welfare Department and to require the centres to comply with certain minimum standards relating to accommodation, health, and safety measures, staffing, programmes of activity and other measures designed to ensure adequate standards of supervision."

Turning to the uncertainty among some agencies about the part they are to play and the amount of government assistance, available to them, Mr. Li said the role of the voluntary sector has been clearly established in the White Paper and the Five Year Plan.

/He said

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 3 -

He said a one-line-vote for social welfare subventions is to be introduced in the year 1974/75 which would mean that the allocation of subventions to individual voluntary agencies will become the responsibility of the Director of Social Welfare acting on the advice of the Social Welfare Advisory Committee. The procedures for allocation of grants from the Lotteries Fund will also be improved.

Mr. Li said with the establishment of the overall policy and strategy for social welfare in the White Paper and the Five Year Plan and with the implementation of projects proceeding satisfactorily, it is now possible to focus attention on particular areas of difficulty which require inter-departmental co-ordination.

One such area, he said, concerns the future needs of the elderly on which a working party had recently published a report.

He said a number of valuable comments had been received revealing a great degree of support for action in this field over a wide front and when these had all been digested, the government would be able to bring forward firm proposals about the future provision of services in this field.

Another area in which co-ordination was necessary, he said, was the rehabilitation of the disabled.

Mr. Li said much preliminary consultative work had already been undertaken between government departments and voluntary agencies in this field. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Rehabilitation has produced a very useful working paper summarising a large number of concepts and recommendations discussed by representatives of the government and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service.

/This paper,

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 4 -

This paper, he said, is not intended for publication but to provide a basis for a more co-ordinated approach to future planning.

On this basis, he said, it will be sent to heads of departments providing rehabilitation services, members of the Social Welfare Planning Committee and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service.

Mr. Li said he would also pursue further with the Financial Secretary the proposal that a unit should be formed to study possible projects that would be of interest to those considering donations for the benefit of the community so that information and advice can be given quickly.

- - - - 0 - - - -

/5

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 5 -

PRICE CHECKS ON RICE TO CONTINUE

No Evidence of Significant Profiteering

Outside the main producing countries, Hong Kong enjoys the cheapest rice in Asia, the Director of Commerce and Industry, Mr. David Jordan, said at today's Legislative Council meeting.

At present, he added, prices are running 15 to 20 per cent below Singapore levels.

Mr. Jordan said that through the rice control scheme a continuing close watch is maintained over both wholesale and retail prices.

"I am satisfied that prices generally at retail level are commensurate with import costs, legitimate trade expenses and the quality of rice on offer, and there is no evidence of significant profiteering," he said.

"There is, of course, scope for blending rice of different qualities, and values may vary from one shop to another. But this is a traditional trade practice and the consumer is able to buy selectively."

Mr. Jordan gave an assurance that price checking operations will continue and stressed that speculative trading in rice will not be tolerated.

Referring to the suggestion that a similar control scheme might be extended to other vital supplies, he pointed out that it was a stock-piling scheme which was restrictive on trade in normal times. "It would not be suitable for example for fresh foods," he said.

In a wide-ranging review of the Commerce and Industry Department's work in other fields, Mr. Jordan dwelt on developments in industrial land policy, investment in industrial operations, commercial relations and the activities of the Preventive Service and the Trade Investigation Branch.

/He said

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 6 -

He said the department had been much involved in the formulation of proposals for making industrial land available for sale on a restricted user basis in order to encourage the establishment of technologically-advanced industries which could not, by their nature, be based in high rise buildings.

There was now a framework of policy within which particular applications for land could be granted on a restricted user basis for the development of industry "that will expand our industrial base, increase our skills, broaden our overseas markets and help to secure supplies of essential raw materials for our export industries."

Mr. Jordan said that several projects had been considered recently by the Executive Council, and it was hoped to announce shortly that one or two major investments have been secured for Hong Kong.

But he emphasised that the development of Hong Kong's industry and trade was undoubtedly due primarily to the energy, resourcefulness and willingness to invest in the future shown by our own manufacturers and businessmen.

"While we welcome investment from overseas, it is indeed a fact that the bulk of the nearly 300 factories in Hong Kong in which there is an overseas interest are joint ventures between Hong Kong industrialists and their overseas partners," he said.

Mr. Jordan said that the diversification of industry had been urged for many years, and the modification of industrial land policy should assist in this process.

/He added:

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 7 -

He added: "The qualities of initiative, energy and willingness to learn so characteristic of our commerce and industry and the stimulation of competition in a free trade environment have been responsible for the most dramatic and sustained industrial and export growth seen anywhere in the world during the last two decades."

During this time, Mr. Jordan said, our domestic exports have increased from under \$500 million in 1952 to over \$15,000 million in 1972. This growth had continued in the present year, despite various difficulties.

On commercial relations, he said the principal concern had been with restrictions on trade in textiles and garments and with the various generalised preference schemes established by many of the developed countries.

"In some cases we have had to accept new restrictions but in others we have been able to persuade our trading partners that the restrictions should be relaxed," he added.

Mr. Jordan said that Hong Kong has taken an active part in the GATT textile negotiations which are intended to produce by the end of this year a new international arrangement on trade in textiles of all fibres - cotton, wool and man-made.

"Our principal concern in this is to try and ensure that the new arrangement lays down more stringent conditions for restrictions than are applied under the existing Cotton Textiles Arrangement," he said.

Announcing that he would be leaving for London this evening on his way to Geneva for the final round of the GATT textile negotiations, Mr. Jordan said that he would be seeing British Government officials to continue the dialogue on EEC preferences and textiles policy.

/Mr. Jordan

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 8 -

Mr. Jordan said that it was proposed to expand and develop the anti-narcotics work of the Preventive Service, of which he is Commissioner, and its command structure is being strengthened.

The Service, he added, had taken on responsibility for official action in enforcement of the Copyright Ordinance, and it was intended to take positive action in the near future against the more flagrant and damaging cases of copyright malpractice.

He said that the department's Trade Investigation Branch had shared responsibility with the Police for prosecuting offences against the Merchandise Marks Ordinance. It had recently been agreed that the department should relieve the police of this responsibility.

- - - - 0 - - - -

/9

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 9 -

CONTRACT CUTS SPEED UP PUBLIC HOUSING

Work was progressing today on 13 public housing contracts which will provide homes for 153,000 people and plans are well in hand to let more than 40 other contracts within the next two years to build housing for another 500,000, the Hon. Ian Lightbody, Secretary for Housing, said today.

He told the Legislative Council that earlier completion dates had been negotiated for some contracts due to be finished in 18 months or so.

"In this way," he went on, "the completion date for a number of blocks at Lei Muk Shu Estate has been advanced by six months, that is the contract time has been reduced from 30 to 24 months. At Hing Wah Estate, the building period has been cut by eight months and at Oi Man Estate by up to six months. This will cost money of course, but extra outlay should be largely recouped by earlier rental incomes."

Mr. Lightbody said that the Housing Authority had considered selling, rather than renting some domestic units, but it was decided that this was not the time to introduce the scheme and it had been shelved.

The Authority, said Mr. Lightbody, was conscious of the need to concentrate on baking a bigger cake to achieve its housing target rather than to argue about the division of the present small cake. This called for a substantial reinforcement of the Housing Department and for the

/creation of

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 10 -

creation of new machinery for inter-departmental co-ordination and co-operation in developing the new towns.

The Construction Branch of the Department had 11 professional and 17 technical posts in April when the new department was set up. The establishment had now been expanded to 47 professional and 69 technical posts. Recruitment was going on satisfactorily and by the end of December there would be 39 professionals and 27 technicians in post.

Looking ahead, Mr. Lightbody said that the Housing Authority was conscious that it could not rely on traditional building methods if it was to achieve its housing target in time, and it was anxious to encourage contractors to employ more modern methods involving a much greater use of craneage and equipment as well as a certain amount of pre-casting.

He revealed that the British Trade Commission in Hong Kong is now planning a visit here next spring by a group of British contractors so they decide for themselves whether they would wish to participate in the building programme.

Mr. Lightbody said that since the Housing Authority started life in April this year it had settled down to the task of implementing the massive housing programme and to managing 51 estates with about 1,700,000 tenants.

It had reviewed management policy in some areas and had introduced higher income eligibility limits for waiting list applicants to compensate for the fall in money values.

/"This ensures

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 11 -

"This ensures that the sort of family for which public housing was intended when the original limits were set will continue to be eligible," he said.

Mr. Lightbody said that even at this early stage in the programme, there was a temptation to ask whether we could meet our targets by 1983. "The public housing programme does not stand alone," he said, "it is part of a very large corporate effort involving many other departments of the government, and time must be allowed for the necessary planning to be done and groundwork to be laid." An essential first stage was the setting up of Public Works Department teams in each New Town under a Project Manager.

Mr. Lightbody went on: "Some of the timing assumptions on which the 10-year housing programme rests will no doubt change in some degree as New Town development plans are further refined, but taking the 10-year period as a whole we have grounds today for expressing confidence that we have not been set (or set ourselves) an impossible task."

He said the Authority hoped to raise standards on new public housing estates to avoid creating buildings that would qualify for the "slum" label in 10 or 15 years' time. Provided additional loan funds were made available, public housing would in future be allocated at 50 square foot a head instead of at the present rate of 35 square feet.

Mr. Lightbody emphasised that no assumptions could be made at this stage as to the final outcome of the approach which the Authority would now make to the government for additional loan funds needed to implement this decision. At the same time, the Authority would have to look closely at its own cash-flow position to see if it could reduce its need for loan funds.

/He said

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 12 -

He said that improvements would be made to future units. Each would have a self-contained kitchen, and more would be built with two separate bedrooms.

Turning to the squatter problem, Mr. Lightbody said that the general shortage of housing and high rent levels had led to an increasing amount of illegal squatting. Families, if found to be genuinely homeless, were offered space in a Licensed Area, and there had been great pressure in recent months on the available areas.

The Housing Department had established several new Licensed Areas for about 9,000 people over the earlier part of this year, and areas would be developed for about 20,000 people by May 1974. The situation would be carefully watched to ensure that the department could respond to legitimate needs.

Mr. Lightbody said that as part of its contribution to the 10-year housing programme, the Hong Kong Housing Society intended to acquire urban sites now occupied by dilapidated old properties and redevelop them, and the government was prepared to use resumption powers to ensure that the Society acquired the sites.

Speaking of the private sector, Mr. Lightbody said it was making a major contribution and this year, 30,000 private dwelling units would have been built.

He went on: "I am confident that private developers will recognise the growing demand that must develop for their flats as Hong Kong families come to rate housing space higher in their priorities and in their pattern of expenditure."

/To accelerate

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 13 -

To accelerate the process of good management and to provide more scope for the self-help instincts of tenants in private multi-storey buildings, the Home Affairs Department and the New Territories Administration have fostered the growth of Mutual Aid Committees since June this year, said Mr. Lightbody. "These are a simple form of organisation of owners and occupiers and they can be set up with the minimum of formalities. In the short space of five months, about 1,000 such Committees have been set up and 195 are in various stages of formation."

Mr. Lightbody said there would inevitably be buildings where the necessary self-help instinct, and desire to improve matters would be lacking, and it might well be necessary for the government to enact legislation compelling owners to set up management committees or to appoint an administrator to look after sub-standard buildings.

"This proposition is being studied with a view to formulating practical proposals for the compulsory management of multi-storeyed buildings, where such compulsion proves to be necessary," he said.

- - - - - 0 - - - - -

/14

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 14 -

TEMPORARY COLLEGE FOR TRAINING TECHNICAL TEACHERS

Large Numbers To Be Trained

A temporary College of Education for training technical teachers will commence operations in September 1974 in the Morrison Hill Primary School.

Announcing this in Legislative Council this afternoon, the Director of Education, Mr. J. Canning said that approval was given recently for the financial commitment involved in re-provisioning the school for this purpose.

"This represents an important step forward and one which will, I am sure, be welcomed by the public," Mr. Canning said.

He pointed out that much of the expansion in secondary education outlined in the Green Paper would be in the secondary technical field.

"This will necessitate training a very large number of technical teachers, certainly more than the present facilities at the Morrison Hill Technical Institute can hope to produce."

The Director reported that enrolments at the other Colleges of Education had continued to rise. In September 1973 enrolments for full-time courses were 1,378 compared with 1,227 last year and for part-time courses were 1,666 compared with 1,278.

"Full-time courses," Mr. Canning said, "are being revised to provide a greater emphasis on preparation for teaching at secondary level and the quality of training is also being reviewed."

/Replying to

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 15 -

Replying to some specific points raised by Unofficial Members earlier in the debate on the Governor's speech, Mr. Canning said Mr. Wilson Wang was quite correct when he said that teacher training was a pre-requisite for the implementation of all educational developments.

Mr. Wang's remarks would certainly be borne in mind when the White Paper was being drafted.

The Director then answered a point raised by Mr. Li Fook-wo regarding entry qualifications for the Colleges of Education.

"The stipulated qualifications for entry are, in fact, qualifications for application for entry," said Mr. Canning.

"These are deliberately kept at a minimally acceptable level in order to cast the recruitment net as widely as possible, and in order not to miss the suitable candidate whose purely academic qualification may be slightly lower than that of others with higher 'paper' qualifications but who may be equally suited to the teaching profession.

"In practical terms, it has been found possible to raise the level of qualification for application in September 1973 while preserving this desirable flexibility, and it is anticipated that, as general educational standards in Hong Kong rise, it should be possible to make progressive further increases in qualification for application."

Technical Education

On technical education, Mr. Canning said: "Steady progress has been made during the year in the field of technical education".

/The expansion

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 16 -

The expansion of the existing technical institute at Morrison Hill by the addition of a sixth floor on the workshop block commenced earlier this month, while the first two of the new technical institutes at Kwai Chung and Kwun Tong would come into operation in September 1975.

Planning work for the third new technical institute at Cheung Sha Wan "is well advanced and is scheduled for completion in 1976. The fourth, to be at San Po Kong, is also being planned and should be opened about a year later," he added.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Canning reported that 22 new secondary school projects were completed during the past year. When fully developed these projects would provide some 21,000 additional places.

Referring to the new targets for secondary education expansion proposed by the Board of Education, Mr. Canning said that Mr. Wilson Wang "seems to have mis-read the Board's interim target which was to provide places for 80 per cent of the relevant age group by 1981 or within eight years."

A new code of aid was introduced during the year for all government aided secondary schools.

"This new code of aid has unified the older codes of aid for grant and subsidised secondary schools and means increased government subventions. "Uniform staffing and salary structures for all government and aided secondary schools have now been introduced," he said.

/The Director

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 17 -

The Director was sure that these measures would raise the standards of all secondary schools in the public sector and help to achieve the improvement of the quality of education in these schools.

Primary Education

Turning to primary education, Mr. Canning noted that the expansion of educational television, the conversion of selected government primary schools into unisessional operation and the greater use of experimentation with teaching projects were steps taken to improve quality in primary education in the past year.

Emphasis at the primary level, he said, was upon improvements in quality since free primary education for all who require it was already an accomplished fact.

"Among the pilot experimental schemes is the integrated teaching in six government, subsidised and private primary schools. The object of the experiment is to attempt to move away from standard classroom teaching to a more pupil-centred informal approach.

In his view, primary education "is the foundation on which all other forms of education stand and we cannot be complacent if our system is to be sufficiently flexible to meet the future needs of our society."

Referring to the Secondary School Entrance Examination, the Director said the Board of Education stressed the need to minimise its undesirable effects and to widen the basis for the selective allocation to secondary schools.

/Noting that

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 18 -

Noting that 47.5 per cent of children sitting for the examination this year were allocated secondary school places compared with 44.2 per cent last year, Mr. Canning said he agreed with the Board and could not see how the examination could be dispensed with in the foreseeable future, as the fairest method of selection for secondary school places.

"Steps have been taken to make papers of the examination progressively easier, however, so that the excessive cramming and coaching which many children have to undergo during the final year of their primary education solely directed towards this examination, will be rendered unnecessary.

"While this is so I do not rule out the possibility that factors other than performance in the S.S.E.E. might become components in the selection process.

"Assessment of pupils' ability by schools is an obvious choice of a factor which might be used in this way. These matters will, I am sure, continue to engage the attention of the Board," the Director said.

In reply to a point raised by Mr. Wilson Wang on whether pupils in primary schools who have difficulty in keeping up with their studies could be allowed to repeat classes, Mr. Canning said that repetition was already allowed, within certain limits, in primary schools.

"Pupils are allowed seven years to complete the six-year course at the discretion of the school concerned in classes Primary 1 to Primary 5. Repetition is not allowed in Primary 6 nor are pupils allowed to take the Secondary Schools Entrance Examination a second time," Mr. Canning said.

/He pointed

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 19 -

He pointed out that if wholesale repetition were allowed pupils might, if they were not fully satisfied with their allocation, wish to repeat Primary 6 in the hope of securing a higher place in the order of merit.

"This to the extent it was allowed would delay pupils in Primary 5 awaiting promotion their chance of taking the examination in their due turn. Repercussions of this would affect the whole primary school system," he added.

Combined School Certificate

Mr. Canning told Council that "a quiet revolution has taken place in recent years in our examination at the school certificate level."

Candidates, he said, would have the option, under certain safeguards, of taking the examination in English or Chinese.

"Next year will witness the first examination of the new, combined Hong Kong Certificate of Education; the first step in a three-year process aimed at achieving complete identity of syllabuses and question papers, irrespective of the language medium which the candidate may choose to use."

He was sure that this advance would prove to be very much in the best interests of both the candidates and the community.

Special Education

On special education, Mr. Canning said ten new special schools for handicapped children would open next year. Thirty additional special classes in government primary schools and 22 special classes in aided primary schools opened in September this year.

/"This is

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 20 -

"This is the first time that voluntary organisations which are well established in the field of ordinary education have provided special education classes in their schools," he added.

The general aim of special education, he went on, was to provide those unfortunate children suffering from some disability of mind or body, the education necessary to develop them as well-adjusted individuals capable of leading a wholly or partially self-supporting life.

"Teacher training for special education, diagnostic and remedial services, and the availability of places in both special schools and special classes in ordinary schools are all in the process of expansion in accordance with the five-year development plan for Special Education approved by Honourable Members last year."

This plan, Mr. Canning said, would provide an additional 4,000 places for severely handicapped children in special classes in ordinary schools.

In conclusion, Mr. Canning said that although the past year "has given further evidence of real and positive advance in the scope and the quality of the education services provided at public expense there is no complacency in my department."

He emphasised that "much needs to be done if we are to satisfy in full the needs and aspirations of our community. This we shall strive to do. It is my belief that the recently published report of the Board of Education provides a sound basis for further planning in the secondary field and that the White Paper which will result from public discussion and further deliberations will provide us with a programme for expansion in the secondary field which the children of our community need and deserve."

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 21 -

ACTIVE ROLE FOR MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPT. IN DRUG FIGHT

Dr. Choa Says Methadone Pilot Study Will Yield Far-Reaching Results

The Director of Medical and Health Services, Dr. the Hon. G.H. Choa, today assured the Legislative Council that his department would play an "active role" from now on in the treatment of drug addiction in Hong Kong.

In anticipation of further responsibilities, he proposed to set up a separate division within the department to deal with narcotics and drug administration, including the organisation of treatment and research.

The division would be headed by an officer not only familiar with the drug problem, but also experienced in health administration, supported by specialist staff, including a statistician.

Dr. Choa was confident that the department's three-year pilot study on methadone maintenance would have "far-reaching results" that would greatly influence thinking on what future action should be taken in Hong Kong.

The study was aimed at two main objectives:

- * To determine the extent to which an out-patient scheme of methadone maintenance was acceptable to addicts.
- * To find out among those attending regularly whether it would be possible eventually to withdraw the substitute methadone so that finally they could be entirely weaned off all drugs.

Dr. Choa said the scheme had begun well, with the 550 volunteers originally planned for three years already exceeded in less than a year, and provisions approved for another 1,000 volunteers in the next two years.

/He described

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 22 -

He described as "encouraging" a tendency already noted that the majority of those dropping out did so because of a lack of motivation rather than a difficulty experienced in medical or social rehabilitation.

Dr. Choa took some time to explain that the New Territories and outlying islands did not lack a casualty service, because a system of transport by helicopter existed to convey urgent cases with the utmost speed to major hospitals in Hong Kong and Kowloon, where there were facilities for their total care.

He felt that these facilities -- embracing staff, special surgical equipment, laboratory and X-ray services -- should be provided in urban hospitals so as to serve the maximum number of people in densely-populated areas, since they could not be duplicated everywhere.

Dr. Choa said the report of the Medical Development Advisory Committee recommended that the accident service be reorganised, and the New Territories and outlying islands were included in this plan.

Once implemented, it would introduce improvements to the present service by providing for rescue, first-aid and transport at the site of accidents, and a number of accident centres distributed on a geographic basis -- with designated accident centres receiving the more severe, and accident centres the less serious cases.

In another reference to the report of the Medical Development Advisory Committee, Dr. Choa drew the attention of the Council to the proposal for the regionalisation of hospital and clinic services on a geographical basis.

/Regionalisation

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 23 -

Regionalisation meant that if a patient had to "go all the way," he would first attend a general clinic, would then be referred to a specialist clinic, and subsequently, depending on the condition and nature of his illness, admitted either to a district or a regional hospital.

There was a further bi-directional flow of patients between a district and a regional hospital. Patients requiring more sophisticated treatment would be referred from a district to a regional hospital, while patients already past the acute stage of their illness could be transferred from the regional to the district hospital for convalescence.

"With such a plan, all beds in government and assisted hospitals will be used to the maximum," Dr. Choa emphasised.

Another advantage was that each region could be administered as an individual unit by an officer based in a regional office, and not in the headquarters of the department. This formed part of the streamlining of the administration of the medical and health services which he intended to introduce so as to effectively implement the recommendations of the 10-year development plan.

Of family planning, Dr. Choa said he had in mind the creation of a division in the department for family health services, headed by an officer with experience of all aspects of family planning and maternal and child health.

The ultimate aim of the recent integration of family planning within the department's maternal and child health service was to enable "all those who wish to practise family planning, and relieve themselves of the burden of excessive child bearing, to do so conveniently and efficiently at a clinic nearest to their homes."

- - - - 0 - - - -

/24

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 24 -

PRESSURE FOR EQUAL TREATMENT IN EEC TO CONTINUE

An assurance that pressure will be maintained to secure equal treatment for Hong Kong's textile and footwear exports in the EEC's generalised preference scheme was given at today's Legislative Council meeting by the Director of Commerce and Industry, Mr. David Jordan.

In reply to a question from Mr. T.K. Ann, he said that the British Government had made very clear to the other member states of the European Economic Community that it regards discrimination against Hong Kong as no longer acceptable.

"I am very well aware of the dissatisfaction with the present situation among Hong Kong textile and footwear manufacturers and exporters," Mr. Jordan said.

"We shall continue to press not for special treatment but for equal treatment for Hong Kong with the object of seeking this discrimination removed by 1975."

Mr. Jordan said that the British Government had reached the conclusion that it would not have been able to get agreement on the inclusion of Hong Kong's textiles and footwear in the scheme for 1974.

"However strongly we may feel about this issue -- and we have made it clear in London that we do feel very strongly about it -- I think we must admit that it must be left to Her Majesty's Government to decide the tactics of the operation," he added.

/"That is

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 25 -

"That is not to say that we shall not continue to press our views and to put forward any further representations we may receive from the industrial and trading interests in Hong Kong that are affected by this situation."

Mr. Jordan said that, although it may seem cold comfort to the textile and footwear industries, there were other aspects of the scheme that are from Hong Kong's point of view to be improved in 1974.

The average quota levels would be increased by some 40 per cent, and there will be a reduction in the number of commodities subject to the tariff quota system.

One of these, locks and padlocks, involved significant Hong Kong trade.

In addition, the individual country cut-off points within the tariff quotas have been raised from 20 to 30 per cent for 14 items, and seven of these are of particular significance to Hong Kong in trade terms.

These include travel goods, imitation jewellery, primary cells and batteries, portable electric lamps, radio receivers and parts, tape recorders and vacuum flasks.

- - - - 0 - - - -

/26

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 26 -

TAX EXEMPT RATE ON INTEREST RAISED TO FOUR PER CENT

The Legislative Council today approved a resolution to further increase the tax exemption rate of interest from three-and-a-half per cent to four per cent.

In moving the motion, the Financial Secretary, the Hon. C.P. Haddon-Cave, noted that the tax exempt rate was last changed in 1968 when it was raised to three-and-a-half per cent from three per cent.

"Because of the general rise in interest rates there is a good case for a further concession, given the practical link between the exempt rate and that paid on saving accounts," he said.

He pointed out that there were two increases in the banks' interest rates during August, and it was felt that small savers should receive some benefit from the higher rates without too much delay.

"The banks all raised their interest on accounts to four per cent on September 1 and it is logical that this rate should be allowed to continue until further notice," he added.

The Financial Secretary explained that under the proviso to Section 28 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance, no tax was charged on any interest paid, or payable, by the government or a bank which accrued at a rate not exceeding three-and-a-half per cent.

- - - - 0 - - - -

/27

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 27 -

NEW MEASURES TO EASE SHORTAGE OF "FIRST AIDERS"

The Legislative Council today voted in favour of new measures aimed at bringing quick relief to the shortage of trained first aid personnel in Hong Kong industry.

In putting forward new regulations made by the Commissioner of Labour on November 2, the Secretary for Social Services, Mr. F.K. Li, pointed out that the number of "first aiders" in industry was now more than 30 per cent below strength, and the situation would get much worse in May next year when laws would come into force requiring first-aiders on building sites.

The new regulations give the Commissioner of Labour the power to recognise a wider range of qualifications for first aid personnel, making it easier for industry to recruit the trained workers needed.

The regulations also enable the Commissioner of Labour to give recognition to persons who are trained in first aid by the Auxiliary Medical Service, the Civil Aid Services and other such bodies.

Formerly the definition "first aiders" only referred to those who were either registered nurses or trained by the St. John's Ambulance Association.

The Secretary for Social Services, Mr. F.K. Li, told the Legislative Council today that the regulations made provision for first aid facilities in registable workplaces, and required that the first aid boxes be in the control of a team of responsible persons, including at least one trained person for every 100 workers.

/The total

The total number of first aiders required to work in local industry was estimated at more than 3,000. "But there are at present only about 2,000 trained by the St. John's Ambulance Association, and a very small number of registered nurses working in factories," said Mr. Li.

This shortfall would become even more acute when the Construction Site (Safety) Regulations become effective on May 1, 1974. Then another 2,000 first aiders would be required for construction sites alone.

The new regulations are one of a series planned by the Labour Department to improve safety measures in industry.

At the same time, the Legislative Council also approved a number of minor changes to legislation dealing with the employment of women and young persons in industry, to make clear beyond doubt the intention of the law.

The alterations to the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Amendment) Regulations made by the Commissioner of Labour on November 5 involve no changes in principle.

Mr. Li explained that, among other things, the amendment regulations clarified that the employment of women and young persons on more than six days in any week was prohibited.

"Women and young persons are also prohibited from being employed on their rest days as well as outside the fixed period of employment except for permissible overtime," he said. "No proprietor is allowed to require or permit them to work during their mandatory intervals for rest or meals."

The amendment regulations permit a proprietor to change the rest day of women and young persons in one week, and then revert to the original rest day in the week immediately following without seeking permission from the Commissioner of Labour.

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 29 -

STRONG SUPPORT FOR LEGALISING OFF-COURSE BETTING

Unofficial members of the Legislative Council have expressed strong support for the government's decision to permit the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club to operate off-course betting on horse races.

Speaking on behalf of his unofficial colleagues on the Betting Duty (Amendment) Bill 1973, the Hon. Szeto Wai described the move as "sensible" and said it was an anomaly that off-course betting should remain illegal when betting at the race course was legal.

Unless and until some proper method was devised of legalising off-course betting, the present illegal betting would continue, he said.

"I agree therefore -- and my unofficial colleagues go along with me -- that the provisions of this Bill represent a sensible approach to the problem by providing proper facilities whereby all those who wish to place a bet on the horses can do so under properly supervised conditions."

Mr. Szeto felt that the majority of the community were not opposed to taking this sensible step which, after all, did no more than recognise the facts of the situation.

Furthermore, he added, the Bill did not seek to introduce any new form of gambling.

The Bill will enable the Jockey Club to conduct off-course totalizator or pari-mutual betting on horse races organised by the Club.

- - - - 0 - - - -

/30

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 30 -

LONG SERVICE MEDALS FOR FIREMEN

The Director of Fire Services, Mr. A.E.H. Wood, will present Long Service Medals to 163 regular and Auxiliary members of the Fire Services tomorrow (Thursday).

The presentation ceremony, which will begin at 10 a.m., will be held at the Tsim Sha Tsui Fire Station, Canton Road.

The recipients comprise 147 regular members who will receive the Colonial Fire Services Long Service Medal and 16 Auxiliary members who will receive the Civil Defence Long Service Medal.

.....

Note to Editors: You are invited to send a reporter and/
or photographer to cover the presentation at
the Tsim Sha Tsui Fire Station, Canton Road,
on Thursday (November 29) at 10 a.m.

- - - - 0 - - - -

/31

Wednesday, November 28, 1973

- 31 -

KWAI CHUNG INCINERATION PLANT CONTRACT

Note to Editors: A \$61.5 million contract will be signed tomorrow (Thursday) for the supply and installation of plant and equipment for the Kwai Chung incineration plant which, when operational, will be able to dispose of at least 900 tons of municipal refuse a day.

Mr. J.A. Wallace, Principal Government Electrical and Mechanical Engineer, will sign the contract on behalf of the government. Signing on behalf of the Company which has been awarded the contract will be Mr. J.W. Ashley, a Director of the Power Plant Division of Clarke Chapman-John Thompson Ltd. of England.

Representatives of the media will be welcome to cover the signing. It will take place at 12 noon in the offices of P.W.D.'s Electrical and Mechanical Office in Caroline Hill Road, 9th floor. There will be an opportunity to ask questions about the project.

- - - - 0 - - - -

/32

- 32 -

BILLS PASSED

Six Bills completed their passage in the Legislative Council today and became law.

They were: the Government Lotteries (Amendment and Validation) Bill 1973; the Supplementary Appropriation (1972-73) Bill 1973; the District Court (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1973; the Interpretation and General Clauses (Amendment) Bill 1973; the Betting Duty (Amendment) Bill 1973; and the Railways (Amendment) Bill 1973.

Three other Bills -- the Cross-Harbour Tunnel (Amendment) Bill; the Law Revision (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill; and the Po Leung Kuk Bill, received their first and second readings.

Four annual departmental reports were tabled. These were by the Commissioner of Inland Revenue, the Director of Broadcasting, the Commissioner for Resettlement and the Registrar General.

- - - - O - - - -

LEGCO DEBATE CONTINUES TOMORROW

Six more Official Members will speak at the Legislative Council meeting tomorrow in reply to points raised by their Unofficial colleagues during the debate on the motion of thanks for the Governor's opening address on October 17.

They are: Mr. J.J. Robson, Secretary for the Environment; Mr. D. Alers-Jones, District Commissioner, New Territories; Mr. A.S. Robertson, Director of Public Works; Mr. D.C. Bray, Secretary for Home Affairs; Mr. C.P. Haddon-Cave, Financial Secretary and Mr. D.T.E. Roberts, Colonial Secretary.

Five Official Members spoke at today's meeting.

- - - - O - - - -

Release time: 8.30 p.m.