



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
GARDEN ROAD, 5th-8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,
HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

Friday, March 14, 1997

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Government response to enquiries on Joint Declaration	1
Financial Secretary's transcript	2
Series of new initiatives to improve basic education	3
Funding for language benchmark pilot exercise welcomed	5
Joint efforts to ensure gas safety	7
Govt opposes Member's Bill on additional statutory holiday	9
Anti-drug prevention continues to focus on youths	9
Tsuen Wan Environmental Resource Centre contract awarded	12
Western Harbour Crossing Regulation gazetted	13
Fee revision proposed for fire services certificates	13
Improved road network to benefit Peng Chau residents	14
Reprovisioning of boy's home to Sha Tin	15
Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee established	16
Results of registration exams for pharmacists announced	17
Air quality report for February released	17
Parents also Appreciate Teachers' Drive kicks off	18
Fresh water cut in Ap Lei Chau	19

Government response to enquiries on Joint Declaration

In response to press enquiries about the role of the British Government in monitoring the implementation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration after July 1, 1997, a Government House spokesman said:

"The Joint Declaration is a binding international treaty registered with the United Nations. It contains solemn commitments by China to Britain that Hong Kong will be run according to the One Country Two Systems formula at least until 2047.

"It provides, for example, for the continuing existence of the Joint Liaison Group until January 1, 2000 to conduct consultations on the implementation of the Joint Declaration. Such consultations will be meaningless unless Britain was monitoring the implementation of the treaty.

"For all these reasons, any suggestion that Britain has no right to do so is therefore extraordinary."

End

Financial Secretary's transcript

* * * * *

Following is the remarks by the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang at the media session at the Legislative Council today (Friday):

Tsang: May be I'll say a few words in English. I'm just following the tradition. I, immediate following the delivery of the Budget Speech, I met members of the public, I also met Legislative Council, and I also tried to talk as much as possible with members of the public. And today is the function where I met members of Legislative Council. And I reported to members that I was most grateful to them for various suggestions they made to me on the preparation of this year's Budget. And indeed, of the 158 proposals they put to me during the preparation stage, we have accepted 119 of them, 119 of them. I'm sure that the reponse that we have received so far is due to no small measure to the suggestions made by members on this. We've discussed, on a whole, three subjects this morning. Members raised the question of CSSA payment for the elderly. I have tried to explain to members that this year the welfare spending would be increased by over nine percent in real terms as compared with 1996-97 and indeed on welfare spending we have increased quite rapidly, substantially above the average growth rate of public services as a whole. But members still felt that we should do more for the elderly CSSA payment. And I agreed with them we should apply our resources and join forces and consider what is the appropriate level of improvement in that regard and we can consider in the context of preparation of the next year's Budget. We also talked about the question of speculation of property market. On that question, I assured members my colleagues and I in the Administration will pay particular attention to this area and if there are signs that speculations going rampant in any particular sector, we will have no reservation in taking necessary measure to counter it. The third area we discussed is our general principle of financial management. I explained clearly our principle of not allowing public expenditure to grow beyond the growth rate of the economy as a whole. We explained that it was very important to the Hong Kong's prosperity all our growth forecast is based on this principle. We must be very careful not to undermine it in any particular way. I think generally members agreed to it. It's only actual application of this principle that they believe that we should have greater flexibility. But this is an area from our point of view is fundamentally important. It also establishes Hong Kong's credibility as an international financial market. Well, thank you very much.

End

Series of new initiatives to improve basic education

* * * * *

The Government will conduct a pilot exercise at a cost of \$15 million in 1997-98 financial year for establishment of language benchmarks for teachers with a view to enhancing the language standards and professionalism of teachers, and in turn, the quality of teaching and learning in schools as proposed in the Education Commission Report No. 6(ECR No. 6).

Speaking at a press conference today (Friday) on the education expenditure in 1997-98, the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, said that the pilot language benchmarking exercise, to be co-ordinated by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) and administered by the Hong Kong Examinations Authority and Education Department, was expected to be completed in 1998.

The exercise, one of the new initiatives taken by the Government to improve language proficiency of students, will finalise benchmarks for English, Chinese and Putonghua languages, and assess the re-training needs for teachers.

Mr Wong noted that new teachers entering the profession in two years would be required to meet the language benchmarks while serving teachers would be expected to meet the requirements in about 10 years' time.

Mr Wong pointed out that four new initiatives would be taken in 1997-98 to enhance language proficiency of students. Apart from the pilot language benchmarking exercise, the government would also extend the English and Chinese Extensive Reading Schemes to all levels of primary and secondary schools, increase the provision of intensive English courses to Secondary Six and Seven students and set up a Language Resources Centre.

The Government has taken a series of measures to implement the recommendations in ECR No.6. These include :

- * setting up the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR);
- * enrolling 110 000 students from 278 schools in Chinese and English Extensive Reading Schemes in 1996-97;
- * enrolling 13 900 students in Putonghua summer courses in 1996;
- * developing Putonghua syllabus, and introducing Putonghua as separate subject in Primary one, Secondary one and four in 1998 before it becomes a Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination subject in 2000.

He emphasised that students' language proficiency was only one of the seven main areas of improvements to enhance the development of basic education. The other six areas, namely, teaching and learning environment, support services for new arrival children, quality of school education, special education, civic education and information technology education, would also be enhanced by implementing new measures.

Improvements in the seven main areas will involve a non-recurrent expenditure of \$4.145 billion and recurrent expenditure of \$929 million a year. The estimated expenditure for 1997-98 is \$538 million.

On the information technology education, the Financial Secretary has in his budget proposed to spend \$300 million over the next two years for the provisions of multi-media computers to all public sector primary schools, an information technology learning centre in each prevocational and secondary technical schools, and computer training courses to teachers.

Mr Wong noted that the Government would ensure the optimal use of the information technology facilities, and further develop the information technology education in collaboration with the following concerned parties :

- * the SCOLAR to study how to use information technology to enhance effective language learning;
- * the Curriculum Development Council to study how to use information technology to enhance effective learning in other subjects; and
- * teacher education providers to study how to enhance information technology training for teachers;

He said the information technology would be reviewed on a regular basis and funds would be sought, where necessary, to upgrade or increase information technology facilities in schools.

The Financial Secretary has also proposed to increase the maximum deduction for taxpayers claiming expenses in respect of fees for training courses attended at approved institutions by 66.7 per cent, from \$12,000 to \$20,000 a year.

Welcoming the proposal, Mr Wong said that it was encouraging and this reflected that the Government was very concerned about the development of continuing education.

The expenditure on education in the 1997-98 financial year is \$45.15 billion, representing 18.2 per cent, or the largest share, of the total public expenditure. This also represents an increase of 7.7 per cent in real terms, which is higher than the 6.9 per cent increase of the total public expenditure.

The expenditure in basic education is \$30.669 billion or 67.7 per cent of the total expenditure on education. This represents an increase of 10.3 per cent in real terms over that of the current year.

End

Funding for language benchmark pilot exercise welcomed

* * * * *

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ), Professor Felice Lieh Mak, welcomes the news that the Government has approved \$15 million to implement a language benchmark pilot exercise.

"Language benchmarking will not only help to enhance the language standards but also the professionalism of teachers, and in turn the quality of teaching and learning in schools," Professor Lieh Mak said.

As a starting point, ACTEQ has embarked on a benchmark study for the following categories of teachers:

- * teachers of English in the lower secondary forms;
- * primary school teachers using Chinese as the medium of instruction; and
- * primary school teachers teaching Putonghua.

In view of the impact of the benchmark exercise on teachers, a pilot exercise will be conducted in 1997-98, involving assessment of a selected number of teachers for the above categories, as well as the finalisation of the benchmarks.

The assessment will include written and oral tests as well as the language performance of teachers in the classroom. The Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA) will administer the written and oral examinations while the Education Department will be responsible for the classroom language observation element.

"HKEA is glad to accept the Government's invitation for it to administer the pilot assessment, which is a new and challenging area of work for the HKEA," Chairman of the HKEA, Mr Chow Ming-kuen, said.

Three subject committees will be formed for the pilot benchmark assessment to deal with the three languages: English, Chinese and Putonghua respectively.

About 1,200 teachers will be randomly selected from different types of schools to participate in the pilot exercise.

In order to ensure that the finalised benchmarks are reliable and appropriate, both new and serving teachers, with different qualifications and lengths of teaching experience will be selected.

The pilot written assessments will probably take place in the second quarter of 1998, whilst the classroom language observation will take place earlier, probably starting from the third quarter of this year.

ACTEQ proposed to implement the language benchmarks, once finalised, on new teachers as soon as possible, and the earliest date would be 1999. As for serving teachers, the Education Commission Report No. 6 recommended that they might be allowed 10 years to reach the benchmarks.

During the public consultation with teachers and the education sector held by ACTEQ in July 1996, there was general acceptance of the need for language benchmarking for enhancement of the language standard of teachers, as well as the proposed implementation time frame on new and serving teachers.

ACTEQ will, based on the experience of the pilot exercise, advise on the actual implementation timetable as well as the qualifications of teachers which will allow them to be considered for exemption from benchmarking.

End

Joint efforts to ensure gas safety

* * * * *

The Government and the gas industry have worked together effectively to ensure the safe supply and use of gas in Hong Kong and this successful partnership has its origins in three aspects of Government policy, the Acting Secretary for Economic Services, Mr Leo Kwan, said today (Friday).

Speaking at the opening of a symposium on risk and safety management in gas industry, Mr Kwan noted first of all the long-standing policy of relying on the private sector to assess the local market in supplying gas.

"This has encouraged substantial investments in the gas supply market by companies having a long-term commitment to Hong Kong and a responsible attitude towards risk and safety management," he said.

The second aspect was the Government's policy of encouraging the provision of piped gas supply to new domestic buildings.

"The policy was adopted in 1982 and since then the percentage of domestic buildings provided with piped gas supply has increased from about 30 per cent to nearly 70 per cent.

"In parallel, the safety of many thousands of gas water heaters has been improved through replacement and upgrading. These actions have undoubtedly made a major contribution to gas safety in Hong Kong," he said.

In addition, the Government has put in place comprehensive gas safety legislation to ensure public safety without being unduly involved in the business operations of gas supply companies, according to Mr Kwan.

"The Gas Safety Ordinance, which was introduced in 1991, controls, in the interests of safety, the importation, manufacture, storage, transport, supply and use of town gas, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), natural gas or any mixture of these.

"To further strengthen the ordinance, amendments were made last year to require the proper maintenance of gas installations by their owners and to deter damage to underground gas pipes by works contractors, who now have to follow a code of practice," he added.

Mr Kwan stressed the Government's commitment to improving gas safety in many other ways through proactive administrative measures.

"The Gas Authority (who is the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services) adopts a risk assessment approach to minimise potential risks associated with gas installations.

"This requires major gas supply companies to submit Safety Case and Quantitative Risk Assessment reports as part of the requirements for registration of their gas terminals, to demonstrate that the risks associated with their operations are controlled within the Government's risk guidelines," explained Mr Kwan.

Also speaking at the Symposium, the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services, Mr Hugh Phillipson, said a fair balance had been achieved between self-regulation by the gas industry and the exercise of Government control.

Moreover, he said the adoption of a risk-based approach had ensured that all risk potentials would be evaluated at the planning and design stage of a gas installation, and cost-effective risk reduction measures would be carried out as necessary.

He noted that his department had adopted such an approach in working with other departments on the feasibility of introducing gas powered vehicles.

In this regard, the Government is working closely with trade operators and the LPG industry on operational and technical matters for a trial run on LPG taxis, he added.

Both Mr Kwan and Mr Phillipson acknowledged the support and co-operation given by the gas industry in the process of achieving high standards of safety, and called for their continued support towards the cause.

Jointly organised by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers and the Institution of Gas Engineers of the United Kingdom, the day-long symposium aimed to promote an exchange of experience in the safety management of gas plants and systems. About 330 engineers and operators from the gas industry participated in the event.

End

Govt opposes Member's Bill on additional statutory holiday

* * * * *

The Government does not support the Member's Bill gazetted today (Friday) by the Honourable Lau Chin-shek, which seeks to amend the Employment Ordinance by adding May 1 as a statutory holiday.

A Government spokesman said: "Statutory holiday is a matter which affects the interests of both employers and employees. As such, it has to be carefully considered and should only proceed on the basis of a consensus reached through tripartite discussion amongst Government, employer and employee representatives at the Labour Advisory Board."

"The Hon Lau Chin-shek's Bill is an unilateral attempt to amend labour legislation without going through this well-established tripartite consultative process. As a matter of principle, the Government will not support any bill which has not been considered by the Labour Advisory Board in the first instance," the spokesman said.

"The proposal to add one statutory holiday on a permanent basis applies to all employees in the private sector and would therefore affect production and work schedules in all business establishments in all economic sectors. This will add to the cost of doing business," he explained.

He went on to say that the list of general holidays for 1997 had been decided and published, so we should not attempt to make any change now.

"In fact, under the existing Employment Ordinance, employers may make May 1 one of the two floating statutory holidays," the spokesman added.

End

Anti-drug prevention continues to focus on youths

* * * * *

The Action Committee Against Narcotics' (ACAN) Preventive Education and Publicity (PE & P) Sub-committee today (Friday) endorsed a \$2.5 million PE & P Programme for 1997/98 and the Report of the Task Group on Preventive Education Strategy.

The new Chairman of the PE & P Sub-committee, Mr Justein Wong Chun said: "Notwithstanding the drop in the number of young drug abusers reported, ACAN's PE & P strategy for 1997/98 would continue to focus on the youth drug abuse problem and the important role parents could play to steer their children away from drugs."

"The anti-drug programme will comprise a wide variety of educational, entertainment and sports activities with active support and participation from District Boards, District Fight Crime Committees, voluntary agencies, educational institutions, Government Departments, the media and private organizations."

Having regard to the recommendations of the Task Group on Preventive Education Strategy, Mr Wong said the following PE & P themes would be adopted for the year 1997/98:

- * to educate young persons that there is no difference between "hard" and "soft" drugs in terms of harmful effects, and to better equip them with refusal skills;
- * to alert parents the importance of strengthening parent-child relationship and the role that they could play to steer their children away from drugs;
- * to encourage people, in particular young people, to adopt a drug-free life, and to point out that whatever their problems may be, there are other alternatives to drug.

Components of the PE & P programme include, among others,

- * Drug Education Talks and a new video for the talks
- * Anti-drug Homepage on the Internet
- * Mobile Publicity Unit
- * Workshops and Seminars
- * Joint Projects with the Electronic Media
- * District Anti-drug campaigns

Mr Wong said: "Drug education talks will continue to be given by the School Talk Team of the Narcotics Division of the Government Secretariat for secondary and primary 6 school students and parents of secondary school students.

"A new video featuring different refusal skills in various real-life situations will be produced to enhance the contents of the drug education talks for secondary school students.

"The video will be produced such that the presenter of the talk can pause at suitable moments to motivate students to think about what are the possible refusal skills/alternatives to drugs before proceeding to view the advice in the video."

The allocation of \$2.5 million for ACAN's PE & P programmes for 1997/98 represents an increase of almost 12 per cent over the last year's allocation.

ACAN's PE&P Programme will continue to be supplemented by the central Anti-drug Publicity Campaign implemented by the Information Services Department. The publicity campaign will promote a drug-free lifestyle for young persons and educate them that there is no difference between "hard" and "soft" drugs in terms of harmful effects.

The campaign would comprise three new Television Announcements in the Public Interest (TV APIs), radio APIs, general posters and poster advertisements at MTR stations.

Meanwhile at the Research Sub-committee meeting held on March 12 (Wednesday), it was decided that an amount of \$2 million would be allocated to carry out researches, which include, among others,

- * A study on the factors affecting drug abuse trend in Hong Kong
- * A study on social cost of drug abuse in Hong Kong
- * A study to look into the situation of drug overdose in Hong Kong
- * A study on the employment problems of the Society for the Rehabilitation of Offenders clients who had ever taken drug and
- * Needs of ex-drug addicts.

Tertiary institutes and interested organizations would be invited to submit detailed proposals on these surveys.

Likewise the Treatment and Rehabilitation Sub-committee had issued the Three-Year Plan setting out the "Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Service in Hong Kong" to the non-government organizations, tertiary institutes and District Fight Crime Committees for information in early March. This document would provide a useful reference point for planning future provision of services for drug abusers.

End

Tsuen Wan Environmental Resource Centre contract awarded

* * * * *

The contract for the provision of management and operation service for the Tsuen Wan Environmental Resource Centre (TWERC) of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) was awarded today (Friday) to the Conservancy Association (CA).

The centre will be EPD's second resource centre to provide the general public with easy access to environmental information.

Speaking at the contract-signing ceremony, the Chairman of the Environmental Campaign Committee, Mr Ronnie Wong, said that the TWERC would be the first environmental resource centre in Hong Kong to be operated by a Green Group.

"The centre will enhance the environmental awareness of the community within the Urban West Catchment and also help extensively in expanding the geographical coverage of environmental education facilities in Hong Kong," he said.

He pointed out that under the contract, CA would operate the TWERC for two years.

"The two-year management and operation of the TWERC would cost about HK\$1,369,000, to be paid out of the Environment and Conservation Fund," he said.

Also attending today's ceremony was the Community Relations Officer of the Environmental Protection Department, Ms Mabel Mak, who estimated that the TWERC would serve about one million people in the district.

"We intend to set up more environmental resource centres in the future and are actively identifying possible sites throughout the territory," she said.

She pointed out that the TWERC was converted from a traditional Hakka style Chinese residential building in Tak Wah Park which was a government declared monument.

With the renovation cost funded by the Woo Wheelock Green Fund and the Environment and Conservation Fund, renovation work of the building has been completed with the assistance of the Architectural Services Department.

When opened in mid-1997, the TWERC will be the first ERC installed with World Wide Web to enable teachers and the public to access to environmental information through the Internet.

End

Western Harbour Crossing Regulation gazetted

* * * * *

The Western Harbour Crossing Regulation was published in the Government Gazette today (Friday).

A Government spokesman said the Regulation set out the obligations and responsibilities of the Western Harbour Tunnel Company Limited in operating the Western Harbour Crossing.

"With the aim of ensuring the safe and efficient operation of the tunnel, it covers such aspects as the safe and continuous provision of facilities, safety of persons using the tunnel, lighting and visibility in the tunnel, noise generated by ventilation equipment, powers of company staff and records required to be kept by the Company," the spokesman added.

End

Fee revision proposed for fire services certificates

* * * * *

The Government proposes to revise the fee for the issue of a Fire Services Certificate (FSC) in respect of matters relating to fire risks or fire precautions.

The Fire Services Department (Reports and Certificates) (Amendment)(No. 2) Regulation 1997, which sets out the new fees, is gazetted today (Friday).

Under the Fire Services Department (Reports and Certificates) Regulations, the Director of Fire Services may issue an FSC to any person applying for one in writing, and upon payment of the appropriate fee, in respect of matters relating to fire risks or fire precautions connected with any premises, vessels or other property.

A Government spokesman said that it was Government policy that fees should in general be set at levels sufficient to recover the full cost of providing the services.

He noted that the existing fee of \$280, set at nominal level, has been in force since November 1994.

"The Director of Audit has observed that the existing fees for FSCs are substantially below cost. He recommended in April 1995 that the Fire Services Department (FSD) should carry out a detailed costing exercise for the various certificates and consider achieving the objective of full cost recovery, in line with Government policy.

"The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) endorsed the Director of Audit's recommendations and suggested that full cost recovery may be achieved by phases and that fees be calculated on the basis of the size and purpose of the premises," the spokesman said.

He said that FSD had conducted a costing review, taking into account the PAC's recommendations.

"Based on the costing results, we propose to introduce a new fee structure to cater for different types of FSCs, and a scale which takes account of the size of new buildings and food premises," the spokesman said.

He said that to lessen the impact, the full cost recovery would be phased in by a five-step annual increase.

"Fees would be revised to achieve cost recovery of 20 per cent this year, and then 40 per cent, 60 per cent, 80 per cent and 100 per cent in each of the following years," he explained.

"We propose to introduce phase one of the increase with effect from April 25 this year," he added.

The spokesman said that the proposed fee increases would have little impact on the trades concerned, such as the food business, as the fees are one-off expenditures and represent only a small proportion of their operating costs.

The Amendment Regulation will be tabled in the Legislative Council on March 19.

End

Improved road network to benefit Peng Chau residents

* * * * *

The Territory Development Department has proposed a series of road and improvement works in Peng Chau to cope with the increasing population on the island by the turn of the century.

A spokesman for the department said today (Friday) that the project would include building new footpaths and new roads along the south-west coast and Tung Wan, putting up retaining walls, reconstructing existing roads, and laying associated drainage works.

"With the improved road network, the island will become much more accessible to the residents and holiday-makers. Moreover, larger fire engines can get to the scenes more swiftly in times of emergency," the spokesman said.

The island has a population of about 4,000, which is estimated to grow to 5,000 by the year 2000.

The spokesman added that the construction works would begin in mid-1998 and take 30 months to complete.

Details of the proposed works are published in the Government Gazette today. Any person who wishes to object to the works, or the use or both, should send his objection in writing to the Secretary for Transport, Central Government Offices, East Wing, 2nd floor, Lower Albert Road, Central before May 13, 1997.

End

Reprovisioning of boys' home to Sha Tin

* * * * *

The Begonia Road Boys' Home in Sham Shui Po, which has a history of 34 years, will be reprovisioned to Area 64 in Sha Tin near the Sha Tin Infirmary & Convalescent Hospital.

The new boys' home will have accommodation for 120 residents. It will comprise six dormitories, four classrooms, five workshops, conference rooms, dining hall, multi-purpose hall, staff offices, quarters, and other ancillary facilities.

Works on the project will start in May for completion in October 1998.

The Architectural Services Department is inviting tenders for the project. Details of the tender are published in the Gazette today (Friday).

End

Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee established

* * * * *

A new advisory committee, the Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee (IIAC), has been established under the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) to co-ordinate the orderly development of the Information Infrastructure in Hong Kong.

"With rapid advances in information technologies, effective inter-personal communication and fast flow of information have assumed a much more important role in our business community and daily life," said Mr Anthony S K Wong, Acting Director-General of Telecommunications.

"It is necessary for Hong Kong to develop in a timely and orderly manner our information superhighway within Hong Kong and linking us up to the rest of the world. Such links should provide us with ready choices of connectivity, greater personal flexibility and mobility, and all kinds of multi-media services and new applications.

"To prepare us for the arrival of the Information age, there is a need to step up our coordination of the development of Hong Kong's Information Infrastructure, hence the setting up of this new committee," he added.

The membership of the IIAC includes representatives of the local fixed network carriers, the telecommunications and information technology industries, and relevant professional bodies. Academics, industrialists, and experts in the relevant fields are also appointed to serve on an ad personam basis. The Committee is chaired by the Director-General of Telecommunications personally.

"I am pleased to have such a distinguished group of people who come from different sectors of the community to join the IIAC," said Mr Wong.

"I shall consider the need for appointing other suitable persons to the Committee at a later stage, in the light of IIAC's operating experience.

"An immediate task for the IIAC will be the establishment of special task forces to tackle individual issues at a more technical, detailed level, and we need to co-opt people outside the IIAC who are interested in the subject and possess relevant expertise to serve as co-opted task force members."

The first meeting of the IIAC will be held on Friday, March 21, 1997 at 9.30 am in the Conference Hall of Central Government Offices Main Wing (New Annex). The meeting is open to the public and the media.

In line with OFTA's established practices, the agenda, papers and minutes of meetings of the IIAC are made available for retrieval by interested members of the public at OFTA's Internet home page (URL address: <http://www.ofa.gov.hk>) and BBS (tel : 2834 0119).

End

Results of registration exams for pharmacists announced

* * * * *

The Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong announced today (Friday) results of the registration examinations for pharmacists held in December 1996.

A total of 57, 63 and 69 candidates sat for the examinations in "Pharmacy Legislation in Hong Kong", "Pharmacy Practice" and "Pharmacology" respectively with corresponding passing rates of 43.9 per cent, 74.6 per cent and 46.4 per cent.

Apart from meeting other conditions set by the Board, a pharmacy graduate who returns from overseas and intends to be registered as a pharmacist in Hong Kong is required to pass the above three subjects.

The Board conducts its registration examinations twice a year, normally in June and December.

End

Air quality report for February released

* * * * *

The Environmental Protection Department today (Friday) released air quality information for February 1997.

The information shows no violation of air quality objective values in the month.

The report includes the monitoring results from Mong Kok, Central/Western and Kwai Chung, which represent three important land use types in the territory:

- * locations close to road traffic in built-up urban areas;
- * combined commercial and residential districts; and
- * districts close to industrial areas.

Air pollutants reported include sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, total suspended particulates, and the respirable suspended particulates. All these pollutants can affect respiratory health in sufficient concentration.

Air pollution originated from various sources, including combustion, industrial and construction processes. In terms of impact on local air quality, motor vehicle exhaust is the most important source of nitrogen dioxide and airborne particulate matter, especially the smaller respirable particles.

End

Parents also Appreciate Teachers' Drive kicks off

* * * * *

The Assistant Director of Education (Schools), Mr Tong Kai-hong; the Chairman of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, Mr Tik Chi-Yuen; and committee member, Professor Wong Chung-kwong; will tomorrow (Saturday) kick off "The Parents also Appreciate Teachers' Drive 1997" at the Hong Kong Teachers' Centre.

Representatives from parent-teacher associations will join a round-the-territory bus parade after the Kick-off Ceremony.

They will distribute specially designed thank-you cards to the public in order to arouse public awareness of respecting teachers.

Last year, a total of 100,000 appreciation cards had been sent to teachers by parents.

This year, parents will send some 600,000 cards to teachers from 686 participating schools.

In response to the Education Department's "Respect our Teachers" Campaign, the annual event is organised by the Committee on Home-School Co-operation and Sing Tao Daily.

End

Fresh water cut in Ap Lei Chau

* * * * *

Fresh water supply to some premises in Ap Lei Chau will be suspended from 11 pm on March 17 (Monday) to 6 am the following day for waste detection work on watermains.

The suspension will affect all premises in Ap Lei Chau Main Street, Lee Man Road, Lee Chi Road, Ho King Street, San Shi Street, Shui Sau Street, Shan Ming Street, Ping Lan Street, Wai Fung Street, Hung Shing Street and London Lane.

End