



## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Transcript of FS's media session

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The following is the transcript of the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang's remark at a media session after giving a briefing to Legislative Councillors on Expenditure of the 1997-98 Budget at the Legislative Council Chamber this (Thursday) morning:

Question: Some Councillors have expressed fears that your hands will be tied doing nothing with next year's Budget given China's insistence that Hong Kong is spending too much on social welfare. How would you react to that?

FS: I think I have explained clearly that we're going to process the 1997-98 estimates in the same way that we have done in the past and we'll listen very carefully the views of the Legislative Councillors and the views of the community as a whole. The additional step we would have to take because of the unique nature of this year is that to listen to also the expert group Chinese representatives' views, and I am aiming at reaching consensus with the Chinese experts on each major step of the preparatory process. I'm personally quite confident that we are going to operate on a rational model because we are dealing with something very important, very important not only to the people of Hong Kong that we are going to have a good estimate, good Budget for the coming year which will be conducive to transition. It will be important, because it is important to China, that Hong Kong is going to succeed in the following year, and for that reason, I am quite sure, my colleagues and I, and the Chinese experts and those who advise the Chinese experts, we are going to be operating very rationally on this and our views will be quite similar to those Legislative Councillor at the end of the day. And then at the end of the day whatever we recommend will have to be put forward to the Legislative Council for approval in March.

Question: Will you need to put it to Chinese advisors that they would have the power to veto?

FS: We have said very clearly we are going to co-operate fully with the Chinese experts in the preparation of next year's estimates. I do not wish to use the word veto, superiority or whatever. We are certainly going into a joint enterprise. Our common aim is to reach a consensus.

End

### Trial scheme to promote safe driving distance

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The Transport Department will put on trial a chevron marking scheme this summer for a section of Tolo Highway to increase drivers' awareness towards safe driving distance.

In July, chevron markings will be painted on each traffic lane for the section of Tolo Highway south of Lam Kam Interchange at 40 metres separation to help drivers gauge the safe driving distance between two vehicles.

Informatory signs will also be erected on the road sides to advise drivers to keep two chevron markings apart from the vehicle in front.

Introducing the trial scheme, Senior Engineer (Analysis and Strategy) of the Road Safety and Standards Division, Miss Ying Fun-fong, said the markings would be a simple aid to drivers for keeping a safe distance from the vehicle ahead.

Miss Ying said: "This is the commonly known 'two seconds rule' as recommended in the Road Users Code.

"The application of this rule is simple. Just choose a stationary object ahead, such as a lamp post or traffic sign, as your marker.

"When the vehicle ahead passes the marker, say the phrase 'a thousand and one, a thousand and two'. If you pass the marker before finished saying the phrase, then you are driving too close and cannot stop safely in case of a hazard."

Miss Ying pointed out that driving too close to a vehicle in front had been a major contributory factor to traffic accidents in Hong Kong in the past years.

Figures for the past three years show "head to tail" (H/T) accidents comprised an averaged 19 per cent of all accidents in the territory, 2,858 out of 15,240 cases. This category also accounts for 23 per cent of the number of casualties involved in road accidents, 4,706 out of 20,510.

For accidents occurred on expressways, H/T accident and casualty numbers comprised a significant proportion averaged 46 per cent (518 out of 1,116 cases) of all accidents and 52 per cent (1,013 out of 1,933) of casualties involved in the past three years.

Miss Ying expressed hope that this scheme could increase drivers' awareness towards safe driving distance and lead to a reduction of road traffic accidents.

She noted that similar experiments were conducted in the United Kingdom and France.

"In the UK ones, an achievement of 56 per cent in accidents and improve driving behaviour were realised. We surely hope similar results can be achieved in Hong Kong to cut down our accident rates and casualties", she said.

End

#### Bill to shorten obstructing article removal time introduced

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The owner of an article which causes obstruction to a scavenging operation or to any street sweeper must remove it within four hours if the Public Health and Municipal Services (Amendment) Bill 1996 is passed into law.

Under the present arrangement, officers of the two municipal services departments can issue notice to an owner to remove his obstructing articles within such period, being not less than 24 hours, as may be specified in the notice.

"Both the Urban Services Department and the Regional Services Department are of the view that the legislative provision is ineffective," a spokesman for the Recreation and Culture Branch said.

"It is therefore proposed that the statutory period under which the owner must remove his obstructing articles be shortened from 24 hours to four hours so as to facilitate the early removal of such articles," he added.

The proposal is supported by the two municipal councils.

The amendment bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on May 15.

End

### Five language projects funding awarded

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The Director of Education and Trustee of the Language Fund, Mrs Helen C P Lai Yu, today (Thursday) approved funds totalling \$14.3 million for five language improvement projects in the Fund's third and fourth allocation exercises since September 1994.

The successful projects - three Chinese, one English and one cross-language - aim at improving the language proficiency of students and members of the public.

The Chinese language projects are a self-learning package on simplified Chinese characters, a parent-child reading programme for schools and a reading award scheme for secondary schools.

The English one is a self-learning package for post-secondary 5 students joining the engineering sector.

The cross-language project has been proposed by the Education and Manpower Branch to enable the future Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) to make an early start in implementing language projects recommended in Education Commission Report No 6 (ECR6).

The proposal envisages the engagement of two professionals for SCOLAR's Support Unit to help design, develop, monitor and evaluate research projects commissioned by the standing committee.

They will establish a network of liaison with relevant organisations and agencies on language projects, advise SCOLAR on the implications of research findings, set up a database of resource materials, and develop a public education and publicity programme on language matters.

They will work on priority tasks recommended in ECR6 including:

- \* a research into the optimal learning pattern for children in the acquisition of language skills;
- \* a study of the general goals and specific attainment targets for language at primary level;
- \* a review of the Academic Aptitude Test;

- \* a study of the relationship between Putonghua and the Chinese subjects in the school curriculum;
- \* development of a vocational language programme, a public information programme and a liaison network for research activities.

Mrs Yu agreed with the Language Fund Advisory Committee's (LFAC) recommendations that the first professional, employed on contract terms at assistant directorate grade, should be a language expert with well established connections in the field and the leadership to steer and supervise both in-house and outside research projects.

The second professional employed also on contract terms at a salary scale of Master Pay Scale 45 to 49, should have sufficient knowledge in language subject and research methodology.

Mrs Yu accepted LFAC's view that all five projects above meet the objective of the LFAC to raise standards in English and Chinese (including Putonghua).

"I endorse the committee's view that it should take a more proactive approach to address language issues.

"I am confident that these projects will help to enhance language proficiency in Hong Kong and to formulate a coherent and strategic language policy in education," she said.

The projects supported by the Language Fund now total 78, amounting to \$111.3 million.

The Language Fund, set up in May 1994 with an initial allocation of \$300 million, is to support proposals and initiatives that will raise the standards in Chinese (including Putonghua) and English, enhance existing efforts and meet temporary shortfalls in language teaching resources.

The Fund also encourages research into problem areas and initiation of new approaches.

End

Director of Marine returns from Beijing visit

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The Director of Marine, Mr Ian Dale, returned from Beijing yesterday (Wednesday) after a two-day visit to discuss Hong Kong maritime safety and operational transitional issues with the Director General of the People's Republic of China Maritime Safety Administration (PRC MSA), Captain Lin Yunai issues.

The talks centred on the technical issues of International Maritime Organisation conventions, specifically international safety management, high speed craft, standards of training, certification and watchkeeping (STCW), and operational co-operation and co-ordination of search and rescue (SAR).

Two understandings were reached concerning Hong Kong's participation in the PRC MSA and STCW activities, and the attachment of SAR staff between PRC and Hong Kong Maritime Rescue Co-ordination centres.

At the end of the talks, Captain Lin Yunai remarked: "These discussions have been very constructive and have continued to strengthen the firm foundations on which the two maritime administrations will co-operate and co-ordinate the essential element of marine operations and communications both leading up to, and after July 1, 1997."

Mr Dale said: "I fully agree with Captain Lin's remarks and would add that my colleagues and I are most grateful for the arrangements made for the Beijing talks by Captain Lin, and the positive way that our questions and proposals have been received by the PRC MSA."

Mr Dale and his colleagues also paid a courtesy call on the Chinese Deputy Minister of Communications, Mr Liu Songjin, who confirmed the need for positive co-ordination of maritime transitional issues between his administration and Hong Kong.

It is anticipated the Mr Dale and Captain Lin will meet again in Hong Kong later this year.

End

Deputy to Governor visits ITSD

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The Deputy to the Governor, Mrs Anson Chan today (Thursday) visited the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) to appreciate the work of the department in enabling its government counterparts to take the full advantage of modern information technology (IT).

Mrs Chan was interested in knowing the latest progress of computerisation in various government departments and, in particular, how they can make full use of computers in achieving cost-effectiveness and improving their services to the community.

Accompanied by the Director of Information Technology Services, Mr K H Lau, Mrs Chan began her visit with a tour of the ITSD computer centre which provides common computer facilities to government departments and supports the government communications network.

Apart from being briefed on the work of the department, Mrs Chan also saw demonstrations on the use of advanced computer tools in system design and development, the use of multi-media technology to provide interactive public enquiries services, the interlink between a hand-held computer and a remote computer by mobile phone, and the potential application of smart card technology.

The Deputy to the Governor was told that computers had now become more and more widely used in all government departments.

The ITSD is now maintaining some 190 application systems and is implementing over 180 approved IT projects for various government departments.. The total value of computers installed, including 10 mainframe, 270 mid-range and over 31,200 microcomputer systems, is over \$2,200 million.

Among the major IT projects in hand is the implementation of information systems strategy plans of the Inland Revenue Department and the Information Services Department to be completed within this financial year. The two projects are expected to generate a total five-year savings of some \$500 million for the two departments.

Also included is the implementation of local area networks (LAN) and office systems for all government departments in two stages in the next three years with the first stage for 22 departments to be completed by end of this year.

In 1995-96, the department also assisted the Immigration Department to achieve an expected five-year savings of some HK\$210 million through the implementation of the information systems strategy plan.

Other major projects included the implementation of LAN in all policy and resource branches for the shared use of office automation systems and exchange of E-mails and information.

In conjunction with the Information Services Department, ITSD also launched the Government Information Centre Homepage on the Internet which provides an alternative and effective means for public access to government information.

End

Pre-sale consent approved in the first quarter of 1996

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The Lands Department has approved eight applications for consent to pre-sale of residential and non-residential units in uncompleted developments during the first quarter of 1996.

Of the applications, seven are for the pre-sale of a total of 3,530 residential units located in Kowloon, Kwai Tsing, Sha Tin and Yuen Long.

Except for one case developed by the Hong Kong Housing Society which is estimated to be completed in July 1997, the other units are estimated by the developers to be completed between the end of 1995 and March 1997.

The other application is for the pre-sale of non-residential units in Kowloon.

In addition, two consents to assign residential units were approved where occupation permits have been issued involving 2,208 units in Yuen Long.

A total of two deeds of mutual covenant, four sub-deeds of mutual covenant, two management agreements and eight deeds of mutual covenant and management agreements for residential or non-residential developments were also approved during the quarter.

At the end of March, a total of 13 applications for pre-sale consent involving 7,371 residential units and seven applications in respect of non-residential developments are pending for approval.

These developments are located in a variety of districts throughout the territory. The majority are estimated to be completed in mid to late 1996.

Since the measures for pre-sale were introduced by the Government in June 1994, consent has been given to 18,813 residential units and to four private sector participation scheme projects (involving a total of 5,810 units), two sandwich class housing developments (involving 1,906 units) and one flat-for-sale scheme (involving 400 units), which are not subject to the measures.

End

#### Hong Kong School Drama Festival

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The outstanding teams in the Hong Kong Drama Festival 1995-96 will show their talents at the Gala evenings at the Theatre, Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre on May 8 and 9 (Wednesday and Thursday).

It is an annual event organised by the Education Department, jointly presented by the Urban Council and the Regional Council, and sponsored by the Lok Sin Tong Benevolent Society, Kowloon.

Four outstanding Chinese dramas will be presented in the first Gala Evening and three English dramas on the second day.

Education Department's Inspector (School Activities) Mr Lai Man-lai said: "A total of 4,227 students from 145 secondary schools and 42 primary schools participated in the festival.

"The best performing primary and secondary schools will be awarded the Lok Sin Tong Cup and the Director of Education Cup respectively in the ceremony.

"The winning teams will be awarded other prizes for best stage effect, original script, actors, actresses, directors, production diary and overall performance."

Tickets of \$30 for Gala evenings are available at the URBTIX outlets. There will be 50 per cent discount for students and persons aged 60 or above.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	<u>\$ million</u>	<u>Time (hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative change (\$million)</u>
Opening balance in the account	2,201	0930	+198
Closing balance in the account	2,049	1000	+198
Change attributable to :		1100	+198
Money market activity	+198	1200	+198
LAF today	-350	1500	+198
		1600	+198

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 123.8 \*+0.1\* 2.5.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.90	2 years	2802	5.16	98.54	6.12
1 month	4.99	3 years	3904	6.30	99.51	6.59
3 months	5.15	5 years	5103	6.75	98.53	7.24
6 months	5.25	7 years	7302	6.02	92.25	7.63
12 months	5.56	5 years	M502	7.30	99.98	7.44

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$16,566 million

Closed May 2, 1996

End