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Action plan to enhance industrial safety drawn up

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A 12-point strategy aimed at ensuring industrial safety was drawn up at a high-level inter-departmental meeting held this (Tuesday) morning.

Chaired by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, the meeting aimed at ensuring proper co-ordination within the Government and exploring the need for additional preventive measures on industrial safety following the recent spate of industrial accidents.

Speaking at a press conference after the meeting, Mr Wong outlined the package of measures which would be targeted at three main high-risk areas: work at height, construction sites and confined areas.

The 12-point strategy is:

* The Labour Department will step up inspections over the next few weeks of high-risk construction sites and industrial undertakings and, in particular, those with previous unsatisfactory industrial records. All Factory Inspectors will be mobilised for the blitz.

* The department will step up prosecution actions against offending contractors and sub-contractors. Prosecution figures will be published regularly to arouse public awareness.

* The Labour Department will monitor closely the results of court cases relating to industrial safety. If the department considers the sentence of any particular case inadequate, it will ask the Attorney General to seek a review of the sentence.

* A telephone hotline 2815 0678 has been set up in the Labour Department to handle complaints against industrial and occupational hazards and any breach of industrial safety requirements.

* The Fire Services Department will alert the relevant departments promptly of any breach of industrial safety requirements found during their routine or special fire safety inspections.

* The Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC), in conjunction with the Labour Department, will mount an intensive educational and publicity campaign on industrial safety focusing on work at height, construction industry and confined spaces.

* OSHC, together with the Labour Department, will organise shortly a series of seminars for some 400 safety officers in the private sector who have direct responsibility for industrial safety.

* The Education and Manpower Branch in the next month or so will publish a charter for safety at workplace setting out the rights of workers to enjoy a safe working environment and the employers' obligations to reduce their employees' exposure to risks of accidents. It will also highlight worker's obligations to follow safety instructions and to co-operate with the relevant authorities in reporting breaches of statutory requirements. OSHC will be tasked to promote the Charter.

* The Government will explore the possibility of tightening the rules on suspending from tendering for government works projects those contractors with an unsatisfactory industrial safety record.

* The Government will consider taking account of the previous industrial safety records of the companies concerned in determining their eligibility to import workers under the Special Labour Importation Scheme for the New Airport and Related Projects and under the Supplementary Labour Scheme.

* The Government will consider the need to strengthen existing industrial safety legislation for operations both on land and at sea.

* The Government will urge the Legislative Council to expedite its scrutiny of two important pieces of draft legislation which will greatly enhance industrial safety. The first, the Buildings Amendment (No 3) Bill, seeks to provide a safety supervisory system at building sites and make architects and engineers criminally responsible for safety measures on site. The second, the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Amendment) Bill 1996, seeks to empower the Commissioner for Labour to issue suspension notices or improvement notices. This will enable the Commissioner to stop immediately any operation or machinery at a construction site which may pose an imminent risk of serious injuries to workers.

The Secretary for Education and Manpower said investigation was continuing into the various major industrial accidents which took place over the past weeks. Reports on individual cases are expected to be completed in the next few weeks.

Describing the meeting this morning as a useful and productive one, Mr Wong said the Education and Manpower Branch would continue to play a co-ordinating role and monitor the situation closely.

"The Government attaches the greatest importance to industrial safety. We will leave no stone unturned and act in concert to reduce the exposure of workers to risks of industrial accidents," he stressed.

Mr Wong said the ultimate solution to reducing industrial accidents was to put in place a safety culture.

"This calls for a tripartite effort - with the Government, employers and employees all joining forces. Indeed, the 12-point strategy seeks to achieve this aim," he said.

Taking part in the meeting this morning were the acting Commissioner for Labour, Mr Alfred Chan Wing-kit; Director of Buildings, Dr Choi Yu-leuk; Director of Marine, Mr Ian Dale; Project Manager, New Airport Projects Co-ordination Office, Mr Wong Hung-kin; Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung; Deputy Commissioner for Labour, Mr Lee Kai-fat; Principal Assistant Secretary for Works, Mr Peter Berry; Chief Fire Officer, Mr Hsu King-ping; Executive Director, OSHC, Mr Yip Yuk-lun; and Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Herman Cho.

End

HK Govt welcomes satisfactory solution on IPR protection

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The Hong Kong Government warmly welcomes the announcement by the US Government that the US and Chinese Governments have reached a mutually satisfactory solution on the protection of intellectual property rights.

"The announcement is indeed good news for Hong Kong. We are pleased to see that the possibility of a trade war between the US and China, our two largest trading partners, has been averted," a government spokesman said today (Tuesday).

"Measures to enhance the protection of intellectual property rights in China will have a positive impact on Hong Kong's own ability to combat copyright piracy in Hong Kong. The strengthening of trade and investment ties between the US and China will also benefit Hong Kong," the spokesman continued.

End

HK to hold bilateral consultations with US

* * * * *

Hong Kong would hold bilateral consultations with the United States tomorrow (Wednesday) in Hong Kong over US' unilateral decision to impose additional import document requirements on a number of textiles and clothing products from the territory, it was announced today (Tuesday).

"During the consultations, we will reiterate Hong Kong's position which the Secretary for Trade and Industry has put to the US government in her letter of June 14," a government spokesman said.

In her letter, the Secretary for Trade and Industry, Miss Denise Yue, raised fundamental objections to US' unilateral decision. She also requested the US to defer the implementation of the measures to enable Hong Kong and the US to discuss the matter with a view to finding a mutually satisfactory solution.

"We are grateful to the US government for their prompt response to our request for consultations," the spokesman said.

The US delegation will be led by the Deputy Commissioner for US Customs, Mr Michael Lane, while the Hong Kong delegation, comprises the Deputy Director-General of Trade, Mrs Rebecca Lai, and other officials from the Customs and Excise and Trade departments, will be led by the Commissioner for Customs and Excise (designate), Mr Lawrence Li.

On June 13 (US time), US Customs announced its decision to impose such import measures with effect from June 17 (US time), on five types of products from Hong Kong. These are skirts (Cat 342/442/642), suits (Cat 443/643), nightwear (Cat 351), underwear (Cat 352/652), and dresses (Cat 336/636).

Under the new US requirements, importers of these products from Hong Kong are required to submit, for each consignment, declarations completed and signed by all manufacturers and subcontractors involved in the production of the consignment.

They need also to certify that the declarations are accurate, and to pay higher entry bonds.

The consignment will then be conditionally released for entry into US, but is subject to recall by the US Customs within 210 days, if Customs determines that the country of origin of the goods in question has not been accurately represented to it.

The requirements also provide that if a US textile production verification team is in Hong Kong, the consignment will be detained until the team verifies that production has actually taken place in Hong Kong.

"These measures are disruptive to our trade," said the spokesman.

"We understand that the measures are intended to tackle illegal textiles transhipment. But they are objectionable because they are being taken in the absence of concrete evidence of illegal transhipment of such products in Hong Kong, and they affect both legitimate and illegitimate traders indiscriminately.

"Also, the US has imposed such discriminatory measures against Hong Kong unilaterally without any prior consultations, and without any prior discussions with the Hong Kong Government to seek to establish the facts about the perceived problems of transhipment in Hong Kong.

"For these reasons we will ask the US to rescind the measures," he said.

The spokesman said should the US need time to consider Hong Kong's request, they would be asked for an immediate deferral of the implementation of the measures while the two sides continued to discuss the matter with a view to finding a mutually satisfactory solution.

"This is because we are concerned with the effects the measures may have on our consignments arriving in the US since June 17.

"The relevant traders are unlikely to be able to meet the new requirements, and may therefore be adversely affected," he said.

He said the Trade Department had informed Hong Kong traders of the US measures. Should they require any additional information, they are welcome to contact the department's Americas Division.

Last year, Hong Kong's exports of the five specific types of products to US amounted to $3.5 billion, representing 9.6 per cent of its total textiles and clothing exports to US, or about 4 per cent of textiles and clothing exports to the world.

End

Report on Vietnamese girls case submitted to Governor

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A Government House spokesman today (Tuesday) confirmed that the Commissioner of Correctional Services had submitted a report to the Governor on the case of the two Vietnamese girls who had been separated from their parents in the aftermath of the riots occurred in Whitehead Detention Centre on May 10 and 11.

"The Governor is considering the report, which will be made public in due course," the spokesman said.

End

202 VMs depart on orderly repatriation flight

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A group of 202 Vietnamese migrants (VMs) returned by air to Hanoi, Vietnam, today (Tuesday) on the 42nd flight under the Orderly Repatriation Programme (ORP).

All of the returnees, comprising 74 men, 53 women, 34 boys and 41 girls, are from North Vietnam.

The majority of them arrived in Hong Kong in 1989, with the remaining in 1988, 1991 and 1995.

The group brought the total number repatriated on ORP flights since November 1991 to 3,638.

End

Monitors' Report submitted to CS

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The monitors appointed to observe the Orderly Repatriation Programme operation this (Tuesday) morning have submitted their report to the Chief Secretary.

The two monitors comprised a non-official Justice of the Peace, Dr Andrew Chuang Siu-leung; and a representative from a non-governmental organisation, Ms Nadine de Lamotte from Medecins Sans Frontieres.

End

Building, construction & real estate sectors survey results

* * * * *

The gross output of the construction sector in 1994 amounted to $174.1 billion, representing an increase of 14.9% over 1993. This comprised a gross value of $166.9 billion for the construction work performed and an income of $7.2 billion from other sources.

Net of total operating expenditure, the gross operating surplus rose by 10.5% to $10.8 billion in 1994, amounting to 6.2% of the gross output. The proportion was 0.3 of a percentage point lower than in 1993.

These are some of the major findings of the 1994 Survey of Building, Construction and Real Estate Sectors conducted from April 1995 to early this year and released by the Census and Statistics Department today (Tuesday).

All dollar figures mentioned in this press release are in terms of nominal value. The percentage changes derived from these figures have not been adjusted for price changes. Caution should therefore be taken in interpreting the survey results.

In terms of percentage of gross output, the operating expenditure incurred by construction establishments amounted to 93.8% in 1994.

This comprised 20.4% for compensation of employees and payments to labour-only sub-contractors; 19.2% for consumption of materials, supplies, and maintenance services; 45.1% for payments for fee sub-contract work; and 9.1% for other miscellaneous operating expenses.

Compared with 1993, the percentage share of compensation of employees and payments to labour-only sub-contractors in total gross output was lower by 1.6 percentage points; and that for consumption of materials, supplies, and maintenance services by 2.3 percentage points.

On the other hand, the percentage share of payments for fee sub-contract work was up by 2.8 percentage points; and that for other miscellaneous operating expenses by 1.4 percentage points.

The value added of the construction sector, which is a measure of its contribution to Hong Kong's gross domestic product, amounted to $46.3 billion in 1994. This represented an increase of 7.2% over 1993.

The value added content of the gross output of the construction sector amounted to 26.6%, comprising 20.4% for compensation of employees and payments to labour-only sub-contractors and 6.2% for gross operating surplus.

Compared with 1993, the former proportion decreased by 1.6 percentage points and the latter decreased by 0.3 of a percentage point.

The survey results also showed that some 18,900 construction establishments operated in 1994.

Some 40.6% of the construction establishments were engaged in decoration, repair and maintenance of erected buildings and structures. They accounted for $25.1 billion or 14.4% of the gross output.

On the other hand, the general trade contractors operating at construction sites, though totalling only about 5.7% of the establishments, accounted for $106 billion or 60.9% of the gross output.

The rest of the construction establishments consisted mostly of special trade contractors, such as contractors specialising in electrical and mechanical fittings. These contractors constituted 53.7% of the establishments in the construction sector, and accounted for $43.1 billion or 24.7% of the gross output.

The survey did not cover labour-only sub-contractors who mainly supplied labour to work on a job-to-job basis. However, the gross value of construction work performed by these sub-contractors had already been included in that performed by those contractors commissioning their services.

Apart from construction establishments, the survey also enumerated establishments engaged in (i) real estate development, leasing, brokerage and maintenance management services, and (ii) architectural, surveying and project engineering services.

The gross output performed by establishments engaged in real estate development, leasing, brokerage and maintenance management services amounted to $121.4 billion in 1994, representing an increase of 33.8% over 1993.

This comprised $50.5 billion for service and rental income, $69.3 billion for the gross margin of real estate development projects (excluding land price appreciation) and $1.5 billion for other incomes.

Among the real estate development projects, the value accrued to private sector projects in 1994 was $103.4 billion, representing an increase of 32.9% over the corresponding value in 1993. The increase was largely due to increased work done in residential buildings, office buildings and multi-purpose commercial premises.

The total project outlays amounted to $40.9 billion which included, for instance, payments to contractors and interest payments.

The gross operating surplus amounted to 79.6% of the gross output in 1994. This was 0.1 of a percentage point lower than in 1993.

The total operating expenditure of these establishments accounted for 20.4% of the gross output. Compared with 1993, this increased by 0.1 of a percentage point.

The total value added of these establishments was $105.2 billion in 1994, representing an increase of 33.1% over 1993. It constituted 86.7% of the gross output performed. This was 0.5 of a percentage point lower than in 1993.

These figures did not include establishments which developed real estate projects for their own use, nor did they include those which owned land without developing it during the reference year.

Also excluded were real estate leasing and other related activities undertaken by individuals or firms which do not employ any persons.

A total of 8,440 establishments operated in the real estate development, leasing, brokerage and maintenance management services sector in 1994.

As regards establishments engaged in architectural, surveying and project engineering services, the gross output performed was $9.6 billion in 1994, representing an increase of 29.9% over 1993. This consisted of $9.3 billion for service income and $0.3 billion for other incomes.

The gross operating surplus amounted to 13.5% of the gross output in 1994, representing an increase of 0.6 of a percentage point over 1993.

The total operating expenditure of these establishments accounted for 86.5% of the gross output in 1994. This was 0.6 of a percentage point lower than in 1993.

The total value added of these establishments was $5.9 billion in 1994, representing an increase of 28.4% over 1993. It constituted 61% of the gross output performed. Compared with 1993, this decreased by 0.7 of a percentage point.

Some 1,340 establishments operated in the architectural, surveying and project engineering services sector in 1994.

More detailed results will be given in a full survey report to be published around August.

Enquiries regarding these survey results may be directed to the Building, Construction and Real Estate Statistics Section of the Census and Statistics Department, Tel 2882 4684.

End

Preliminary population estimate from population by-census

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A preliminary estimate of the population of Hong Kong as compiled from the 1996 Population By-census conducted in March shows a resident population of 6,210,000 on March 15, the Census and Statistics Department announces today (Tuesday).

The estimate includes 190,000 residents who were reported to be temporarily away from Hong Kong on the by-census reference date.

For the geographical distribution of the resident population, 1.3 million were on Hong Kong Island, or 21 per cent of the total; 2 million in Kowloon or 32 per cent; and 2.9 million in the New Territories, or 47 per cent. There were still some 10 000 residents being the marine population.

The by-census data are being processed and summary results will be released in November.

As the preliminary population figures were based on work records compiled by enumerators, they may differ marginally from the estimates which will be available later based on data being validated and processed by the computer.

A spokesman of the Census and Statistics Department said in February, a population estimate of 6.31 million people as at end-1995 had been released.

He said: "The figure of 6.31 million is an estimate of the total number of people in Hong Kong as at end-1995, hence visitors and Vietnamese migrants are included.

"Taking into account such factors and the difference in time reference, the by-census preliminary figure of 6.21 million for the resident population as at mid-March 1996 indicates that the series of half-yearly population estimates released have been of the right order of magnitude."

The population estimate in respect of mid-1996 will be compiled based on the by-census population estimate and figures on births, deaths, arrivals and departures during March to June, and will be released in the middle of September.

Retrospective adjustments will be made to previously published population estimates for recent years for a coherent series of half-yearly population estimates.

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Resident population by District Board district, 1991 and 1996

District Board District	Resident Population 1991	Resident Population 1996 #	Change Number #	Change Percent
Hong Kong Island				
Central & Western	253 383	261 000	+7 000	+2.8
Wan Chai	180 309	168 000	-12 000	-6.8
Eastern	560 200	593 000	+32 000	+5.8
Southern	257 101	288 000	+31 000	+12.1
Sub-total	**1 250 993**	**1 309 000**	**+58 000**	**+4.7**
Kowloon				
Yau Tsim Mong	282 060	259 000	-23 000	-8.3
Sham Shui Po	380 615	361 000	-20 000	-5.3
Kowloon City	402 934	377 000	-26 000	-6.4
Wong Tai Sin	386 572	397 000	+10 000	+2.7
Kwun Tong	578 502	587 000	+8 000	+1.4
Sub-total	**2 030 683**	**1 980 000**	**-51 000**	**-2.5**
New Territories				
Kwai Tsing	440 807	471 000	+30 000	+6.8
Tsuen Wan	271 576	272 000	*	+0.1
Tuen Mun	380 683	464 000	+84 000	+22.0
Yuen Long	229 724	343 000	+113 000	+49.2
North	165 666	233 000	+67 000	+40.4
Tai Po	202 117	284 000	+82 000	+40.3
Sha Tin	506 368	584 000	+78 000	+15.4
Sai Kung	130 418	198 000	+68 000	+51.8
Islands	47 459	63 000	+16 000	+32.8
Sub-total	**2 374 818**	**2 911 000**	**+536 000**	**+22.6**
Marine	17 620	10 000	-8 000	-43.9
Total	**5 674 114**	**6 210 000**	**+536 000**	**+9.4**

* Less than 500.

\# Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand. Owing to rounding, there may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the corresponding total. Similarly, the percentage figures may not correspond exactly to the figures which are obtained by dividing the given population estimates.

End

CAS Chief Staff Officer appointed

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The Government today (Tuesday) announced that Mr Fung Kwok-him will succeed Mr F S Kavanagh as Chief Staff Officer, Civil Aid Services (CAS), from June 29.

Mr Kavanagh will proceed on pre-retirement leave on that date having served the Government for 36 years.

Commenting on the appointment, the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr W K Lam, said: "Mr Fung is very experienced in the operation of the CAS. I am confident that he will lead the CAS to continue to serve the community in their fine tradition."

Mr Lam also commended Mr Kavanagh for his devoted service to the Government and the community during the past 36 years.

Following are the brief biographical notes on Messrs Fung and Kavanagh:

Mr Fung Kwok-him

Aged 57, Mr Fung is at present CAS Staff Officer. He joined the Hong Kong civil service in August 1963 as an Assistant Training Officer. He was promoted to his present rank in December 1993.

Mr F S Kavanagh

Aged 57, Mr Kavanagh joined the Hong Kong civil service in October 1960. He joined CAS in January 1989 as Chief Staff Officer.

End

Record high penalty for forger of travel documents

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The mastermind of a forged travel document syndicate, which smuggled mainlander to overseas with fake travel documents, was today (Tuesday) jailed for five years, a record high penalty for offence in relation to possession of forged travel documents.

Commenting on the sentencing, an Immigration Department spokesman said: "It is an offence in law to have in possession of forged, false or unalwfully altered travel documents. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction, the maximum penalty will be a fine of $150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years."

The man was charged with three counts of offences in relation to conspiracy to possess, possession of forged, false, unlawfully obtained or unlawfully altered passports and equipment for making a false instrument.

At the Wan Chai District Court today, the defendant pleaded guilty to one court of possessing 16 pieces of unlawfully altered travel documents, namely 19 copies of British National (Overseas) (BNO) passports, one British Dependent Territories Citizens (BDTC) passport and two Singaporean passports, and one count of conspiracy to possess 11 pieces of forged or unlawfully altered travel documents, namely six People's Republic of China (PRC) passports, three BNO passports and two BDTC passports.

The Court heard that Immigration investigators, acting on information, arrested the defendant on April 20, 1996 at the Hong Kong International Airport when he attempted to leave Hong Kong for Guangzhou.

He was then taken to his residence at Sha Tin in which a total of 16 forged, false, unlawfully obtained or unlawfully altered travel documents were found. Also in the haul, immigration investigators found 470 blank Brazilian visas and 960 Brazilian stamp duties.

The arrest was prompted by an earlier operation in which Immigration investigators found a postal parcel, mailed from Brazil and addressed to the defendant, containing six forged PRC passports and five forged BNO and BDTC passports.

Enquiries revealed that the defendant got those travel documents from a friend in Brazil. The friend told defendant that these travel documents would be brought to Thailand for re-photosubstitution.

End

93 convicted pollution cases in May

* * * * *

A total of 93 convictions were recorded in courts last month for breaching anti-pollution legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Among them, 35 were made under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance, 23 under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, 19 under the Noise Control Ordinance, 13 under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance and three under the Ozone Layer Protection Ordinance.

The fines ranged from $2,000 to $75,000. Three companies received a fine of $75,000 for their offences.

Man Luen Hong Motor Company Ltd was fined $75,000 for discharging polluting matter in the Deep Bay Water Control Zone while Gammon Construction Ltd was fined the same amount for permitting the use of powered mechanical equipment not in accordance with permit conditions.

Cheung Hing Dyeing Factory Ltd was also fined $75,000 for failing to comply with Water Pollution Control (General) Regulation.

End

Water storage figure

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Storage in Hong Kong's reservoirs at 9 am today (Tuesday) stood at 86.1 per cent of capacity or 504.539 million cubic metres.

This time last year the reservoirs contained 387.646 million cubic metres of water, representing 66.1 per cent of capacity.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

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Tender date	18 Jun 1996	18 Jun 1996
Paper on offer	EF bills	EF bills
Issue number	Q625	H667
Issue date	19 Jun 1996	19 Jun 1996
Maturity date	18 Sept 1996	18 Dec 1996
Coupon	-	-
Amount applied	HK$7,200 MN	HK$4,330 MN
Amount allotted	HK$1,500 MN	HK$800 MN
Average yield accepted	5.23 PCT	5.44 PCT
Highest yield accepted	5.23 PCT	5.45 PCT
Pro rata ratio	About 88 PCT	About 60 PCT
Average tender yield	5.25 PCT	5.48 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

Tenders to be held in the week beginning 24 Jun 1996

Tender date	25 Jun 1996
Paper on offer	EF bills
Issue number	Q626
Issue date	26 Jun 1996
Maturity date	25 Sept 1996
Tenor	91 days
Amount on offer	HKD1,500+300MN

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

* * * * *

	$ million	Time (hours)	Cumulative change ($million)
Opening balance in the account	2,160	0930	-203
Closing balance in the account	1,740	1000	-203
		1100	-203
Change attributable to :		1200	-200
Money market activity	-200	1500	-200
LAF today	-220	1600	-200

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 124.1 *-0.0* 18.6.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills

Terms	Yield
1 week	5.05
1 month	5.11
3 months	5.24
6 months	5.45
12 months	5.85

EF notes

Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
2 years	2805	6.30	100.01	6.39
3 years	3904	6.30	99.03	6.79
5 years	5106	7.23	99.65	7.45
7 years	7305	7.60	99.81	7.78
5 years	M502	7.30	99.28	7.63

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - $12,211 million

Closed June 18, 1996

End