



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Star Ferry fare rise approved by ExCo

The Governor-in-Council today (Tuesday) approved a fare increase by a weighted average of 18.9 per cent for the "Star" Ferry Company Limited to take effect in early March this year.

A government spokesman pointed out that the company last revised its fare in December 1994 and with falling patronage and increasing operating costs, it was expected to incur losses in 1996 and 1997.

In approving the rise, the spokesman said, the Governor-in-Council took a number of factors into account, including the financial position of the company, its satisfactory standard of service and the acceptability of the fare increase to the public.

"The impact the fare increase would have on inflation would be minimal," he said.

Details of the fare increase are as follows:

Services	Range of % increase	Increase in money terms
Edinburgh Place - Kowloon Point	19%	20 to 30 cents
Edinburgh Place - Hung Hom	20.7%	20 to 50 cents
Wan Chai - Kowloon Point	17.7%	20 to 30 cents

The spokesman said the approved rate of increase was considered necessary to offset rising operating costs, particularly on pier maintenance and replacement of engine parts in older vessels.

In overall terms, about 90 per cent of the passengers would have to pay only 20 to 30 cents more per trip, he added.

End

Unemployment and underemployment statistics

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The provisional seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period October to December 1995 was slightly lower, at 3.5%, while the provisional underemployment rate was slightly higher, at 2.3%.

These latest labour force statistics are released today (Tuesday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period September to November 1995 was 3.6%, and the underemployment rate was 2.2%.

Commenting on the latest figures, a government spokesman said with the unemployment and underemployment rates in the three months ending December showing little change from the corresponding figures in the three months ending November, the labour market remained generally stable in overall terms.

Underlying the 3.5% unemployment rate was a continued more rapid increase in total labour supply than in total employment.

In the three months ending November 1995, total labour supply rose by 3.4% over a year earlier, while total employment was 1.7% higher.

During the period September to November 1995, the number of unemployed persons with previous jobs was estimated at 99,000. Another 16,100 unemployed persons were first-time job-seekers. The number of underemployed persons was estimated at 68,000.

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were obtained from a continuous General Household Survey.

The survey for September to November 1995 covered a quarterly sample of some 18,100 households or 61,700 persons, selected scientifically to represent the land-based civilian non-institutional population in Hong Kong. Data were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the households sampled.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organisation.

'Seasonally adjusted' refers to adjustment for seasonal variations in the proportion of first-time job-seekers in the labour force.

Detailed analysis of labour force characteristics is given in the report on the General Household Survey which is published four times a year.

The next report covering the quarter ending December 1995 will be on sale at the Government Publications Centre at ground floor, Low Block, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, by the end of March.

End

New measures to promote worksite safety

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The Government will introduce a "Pay for Safety" scheme and an independent safety audit scheme on public works projects as further measures to promote worksite safety.

The Pay for Safety scheme will adopt a reward and penalty procedure to focus contractors more on the requirement for effective planning and implementation of safety measures at worksites.

The scheme will be introduced initially on larger public works contracts in the Bills of Quantities category to be called after March 1. This followed a careful evaluation of a pilot scheme introduced in 1994.

Under the scheme, payment up to 2 per cent of the contract price will be made to a contractor who has fully implemented specific safety items built into a contract.

These will include establishment of a site safety committee, production and review of a safety plan, appointment of safety officer and provision of safety training for workers.

Principal Assistant Secretary for Works, Mr Peter Berry, said: "The two schemes will enable the Government with the assistance of independent safety auditors to monitor more effectively whether a contractor has performed the safety measures as required in the contract terms.

"The Pay for Safety scheme will identify sums payable for carrying safety measures and penalise contractors for their non-performance in accordance with the contractual requirements."

Mr Berry continued: "By linking performance of safety items with payment, it will take away pressure on contractors to compromise safety for the sake of returning a more price-competitive bid in a tendering exercise or in the subsequent implementation of safety plans proposed in their bid.

"In addition, independent auditors will visit worksites to evaluate a contractor's performance. They will check whether the safety management procedures and other measures listed in the safety audit are being implemented."

The audit scheme will be managed by the Occupational Safety and Health Council and will be introduced gradually on the advice of the Council.

The "Pay for Safety" scheme and independent auditing procedure have the support of the Hong Kong Construction Association and the Construction Advisory Board.

"The Government aims to extend the two schemes gradually to all public works contracts. We hope the private sector will adopt similar procedures in their management of worksite safety," said Mr Berry.

End

Statement on MTR incident

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In response to media enquiries, a Transport Branch spokesman said the Government would study the MTRC report on the incident of December 29, 1995, carefully. He said the Government Chief Inspecting Officer of Railway had been asked to follow up the matter with MTRC and to make recommendations.

End

Gurkhas fly to Nepal on road-building project

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Seventy soldiers, the main body of men from 67 Gurkha Independent Field Squadron, Queen's Gurkha Engineers (QGE), fly out to Nepal this week to begin work on a major road building project.

As part of Exercise Holdfast, and under the command of Major Alistair Sheppard, they will join an advance party of 50 soldiers to assist the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) build the first proper road to the capital of the Everest region. Remaining there until March, they will carry out work on the Katari to Okhaldhunga Road, in Sagarmatha, east Nepal.

This is the second year that Gurkhas from 67 Independent Field Squadron, QGE, have returned to their homeland to assist the RNA in what is destined to be a 10-year project.

During their stay they will live in a self-built base camp in the Himalayas, south of Mount Everest.

Exercise Holdfast, which aims to practice and develop the Squadron's engineering and construction skills, will also provide significant benefits for the Nepali people.

End

Royal Marines raise funds for children

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A 10-man detachment of Royal Marines, which will return to the United Kingdom in early February, are giving up their spare time to raise money for two charities - the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children, and the Hong Kong branch of Save the Children.

The event, to be called "Rent-a-Royal", is to take place from January 19 to 23.

It will run along the lines of the traditional boy scouts "Bob-a-Job" where the Royal Marines will be available to do various jobs around the house such as washing up, walking the dog, or helping with the shopping.

The charge for their service will be at a rate of \$100 per hour.

In support of the event, the Bull and Bear Pub (Central) will hold a party on Saturday (January 20). It includes a raffle and numerous prizes have been donated by local businesses.

All monies raised during the week and at the raffle will be evenly divided between the two charities.

End

65 pollution cases in December

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A total of 65 convictions were recorded in the courts last month (December) for breaching anti-pollution legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Among them, 18 were convictions made under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance, 23 under the Noise Control Ordinance, 10 under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, another 10 under the Waste Disposal Ordinance and four under the Dumping at Sea Ordinance.

The fines imposed on the offenders ranged from \$1,000 to \$70,000. Evergreen P C B Factory Ltd was fined \$70,000 for discharging polluting matter in the North Western Water Control Zone.

End

Weather of 1995

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In 1995, eight tropical cyclones necessitated the hoisting of local Tropical Cyclone Warning Signals as compared to the annual average figure of about six and the No 8 Gale or Storm Signal was hoisted three times.

The first half of the year was particularly dry with rainfall amounting to only 427.6 millimetres, 57 per cent below the normal of 992.5 millimetres for the same period and the fourth lowest on record.

However, the heavy rainfall in July and August associated with active southwest monsoon and tropical cyclones contributed to an overall annual total of 2,754.4 millimetres, 24 per cent above the annual mean of 2,214.3 millimetres. Furthermore, the annual mean pressure of 1,013.7 hectopascals was the second highest on record.

January was cloudier than normal. The total duration of bright sunshine in the month amounted to 117.9 hours, 34.5 hours below normal. The first thunderstorm of the year was reported on January 3.

It was on the whole slightly cooler and drier than normal in February. Generally fine and dry weather occurred during the first 12 days of the month but cloudy and rainy conditions prevailed thereafter.

March was dry in terms of rainfall. The monthly rainfall of 32.4 millimetres was 52 per cent below the March average. It was also marginally cooler than normal with a mean air temperature of 17.9 degrees.

April also had less than normal rainfall. The monthly rainfall of 76.3 millimetres was 53 per cent below the average for April. It was a little warmer than normal with a mean air temperature of 22.5 degrees. Heavy rain on April 19 brought the first flood warning of the year and hail was reported in Tai Po.

The 20.8 millimetres of rain recorded in May was only seven per cent of the May norm, making it the second driest May on record. Under the influence of a hot maritime airflow, a maximum temperature of 34.2 degrees was reached on 30 May, the fourth highest for the month of May.

June was unusually warm and dry. The mean daily minimum temperature of 27.1 degrees and the mean air temperature of 28.7 degrees were the highest and the third highest values respectively for June since records began in 1884.

The month was also the sixth consecutive month this year with below-normal rainfall with only 243.9 millimetres, 65 per cent of the June norm. However, heavy downpours on June 14 and 18 necessitated the issuance of the Rainstorm Red Warning.

July was very wet with above average monthly rainfall registered for the first time this year. The total rainfall in the month, 668.7 millimetres, was more than twice the average, making it the seventh wettest July on record.

With unsettled conditions associated with low pressure troughs and active southwest monsoon characterised the weather, there were seven days with rainfall of over 50 millimetres. The Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal was hoisted for the first time in the year with the approach of Severe Tropical Storm Gary.

August was extremely wet. The total rainfall of 1,090.1 millimetres, about two point eight times the normal of 391.4 millimetres, was the highest for the month of August and the third highest for any month since records began in 1884. The rain was mostly brought about by active southwesterlies in the wake of Severe Tropical Storm Gary and by the passage of Severe Tropical Storm Helen, Severe Tropical Storm Lois and Typhoon Kent.

This month was also the first August since 1946 when the No 8 Gale or Storm Signal had to be hoisted twice within the month. Torrential rain fell from August 12 to 14 amounted to 448.3 millimetres causing around 60 landslides.

The two most disastrous occurred at Chai Wan where a teenager was crashed to death by a wall of rocks and mud, and at Nam Long Shan where boat yards were buried under thousand tonnes of mud killing two persons and injuring four. An international flight encountered turbulence on the approach to the Hong Kong International Airport on August 14. Forty-seven passengers and crew were hospitalised.

September 1995 was the 10th driest September on record. The total rainfall of 81.4 millimetres was 73 per cent below the normal value.

October 1995 was the fifth wettest October on record. On three days during the first week, daily rainfall exceeded 100 millimetres. The total monthly rainfall of 476.9 millimetres was more than three times the normal figure. Typhoon Sibyl came close to Hong Kong in the beginning of the month, necessitating the hoisting of Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No 8.

November was dry with only 1.8 millimetres of rainfall recorded against a normal of 35.1 millimetres. The relative humidity dropped to only 17 per cent on November 24, the lowest on record for November. Fire Danger Warnings had to be issued for 19 days in the month. About 160 cases of hill fire were reported on November 1.

With the prevalence of the winter monsoon, December was generally fine and dry. Fire Danger Warnings had to be issued for 18 days in the month. Frost was reported at the Sha Tin Race Course on the morning of December 31.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

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Tender date	16 Jan 1996	16 Jan 1996
Paper on offer	EF bills	EF bills
Issue number	Q603	H656
Issue date	17 Jan 1996	17 Jan 1996
Maturity date	17 Apr 1996	17 Jul 1996
Amount applied	HK\$7,920 MN	HK\$8,380 MN
Amount allotted	HK\$1,500 MN	HK\$800 MN
Average yield accepted	5.36 PCT	5.33 PCT
Highest yield accepted	5.36 PCT	5.33 PCT
Pro rata ratio	About 69 PCT	100 PCT
Average tender yield	5.37 PCT	5.35 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

Tenders to be held in the week beginning 22 Jan 1996

Tender date	22 Jan 1996	23 Jan 1996	23 Jan 1996
Paper on offer	EF notes	EF bills	EF bills
Issue number	3901	Q604	Y685
Issue date	23 Jan 1996	24 Jan 1996	24 Jan 1996
Maturity date	25 Jan 1999	24 Apr 1996	22 Jan 1997
Tenor	3 years	91 days	364 days
Amount on offer	HK\$500+100MN	HK\$1,500+300MN	HK\$500+150MN
Coupon	5.57 PCT		

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	<u>\$ million</u>	<u>Time (hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative change (\$million)</u>
Opening balance in the account	1,897	0930	+109
Closing balance in the account	2,166	1000	+109
Change attributable to :		1100	+109
Money market activity	+69	1200	+109
LAF today	+200	1500	+69
		1600	+69

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 123.5 *+0.1* 16.1.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.48	2 years	2711	5.60	100.51	5.37
1 month	5.42	3 years	3810	6.15	101.78	5.52
3 months	5.38	5 years	5012	6.38	102.13	5.96
6 months	5.36	7 years	7211	6.82	103.71	6.24
12 months	5.31	5 years	M502	7.30	104.62	6.27

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$16,525 million

Closed January 16, 1996

End