



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Hong Kong joins WTO Government Procurement Agreement

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Hong Kong will soon become a party to the World Trade Organisation Agreement on Government Procurement following a unanimous agreement by all signatories of the Agreement on December 5 to accept Hong Kong's participation.

The Agreement on Government Procurement provides for a set of rules that govern the procurement of goods and services by government and other public entities of signatories.

Under the Agreement, each signatory is obliged to treat the products, services and suppliers of other signatories in public procurement as if they were of domestic origin.

The Agreement also stipulates very detailed rules on tendering procedures, technical specifications and challenge procedures. The objective of all these requirements is to ensure that foreign products and suppliers can compete on a level playing field with domestic products and suppliers for public procurement contracts.

"We are pleased that Hong Kong can become a party to the Agreement. This will provide greater opportunities for our exporters and suppliers to tap into overseas government procurement markets," a Government spokesman said.

"Our participation in the Agreement would also reinforce the confidence of overseas and local suppliers in our already open and non-discriminatory government procurement system."

The exact coverage for each signatory is defined in its schedule of commitment attached to the Agreement.

Hong Kong's schedule includes the procurement of goods, services and construction works above certain specified contract values by all government departments as well as by the Urban and Regional Councils, Hospital Authority, Housing Authority, Airport Authority, Mass Transit Railway Corporation, and Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation.

The Agreement was first concluded in 1994. Although Hong Kong participated actively in the negotiations then, it did not sign the Agreement because other negotiating parties included at the final stage of negotiations some discriminatory provisions in the Agreement which were objectionable in principle to Hong Kong.

"We have now secured agreement from signatories to remove the discriminatory provisions targeted specifically against Hong Kong, and to conduct an early review of the Agreement with a view to removing other discriminatory elements," the Government spokesman explained.

Other parties to the Agreement include Canada, the twelve member states of the European Community, Israel, Japan, Korea, Aruba, Norway, Singapore, Switzerland and the US.

End

\$20 billion earmarked for upgrading drainage system

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The Drainage Services Department is committed to a programme of works to upgrade the sewerage, sewage treatment and storm drainage systems at a total estimated cost of around \$20 billion over the next 10 years.

This was stated by the Director of Drainage Services, Mr John Collier, at the opening ceremony of the Drainage Services Department Open Day at Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works today (Saturday).

"Every day, two million cubic metres of wastewater are generated and discharged into our surrounding waters. If left untreated, it would damage our natural environment," he said.

Also officiating at today's Open Day were two former directors of the Drainage Services Department, Mr Ng Yee-yum and Mr Siu Chuen.

The Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works, one of the largest of its kind in Southeast Asia, is open to the public today as part of the "Serving the Community Week" programme.

The plant provides full biological treatment to the sewage entering the plant and is capable of serving an ultimate population of 500,000 in Sha Tin and Ma On Shan. Similar secondary treatment plants are in operation in Tai Po, Fanling and Yuen Long.

Mr Collier said that new capital projects for extending our sewerage and sewage treatment systems were at various stages of planning, design and construction.

"These include new sewers being laid over the entire territory under the sewerage master plans and new sewage treatment facilities in Pokfulam, Sham Tseng and Lantau Island.

"On completion of the \$9.4 billion High Priority Programme, wastewater from areas around Victoria Harbour will be collected and conveyed through a network of deep tunnels to the Stonecutters Island sewage treatment works for chemical treatment before discharging through a long submarine outfall into the sea," he said.

Turning to flood protection, Mr Collier said major drainage works were being carried out in the New Territories to build up a comprehensive river channel system for carrying away flood water to the sea.

These works include training by stages of Shenzhen River, Indus River and Beas River in the northern areas, and the on-going training of Shan Pui River and Kam Tin River in the north-western part.

"Upon completion by 2002, they will bring significant relief to the flooding problem in the New Territories," Mr Collier said.

To augment the main river training project, village flood protection schemes are being completed.

"They typically comprise earth bunds around the villages to protect them from flood water overflowing the river banks, and a flood pumping station to pump away the surface runoff collection within the villages.

"Fifteen schemes are currently in operation with another 12 schemes under construction, planning and design.

"Other short term measures include local drainage improvement works, maintenance activities to identify and remove drain blockage, and surveillance activities to ensure that the integrity of the drainage system is preserved," he added.

Looking ahead, Mr Collier said one of the department's major initiatives this year was to carry out the Drainage Master Planning Studies.

"The studies will review the condition and performance of the existing stormwater drainage system, and provide a comprehensive and prioritised programme for upgrading the stormwater drainage system to meet the present and future development needs," he said.

Mr Collier said another area of concern was drainage impact arising from developments.

"Proponent of infrastructural projects are now required to carry out drainage impact assessments whenever there is potential adverse drainage impact" he said.

Mr Collier pointed out that in the past, maintenance of many of the main watercourses passing through private land was also a problem.

"However, the Land Drainage Ordinance enacted in 1994 has provided for a better control of these watercourses.

"To protect the community from the risk of flooding, government's effort alone is not sufficient. The society as a whole needs to act responsibly to avoid blocking the stormwater drainage system so as to minimise the likelihood of flood occurrence," he stressed.

End

SG to visit US

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The Solicitor General, Mr Daniel R Fung, QC, will engage in a speaking tour in the United States of America next week to reassure influential members of the American Government, Congress and the investing public of the continuation of Hong Kong's legal system post 1997.

During his tour, he will meet officials of State Department, Senators, Congressmen, businessmen, lawyers, members of influential think-tanks, and be giving interviews to both the print and electronic media.

Mr Fung will depart this (Saturday) evening and before his return to Hong Kong on December 13 will have taken up 13 speaking engagements and briefings in New York and Washington.

His programme in New York includes briefing the Business Council for International Understandings, an interview by the Wall Street Journal and a luncheon meeting with the National Committee on US-China Relations and the Hong Kong Association of New York.

While in Washington, Mr Fung is invited as a keynote speaker to address the Atlantic Council US Conference on "China 2010: The Rule of Law and Prospects for Institutionalizing Change". He will give an account on Hong Kong's role in contributing to the establishment of the rule of law in China.

He will meet with Senator Craig Thomas, and is scheduled to meet with the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Mr Winston Lord, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Mr Jeff Bader, and attend briefings for US think-tanks, Congressional staffers and the Council on Foreign Relations.

Mr Fung will also address the US-China Business Council, US Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers and will give an interview to the CNN programme - "World View".

The theme of the speaking tour is the "Rule of Law in Hong Kong and its impact on the Chinese legal system".

Mr Fung will be accompanied by Mr Llewellyn Mui, Senior Crown Counsel of the Legal Policy Division of the Legal Department.

End

Public briefing session on ECR7 Consultation Document

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Members of the public are invited to participate in a briefing session next Saturday (December 14) to give their views on quality school education, the theme of the Education Commission Report No. 7 Consultation Document.

The briefing, which will be held at Wellington College in Telford Gardens, Kowloon Bay, at 10 am, is one of a series of sessions conducted by the EC to solicit views from various sectors on the recommendations in the consultation document.

Present at the briefing will be the EC Chairman, Professor Rosie Young; an EC member, Ms Sansan Ching; and officials of the Education Department.

Similar briefings are scheduled for Legislative Councillors, principals, teachers, school councils and sponsors, advisory boards and committees, education faculties of tertiary institutions, and District Board members during the two-month consultation ending on January 15.

A spokesman for the Education Commission said today (Saturday): "The views collected will be taken into account before finalising and presenting the recommendations to the Government early next year.

"The Consultation Document was published on November 19 with recommendations aimed at helping schools to improve their performance and ensuring that resources for school education are used in the most effective, efficient and accountable manner.

"It represents the Commission's vision of a quality school education system which will have lasting benefits to the generations to come," the spokesman said.

The major recommendations are on the development of school-based management; the introduction of pilot incentive schemes for schools; the establishment of a framework for developing and monitoring quality of school education; the role of the Education Department; and training of key players in the school system.

This is the second phase of the Commission's two-round consultation exercise to gauge public response. The first round of public consultation on broad principles was held in June this year.

Copies of the ECR7 Consultation Document are available at all district offices and the sub-offices of the Education Department. It is also available at the E-mail address: embinfo@emb.gcn.gov.hk.

Views can be forwarded before January 15, 1997 to the Secretary, Education Commission, ninth floor, Central Government Offices (West Wing), 11 Ice House Street, Central (fax: 2537 4591 or e-mail address: embinfo@emb.gcn.gov.hk.)

End

Round-the-clock emergency services for dangerous buildings

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The Buildings Department received a total of 500 calls for emergency services to remove dangers from buildings during the first 11 months this year, the Assistant Director of Buildings (Structural Engineering), Mr Ng Hon-keung, said today (Saturday).

About 25 per cent of the cases involved loose finishes and rendering, 15 per cent on advertising signs, while about 12 per cent were related to dangerous appendages or canopies.

Other problems ranged from structural defects of building, unstable slopes, dangerous scaffolding to defective drains or leakage.

Mr Ng said that the Buildings Department, in recognition of the importance of public safety, was committed to maintain a 24-hour services to the community.

"The Department provides expert advice on private buildings and developments in case of danger. Our professional officers attending an emergency scene will make an initial assessment of the situation and decide what immediate action should be taken in order to protect public safety.

"In many cases, government contractors are called to carry out emergency works to remove dangers from the affected building," Mr Ng said.

During office hours, emergency calls are directed to the relevant case officers. After office hours, two professional officers are on emergency call on a rotation basis. They will be informed of emergencies by the police control and command centre.

Mr Ng pointed out that the department had pledged a performance standard of inspecting and responding to any emergency situation within three hours.

"We are glad that in 1995, we had met our performance target in 97.4 per cent of the cases. The shortfall was mainly due to the engagement of the duty officers in other emergency cases or heavy traffic condition," he said.

When tropical cyclone No. 8 warning signal is hoisted or the rainstorm black warning is issued, or during a major emergency situation, an emergency duty centre will be set up at the Buildings Department office.

Professional officers will be on duty round-the-clock at the centre to provide and co-ordinate expeditious professional services to handle dangerous buildings, private slopes, scaffolding, or advertising signs.

Noting that the emergency system had been functioning for more than 20 years, Mr Ng said that it would be reviewed from time to time to see how best the services can be improved.

"Through its 24-hour emergency services, the Buildings Department undertakes to provide a safe and healthy building environment for our community," he said.

End

Late payment of wages incurs fine

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Labour Department today (Saturday) reminded employers that wages have to be paid at the end of a wage period and in any case not later than seven days thereafter.

Sonic Asia Limited was recently fined \$40,000 in Sha Tin Magistracy for not paying wages to an employee within the statutory period.

Acting Senior Labour Officer (Prosecutions), Mrs Tonia Leung, said section 25 of the Employment Ordinance stipulated that on termination of employment, wages and any other sums due should be paid to the employee on the day of termination and in any case, not later than seven days after termination of employment.

"Moreover, under section 23 of the ordinance, wages are due at the end of the wage period, and must be paid on expiry of the wage period and in any case, not later than seven days after the end of the period," she added.

Any employer who fails to comply with these provisions commits an offence which upon conviction may incur a fine of \$200,000 and one year's imprisonment.

"Employees whose wages are not paid within the statutory period could approach the Labour Relations Service for advice and assistance," Mrs Leung said.

End

Seminar to promote sound building management

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Members of Owners' Corporation (OCs) and Mutual Aid Committees (MACs) as well as residents and various government departments should work together closely to promote sound and effective building management, Wan Chai District Officer, Mrs Elaine Tang, said today (Saturday).

Speaking at the closing of the 1996 Wan Chai Building Management Seminar, Mrs Tang said the Wan Chai District Office and Wan Chai District Board had all along taken steps to promote building management.

"The District Office organised for the first time a workshop in September to share with OCs and residents in Wan Chai the concepts of good building management," she said.

"I hope the seminar in these two days would further increase participants' understanding and encourage their adoption of correct building management techniques."

During the seminar, representatives from the Fire Services Department, a lift company, the Hong Kong Electric Company, the Buildings Department, a survey company and the Urban Services Department, and a lawyer, each gave a talk on building management from their professional perspective to more than 200 residents as well as members of OCs and MACs.

Topics discussed included fire precautions, lift maintenance and repairs, examination of electrical installations, unauthorised buildings works, major building repair works, environmental hygiene, deed of mutual covenant and Building Management Ordinance.

The two-day seminar was jointly organised by Wan Chai District Office and Wan Chai District Board's Environmental Improvement Committee with the aim of raising participants' awareness of effective building management.

End

Tsing Yi Fire Station open day

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Tsing Yi Fire Station will be open to members of the public from 10 am to 5 pm tomorrow (Sunday).

The open day is part of the Fire Services Department's effort to promote the 1996/97 Fire Prevention Campaign.

Members of the public visiting the fire station will have a chance to learn more about fire prevention.

They can see various types of modern fire appliances such as hydraulic platform, major pump and turntable ladder.

They can also see various kinds of fire-fighting and rescue equipment, including fireman's chemical protection suit, thermal imaging camera and defibrillator.

Two fire-fighting and rescue demonstrations by firemen will take place at 10.30 am and 3 pm respectively.

There will be a set of display boards on fire safety advice. A video tape on fire prevention in industrial premises will also be shown.

Officers from the department's Fire Protection Bureau will be on hand to give fire safety advice and to distribute information leaflets to visitors.

Tsing Yi Fire Station is located at 11 Tsing Yi Heung Sze Wui Road, Tsing Yi.

Meanwhile, Tai Po Fire Station will hold an open day on December 15 (Sunday) in support of the fire prevention campaign.

Wong Tai Sin Fire Station and Sai Wan Ho Fire Station will also be open to members of the public in January and February.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

		<u>Time</u>	<u>Cumulative change</u>
Opening balance in the account	4155 MN	0930 HR	+550 MN
Closing balance in the account	4860 MN	1000 HR	+550 MN
Change attributable to:		1100 HR	+550 MN
Money market activity	+550 MN	1130 HR	+550 MN
LAF today	+155 MN		

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 124.9 *+0.2* 7.12.96

Closed December 7, 1996

End

Governor's Letter to Hong Kong

The following is the broadcast of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, on Radio Television Hong Kong's "Letter to Hong Kong" this (Sunday) morning:

Later this week, the first Chief Executive of the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong will be selected. It will be a proud moment for him, a proud moment for his family, and a proud moment for Hong Kong.

The winner will have gone through a long and, I'm sure, often demanding selection process. But I'm equally sure that he will be pleased that the process didn't exclude public questioning and public campaigning. The candidates have had to say where they stand on the issues. They've had to get out into the community - meeting interest groups and political parties, seeing problems for themselves, discussing livelihood issues and matters of high politics.

The process is a reflection of how much more open Hong Kong has become. People these days expect to be involved, to have access, to be able to ask questions. I'm sure that expectations of doing things in a more accountable way are here to stay.

I've made it clear that once a Chief Executive Designate is chosen, we will extend a warm hand of friendship. We want to co-operate within - naturally enough - the terms of the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. And I believe the whole community will want to see co-operation and a willingness to work together all round. What we are talking about, after all, is securing the good government and the well-being of Hong Kong.

I don't wish to appear unrealistic. The Chief Executive and I are not going to be able to agree on everything. For example, he will know our position on the Provisional Legislature. But I for my part will do all in my power to work closely and sensibly with the Chief Executive (Designate) in the interests of Hong Kong.

It will be in that spirit that we'll be offering the Chief Executive an à la carte menu of co-operation and support, not a table d'hote. We don't want to say, "Here's what we propose - take it or leave it". Nor do we want to overwhelm the Chief Executive with effusive good ideas. He's his own man. He'll have his own plans. His own agenda. His own working style. But I hope that we'll be able to satisfy his requests.

There's one very obvious distinction to make. What happens in Hong Kong after 1997 is his responsibility. It's for him to answer for that, and for him to determine and shape that. Those are not matters for me, and I won't seek to interfere in them.

But what happens before 30th June next year is just as clearly my responsibility. And Article 30 of the Joint Declaration pledges China's co-operation in my discharge of that responsibility. I intend that Hong Kong should continue to be run as competently and decisively as possible, while being well aware of the ticking of the clock and the passing of the hours.

We're not in a countdown to the end of good government in Hong Kong. It's my duty to ensure that Hong Kong is well run before the middle of next year in order to make certain that the government after that has a secure and broad foundation. Good government in Hong Kong, good government anywhere, can't be turned on and off like a car engine.

The foundations today - just taking a rain check on where we've got to - are in good shape. Who predicted a few years ago that the economy would be as strong today as it is? Our institutions are also very healthy - the civil service, the police, the courts system. We've got a comprehensive network of community programmes. We're investing heavily in our infrastructure. Crime is falling. All of that doesn't mean that there are no problems ahead. There are. The Chief Executive candidates themselves have focused on some of these. We have to go on working away at our competitiveness. We have to address new social needs when they arise. But we're well placed to tackle those issues. There's money in the bank - and a lot of international goodwill, too.

So while the Chief Executive will have one of the toughest jobs in the world, he's going to be running a thriving city. Hong Kong is a going concern. The job will be a vast challenge for the Chief Executive, but not an impossible one and not a challenge bereft of interest, excitement and sheer enjoyment.

The Chief Executive will also know that the whole community is willing him to do well, that everyone will want him to make a big success of the job. Because his success will be Hong Kong's success. That is a source of great strength and should help him to take all those decisions that will help to convince Hong Kong opinion and international opinion that Hong Kong is going to remain free, largely autonomous, stable and prosperous.

There's one other issue that I want to mention this morning in order to put some doubts that arose this week to rest. Let me repeat today what I told the Legislative Council on Thursday afternoon. British passports received under the British Nationality Selection Scheme - the BNSS - are identical to British citizen passports received through any other route. They are the same passports as my passport or John Major's passport. The British Government draws no distinction whatsoever between passports acquired under the BNSS and British citizen passports acquired in any other way - and nor, after 30 June next year, will the British Consulate-General in Hong Kong.

What is the issue that has caused anxiety this week? It is whether holders of BNSS passports would receive consular protection from the British Consulate-General in Hong Kong after 1997. People are worried that because they hold passports acquired under the BNSS rather than in any other way, that an official at the door of the Consulate would turn them away. That is not true. As far as Britain and the British Consulate are concerned, a British citizen is a British citizen, full stop. It doesn't matter how you got your passport, and officials at the Consulate will not ask that question.

It is the case - and this is a matter of international law - that those who hold dual nationality are not entitled to receive formal consular protection in the country or territory of their second nationality. This limitation, which Britain accepts, applies to all British citizens regardless of how they acquired their citizenship. A note about it is printed in every single British passport, including mine. But that does not mean that Britain will regard any BNSS recipient seeking consular protection at the British Consulate as automatically being a dual national. The officials at the Consulate will, I repeat, not know whether someone is a BNSS recipient from his or her passport, and they will not ask. As far as they are concerned, it is completely irrelevant. If you present yourself at the Consulate with a British citizen passport, claiming to be a solely British citizen, then the Consulate will accept that at face value and act on your behalf - unless it is presented with acceptable evidence of dual nationality, such as an SAR passport. And what if you do have dual nationality? In that case, the Consulate will not just wash its hands and turn you away. It is true that it won't be able, formally, to assist you. Note the word formally. It can and will do everything it can to help - just as Britain does today when Hong Kong residents get into difficulty, for example in China.

So, let me repeat, BNSS passport holders will get exactly the same treatment from the British Consulate - whether dual nationals or not - as every single British passport holder around the world from Panama to Papua New Guinea. I hope that we can set those anxieties to rest.

End

Public invited to attend hearing on Metro Broadcast

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Members of the public are invited to attend a hearing for the mid-term review of Metro Broadcast's sound broadcasting licence.

The public hearing, to be organised by the Broadcasting Authority, will take place at Studio Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, from 7 pm to 10 pm on Wednesday (December 11).

The licence of Metro Broadcast Corporation Limited was first granted in 1991 for a term of 12 years, expiring in 2003. "The licence carries a condition providing its renewal by the Governor in Council on a date not before June 1, 1997," a spokesman for the Broadcasting Authority said.

"As the statutory body regulating the commercial broadcasters in Hong Kong, the Authority will evaluate the licensee's performance against the various statutory requirements and licence conditions and consider whether to recommend any changes to these conditions," he added.

The hearing will concentrate mainly on the station's performance in the areas of programming and advertising. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided.

"We call on members of the community to come forward to express their views on how well the licensee has performed in these two areas," he said.

The Chairman of the Broadcasting Authority, Sir Roger Lobo, and the Commissioner for Television and Entertainment Licensing, Mr Eddy Chan, will address the opening of the hearing. The Deputy Secretary for Broadcasting, Culture and Sport, Mrs Rita Lau, will also be present.

Further enquiries can be made at the Office of the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority at 2594 5725.

End

Discussions on AIDS services development

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Provision of services to people living with HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong was discussed at the first meeting of the new term of AIDS Services Development Committee of the Advisory Council on AIDS (ACA) held recently.

At the meeting, the committee supported the Government's aim of integrating AIDS services into other health programmes in Hong Kong, through the establishment of suitable health care services.

Members were concerned about objections against the Kowloon Bay Primary Health Care Centre and Nursing Home for the Elderly.

They understood that this might result in unnecessary delay in the provision of much needed services planned for people living with HIV/AIDS and those with other health needs.

The committee also noted the progress made by Hospital Authority and the community in planning for the provision of hospice care to people living with HIV/AIDS. This point would be reviewed by the committee from time to time.

The AIDS Services Development Committee is one of the three committees under the ACA. The chairman of the new term committee is Dr Homer Tso, who has been appointed to ACA since 1993.

The terms of reference of the committee are:

- * to recommend on the strategy of developing clinical and support services for HIV infected individuals in Hong Kong;
- * to co-ordinate available services and facilitate their accessibility to people with HIV/AIDS and their relatives who require them; and
- * to evaluate the quality and availability of AIDS services in the territory.

End

ED's new performance pledges launched

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The Education Department has launched its new performance pledges with new targets and services to further improve its efficiency.

The department pledges to provide immigrant children from China aged between six and 15, who have arrived in Hong Kong for less than one year, with special programmes to adapt to the school environment.

Another new target is to set up by stages an information system in public sector schools.

It is expected to extend the computer network to about 1,100 schools and offered 40,000 computer training places to school staff before September 1998.

The department further commits to help children seeking admission to public sector schools up to Secondary Three by arranging the first interview within 14 working days and admission within three months.

The department also pledges to issue teacher registration certificates or teaching permits between January and August within 25 working days, shortened by three days.

The period committed to complete processing of applications for provisional school registration between December and July is also shortened from 30 to 25 working days.

Among other pledges for teachers, the department is committed to provide training and resources to support new initiatives for quality school education.

In order to serve the public better, the department also provides fact sheets, leaflets and booklets on its major services and response promptly to telephone enquiries.

If replies cannot be provided immediately, the department will return call as soon as possible and in any case within two working days.

The department launched its performance pledges in 1993. Since then most of the targets have been achieved.

Enquiries should be directed to the department's Serving the Community Section on 2961 7435.

End

Injured employees should be duly paid

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The Labour Department today (Sunday) reminded employers that periodical payment for an injured employee have to be paid within seven days after the due day for payment.

The principal contractor and the employers of two injured employees, who had sustained injuries in a construction site in Kennedy Road, were recently fined a total of \$73,500 in Eastern Magistracy for failing to pay periodical payments within the statutory period.

Labour Officer (Prosecutions), Mr Raymond Ho, said that under section 10 of the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, injured employees are entitled to receive periodical payments calculate at the rate of two-thirds of the monthly earnings at the time of accidents on their normal pay-days.

Failure to comply with this provision is liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000 with effect from July 1, 1996.

End