



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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/Second dose



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CABLE NEWS AND TELEVISION
HONG KONG

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Transcript of the Governor's media session

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Following is the transcript of the media session by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, after the Summit on Employment this (Thursday) afternoon:

Governor: Good afternoon. We have had another useful discussion on employment. This is the third of the summits that we have had on employment. The first was in the summer of last year, then we had a second one in November of last year when the unemployment rate stood at 3.6 per cent, and this was the third and it was against a background, I think, of considerable improvement in the employment situation which we very much hope will be sustained.

Unemployment now stands at 2.9 per - fallen from 3.6 per cent. It is the lowest level for 14 months and the aggregate figure is that the number of people unemployed has fallen from 110,000 to about 90,000. There have also been improvements in the underemployment figures as well, so it definitely represents a move in the right direction which I think is largely a result of the figures for the creation of new jobs and the figure for the number of people in the labour market coming into line. They had drifted out of balance last year with such a large number of people joining our labour force here in Hong Kong, both because of returning emigrants and for other demographic reasons as well.

The improvement in the position does not make any of us complacent, and I don't think should take our eye off the long term which all my colleagues, the other panellists representing employers and employees, were very keen to focus on today.

There are a number of things that have to concern us and continue to concern us. The first is the improvement of our labour market programmes. We have, I think, successfully developed our local employment services and our job matching programme. The numbers who are gaining employment with the help of those programmes has increased very steadily but we obviously want to be even more proactive and even more successful with those programmes.

We have also, of course, taken tougher measures against illegal employment, increasing the number of people who have been involved in policing the labour market and increasing the penalties for abuses and for breaking the law importing illegal labour.

Thirdly, we have of course been attempting to establish schemes for the importation of labour which meet our requirements as a modern developed economy while at the same time carrying the support of employers and employees. Now, that has not proved easy but we want to continue to try to work with employers and employees to get the best possible balance and to get a programme which everybody thinks in the circumstances is a reasonable one for an economy like ours which is still growing at a steady rate, a trend rate of about 5 per cent a year.

For the longer term - and I repeat it is where our panellists concentrated their attention - for the longer term what we have been particularly concerned about is to ensure that Hong Kong has the vocational training and the retraining that we need. We have had a couple of consultancies looking at those two issues. We will be consulting widely on the way ahead and I hope that we will be able to agree to proposals with the employers and employees which will ensure that we are able to improve our skill base in Hong Kong and give people the opportunity of moving from one area of employment to another as quickly as possible.

The Financial Secretary of course announced in his Budget a number of measures for giving greater assistance to the service industries which are now such an important source of employment in Hong Kong but that does not mean that we can forget the extremely important role played by manufacturing, and we will continue to try to work with our manufacturers to meet their principal requirements.

Overall, the best way we can help sustain high levels of employment in Hong Kong is by retaining our competitive edge. The international think-tanks have been pretty complimentary about us over the last year and of course so has the International Monetary Fund, but we are always open to advice and always aware that we have got to keep ahead of the competition. But I am grateful for everybody who took part in the discussion today. As ever the conversation was a lively one and I am sure the debate will continue well after today's summit.

Question: Governor, some trade unions, while welcoming what they call 'short term improvements' say that the Government's proposals do not go far enough. How would you react to this criticism?

Governor: I think I mentioned that what we are most concerned about is what is done in the long term and there I think the focus has got to be on training, on retraining, above all, and I hope that the measures that we bring forward in both those areas will command the confidence of the employees as well as the employers.

Question: Governor, my question is not about employment, but recently the Hong Kong people held a demonstration against ... strong protest the occupation of Japan of the islands. So what is your opinion about this?

Governor: It is of course a foreign policy issue and therefore not one on which it is really appropriate for me to comment. But of course I recognise the strength of feelings locally. I hope those feelings will continue to be expressed in an orderly and restrained and dignified fashion. And like everybody else, I hope that that dispute and others in the region can be solved peacefully as soon as possible.

Question: But some of them have been looking for boats to the island to demolish the Japanese lighthouse. Do you think it is a rational decision as there may be dangers?

Governor: I very much hope that the issue can be solved peacefully and through discussion.

Question: Mr Patten, I wonder ... according to a survey the real wages of the employees have been ... So do you think really there is a real improvement and what will the Government do to lift the living standard of the employees?

Governor: A lot of the employees' representatives today were claiming that there had been some reduction, certainly in comparison with inflation, in real wages. I think over the years real wages have been increasing as Hong Kong's economy has grown. Certainly the latest figures, I think, on wages suggest that there has been a real increase. The most important thing the Government can do is to abate inflation, as we have been doing. It is now about half the level it was at the year before I arrived as Governor in Hong Kong. I think that it is important as well for Government to ensure that employees and businesses on their profits pay as low taxes as possible.

What is I think always difficult for employees to understand is why governments in some other places take such a high proportion of their income in tax. Fortunately, that is not the case here.

Question: Mr Patten, as the Government promised some more things will be done on the employees retraining programme, does it mean that the Government will financially inject into the ... ?

Governor: We want to make sure - it is a point that we have made clear to Mr Tam - we want to make sure that he has in the retraining board the resources that are required to do the job which our economic needs themselves require, so we do not want to see training or retraining starved of funds.

Question: Governor, what is your reaction to the judicial review this morning about civil servants serving on the Selection Committee?

Governor: We believe that the policy we have pursued is the right and sensible one. We think it has been striking a good balance between on the one hand allowing civil servants over the years to pursue their political interests, their interests as citizens, while on the other hand retaining the public's faith in the political neutrality of the civil service. We think that the arrangements that we had proposed as far as the Preparatory Committee and the Selection Committee were concerned were sensible arrangements and we are pleased that they have received a legal endorsement again today.

Question: Governor, I would like to ask you one question. There are a lot of employers claiming that the supplementary labour scheme is not really working and that they ask you to speed up the scheme. What do you think?

Governor: We think that it is early days. We think that the figures will look a lot more substantial over the coming weeks and months as the LAB process a large number of applications and the visas follow those applications. We have promised, as you know, a full scale review of the scheme when the figure of people using the scheme reaches 2,000 but in the meantime we will take account of all the proposals put to us by employers and employees. It is in everybody's interests that we have as effective and efficient a scheme as possible. We have had a number of particular proposals put to us by the Hong Kong employers and by others and we will be looking at them.

Question: Mr Patten, does that mean that you won't do anything as far as the importation of labour is concerned - I mean the quota, the importation quota is concerned, the Government won't do anything until the review is carried out?

Governor: We are always in the position of wanting to improve our administrative arrangements if we can do so but there won't be a fundamental review of the scheme until we have reached the 2,000 figure. In the meantime we will make any improvements which seem to us to be sensible.

Question: Governor, you mentioned that the long term work of the Government, the Government's plan to tackle the unemployment situation is to put emphasis on the training and retraining side and we know that there are two consultation studies - on the VTC and ERB. Can you disclose something about the result and what will the Government specifically do to improve the training and retraining ...?

Governor: I think it would be both unwise and unreasonable of me to say what we are proposing to do before we have consulted on those studies because we want to have the advice of the employers and employees as well as, of course, as the informed and experienced input that we will get from the Employees Retraining Board, and in addition to that from those who have been involved in vocational training in Hong Kong for many years.

We are talking about a huge contribution to the skills of our work force. We are talking, I suppose, in any one year of the training which about 150,000 Hong Kong people, Hong Kong men and women receive. That is an enormous contribution to their well-being and it is a considerable contribution to Hong Kong's as well. We don't have any natural resources in Hong Kong except the people who live here and that is why investment in education and training is so vitally important and that is why we want to work with Mr Tam and the Employees Retraining Board and we want to work with the Vocational Training Council in ensuring that Hong Kong has a first-class set of training arrangements as well as a first-class education system. Thank you very much indeed.

End

Governor's Employment Summit opening statement

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Following is a transcript of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten's opening statement at the third Summit on Employment held today (Thursday):

Good afternoon and welcome. I feel slightly discriminated against - there is no bitter melon today.

When we held the last summit on employment about 10 months ago in November last year, it is worth recalling that our unemployment rate was at what I think was a ten year high point of 3.6%. As one might expect in a dynamic economy like ours, the labour market has undergone very considerable changes since then.

I think it is useful to have this meeting today and I am grateful to all of you for attending when I know you have got many other responsibilities. I think it is a useful time for us to take stock of the latest developments in the labour market, to look at the results of what we have done so far to tackle the unemployment and related problems, and perhaps to exchange views about what has gone wrong and what may have gone slightly better. We will be interested to hear from you about any improvements you think we should make in our existing labour market arrangements or any changes that we should make to the measures introduced during the last nine or 10 months.

We also need, obviously, to chart a course for human resources development in Hong Kong for the 21st century, and that has a particular bearing on what we do about training and retraining.

Let me say a few words about the latest labour market situation. During the past ten months we have obviously seen some encouraging improvements. The provisional seasonally adjusted unemployment rate has fallen from the then high of 3.6 to 2.9 per cent. It is the first time it has fallen below 3% in the past 14 months with the number of unemployed people coming down from the peak figure of over 110,000 from August to October 1995 to around 90,000 at the latest count. The underemployment rate has also fallen gradually from 2.2% around November last year to 1.6% in the three months ending June 1996. There have been a number of factors underlining these encouraging indicators.

First there has been an across the board strengthening in demand for labour in various major service sectors as well as in the construction sector - that is the one that of course was most hard hit by the unemployment problem over the past year - and that has been shown by a sustained pick-up of employment in these sectors.

Second, there has been a gradual downward adjustment in the growth rate of total labour supply towards a level close to the growth in total employment. You may remember that at the time of the last summit we had seen quite a substantial increase in the number of jobs being created in the economy, but an even larger increase in the supply of labour which was working in Hong Kong.

The number of vacancies has fallen from slightly over 50,000 in September last year to 41,300 in December, and then risen again to around 49,000 in the spring of this year, in March. And that, I suppose, indicates there are still plenty of jobs available in the market.

Against the decline in the number of unemployed persons and the improvement in the vacancy situation there has been a reduction in the net shortfall of vacancies over the unemployed in the labour market, mainly as a result of first a drop in the total net shortfall of vacancies over the numbers employed - that has been mostly in manufacturing, restaurants and hotels and the wholesale and retail trades; second, the rise in the net surplus of vacancies over the numbers unemployed in the import/export sector, in financing, in insurance, in real estate and in business services; third, there has been a slight decrease in the net shortfall for certain jobs, including clerical jobs, service and shop sales jobs and those requiring little or no skill; and finally, there has been a noticeable increase in the surplus of vacancies in the professional, associate professional and technician categories. These improvements are obviously largely driven by general economic factors but the package of measures to tackle the unemployment problem which we promulgated during the last two summit meetings has certainly played a part in the process.

During the past 10 months I think we have made good progress on measures first of all to help local workers find jobs by expanding our job matching and placement services. Second, to protect the employment interests of local workers by tackling illegal employment - as you know, we have put much more effort into that and of course increased the fines. And thirdly, to deal with a genuine manpower shortage facing employers by introducing the Supplementary Labour Scheme which I imagine will once again be the subject of some discussion and occasional disagreement during the course of this afternoon if what I heard on the radio this morning was anything to go by.

But there is no room for complacency. We still need to redress the mismatch and to help the unemployed and displaced workers to find jobs. We will therefore continue with these efforts with vigour and will endeavour to improve their effectiveness. Both the Secretary for Education and Manpower and the Secretary for Security will expand on these areas in their presentations a little later.

On top of these measures we are planning to take things forward, to chart the way ahead, in respect of employment, vocational education and retraining basing on the results of the consultancy studies we have recently undertaken on vocational education, on employees retraining and on age discrimination in employment. And Joseph will later explain to you in detail our latest thinking on all these aspects of the labour market.

On measures to facilitate economic development much has been done to sustain and promote the development of the services sector, and the Financial Secretary is going to speak on this in a moment.

The success of these employment related measures so far shows how effective it can be if both employers and employees do work together for the common good of the community. To map the way forward I certainly have to count on you all again for your continued co-operation.

What I would now like to do is to invite my colleagues from the Administration to report on the progress we have made since November last year. Then I would like to ask the panellists representing both the employers and the employees to set out their views. And then we will have a general discussion inviting you to comment from the floor - and there will be no discrimination against those who wear ties or fail to wear ties, I can assure you of that.

Can I first of all ask you, Donald, if you could begin the discussion.

End

Governor's Employment Summit closing statement

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Following is the transcript of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten's closing statement at the third Summit on Employment held today (Thursday):

Perhaps I can just try to summarise what was becoming, I think, an agreeably more lively discussion as we went on.

As in previous meetings we have heard the concerns of employers and employees put forward very clearly and cogently. I think to be fair and to respond to Mr Lee Cheuk-yan, maybe today it was employers who were talking more about the importation of labour, but certainly at previous meetings it has been the representatives of employees who have spoken cogently and eloquently about the importation of labour, so I don't think it is fair to, as it were, turn the tables on the employers in that way.

What we are trying to find - and I am sorry if the attempt to find a consensus is regarded by some people as irredeemably wet - but what we are trying to find is an approach to the importation of labour which meets our requirements as a modern developed economy and which can carry the support of both employers and employees. Now if we have got it wrong, if we have moved too far in a particular direction, if there are improvements in our bureaucratic arrangements that we could make, then we will want to do that and we will want to do it with as much support as possible, using the admirable institutional machinery of the LAB.

But I must say I do think that sometimes we get these figures, or some of these figures, slightly out of context. I would like to see the figures for the total increase in labour coming from abroad compared with the sort of figures we have been talking about, even at maximum, through the Supplementary Labour Scheme. We have about a net return of former Hong Kong citizens back to Hong Kong of twenty or thirty thousand a year. We have got all those with professional skills who fall quite outside these arrangements, these schemes. So we are not talking about these very small numbers joining the Hong Kong labour force, we are talking about much larger numbers. And maybe the reason why we don't acknowledge that sufficiently is we are not quite sure that we like the political consequences of doing so. But the fact of the matter is that there are quite a lot of people joining our labour market from other countries every year.

The other thing that I think it is important for us to remember is this is an economy which is increasing the number of jobs in it by 3 to 3.5 per cent a year. There are of course some economies around the world and around the region which are doing better than that but it is a pretty good striking rate. And we are, it is worth noting, doing that year after year, increasing the number of job opportunities for people in this economy.

I think that it is important for us to focus, as far as we can, on the ways in which we can continue to improve the mechanisms of the labour market to put people without a job in touch with the vacancies which are still there. I think it is extremely important that, as a number of speakers have suggested, that we work very rapidly after the studies have been completed on vocational training and on retraining to make sure that we have got the best possible arrangements for raising the skill levels of our workforce and allowing workers to move from one sector to another. And it is of course important for us, as Peter was saying earlier, to clamp down vigilantly on illegal employment and to make sure that unscrupulous employers and illegal workers are warned of the consequences of what they are doing.

The long term was touched on by the Financial Secretary in his contribution. The importance of us maintaining a highly competitive economy, the importance of us helping some of the new sectors where there is so much employment, like in services, without ignoring the important contribution which manufacturing makes to our economic well-being.

Most of the adjustments that have been made in our economy over the years have been made by the private sector, by adjustments within what is still perhaps the most open market in the world. I totally accept that there is an important role for government to support those market driven changes but I must say I would be pretty suspicious of any proposition that the Government itself should start intervening more and the Government should try to second-guess the market and try to get into the business once again which some European governments have done, with I think considerable damage to their economies, of attempting to discover winners and back them only to discover invariably that they were actually pouring a lot of money into losers.

The job for government is to make sure that we have the right educational skills, to make sure that we have the best sort of training, to make sure that we run our economy with the lowest possible tax with the maximum macro-economic success. And I think, to be honest, that if we can go on getting the sort of reports that we had recently from the International Monetary Fund, we won't be doing badly. I think that is an objective for all of us.

We will follow up the ideas and the proposals which have been put forward today. We are obviously particularly concerned at the number of employers who have been raising some of the difficulties they have experienced with the Supplementary Labour Scheme. We will look at those without, I hope, getting the figures out of context and without ignoring what is happening overall in the labour market to which the SLS even if we had got to the 2,000 level would be making a very small contribution.

But thank you once again all of you for coming here today. I make no excuse whatsoever for trying to build a consensus on these issues. There is in Hong Kong a surprising degree of social stability and political moderation in comparison with other places in the region and other places in the world and I think those things are worth hanging on to and I am grateful to all of you for the contribution you make to that. Thank you very much.

End

Efforts to match job seekers and vacancies continued

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The Government, with the support of employers and employees, has managed to achieve good results in tackling unemployment and redressing the 'mismatch' in the labour market.

However, the Government believes that long-term solution lies in equipping the territory's workforce with the necessary skills and expertise to cope with changing demands of the economy.

This was stated today (Thursday) by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, when addressing the third Governor's Summit Meeting on Employment.

Mr Wong said the two separate consultancy studies commissioned by his Branch to study the direction, strategy and management structure of the Vocational Training Council and the Employees Retraining Board were nearing completion.

"The relevant bodies and other interested parties will shortly be consulted on the recommendations.

"The Government is determined to ensure the provision of the most efficient, cost-effective and market responsive training and retraining programmes for our workers well into the 21st century", Mr Wong said.

Noting that the 'mismatch' in the labour market was largely a product of the restructuring process of Hong Kong's economy, Mr Wong said the Government had been using a three-dimension approach to solve the problem.

They include: (a) helping the unemployed find jobs to fill the vacancies in the market; (b) implementing a suitable labour importation policy to cope with the possible manpower shortage facing employers; and (c) ensuring that the labour force possess the requisite skills to cope with the needs of the Hong Kong economy in the longer term.

To help the unemployed rejoin the workforce was the Government's top priority in solving the employment problems, Mr Wong stressed, pointing out that the Labour Department had expanded its free employment services to cater for the needs of different job-seekers.

From November 1995 to July 1996, the Local Employment Service (LES) of the department had placed over 19,500 job seekers as against around 14,000 for the same period last year, representing an increase of 46 per cent.

Within LES, the Job Matching Programme (JMP) has been open to unemployed job-seekers of all ages from February. The service has been made more efficient with the installation of a computer network system at all the nine LES offices to facilitate the sharing of vacancy information.

As at the end of July, a total of 10,244 job-seekers have registered with JMP and 5,928 job offers have been secured for them, representing a consistent success rate of around 75 per cent, up from 64 per cent at the time of the last Summit.

Other arrangements put in place by the Labour Department are: a Job Matching Centre tasked with matching job-seekers to fill vacancies under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS); an outreaching placement service for providing on-the-spot registration service to workers affected by major retrenchments; and the Special Placement Service for the New Airport and Related Projects.

In addition, the Airport Authority and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation have jointly operated a job centre for the airport related projects.

Mr Wong appealed to employers who are looking for staff, and workers who may need employment assistance, to make good use of these services.

On labour importation scheme, he reiterated that the objectives of SLS were to ensure that local workers would have priority in employment, and that only those employers who were genuinely unable to recruit local workers for certain vacancies would be allowed to import workers to fill such places.

He encouraged employers and employees to give their views when the administration conduct a review of the Scheme after 2,000 visa applications have been approved.

Outlining the significant changes that had been introduced when SLS was introduced in February, Mr Wong said the administration had dispensed with the much-criticised industry quota system by allowing each application to be considered on its own merits, mainly through the wage and job requirement screening process and the mandatory local recruitment test.

In addition, SLS is a more open and transparent scheme than the previous General Labour Importation Scheme as the operation is being monitored by the Labour Advisory Board. So far, 900 applications for imported workers covering a wide variety of posts have been approved.

To guard against abuses of the labour importation schemes, the Labour Department has introduced a series of measures such as stepping up inspections, conducting more on-site briefings for workers to familiarise them with their rights and benefits and setting up a 24-hour complaints and interactive telephone enquiry service.

End

Considerable successes action against illegal employment

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The Government has achieved considerable successes in recent months in combating illegal employment through a combination of enforcement action, legislative and administrative improvements and public education, the Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, said.

With the doubling of the size of the Immigration Task Force since last October, Mr Lai said from January to August this year the Immigration Department had conducted 985 anti-illegal employment operations, including joint operations with the Police and the Labour Department.

"As a result, 3,024 illegal workers, and 1,139 suspected employers of illegal workers have been arrested. Some 2,328 illegal workers and 415 employers have been prosecuted," said Mr Lai at the Governor's third Summit Meeting on Employment this (Thursday) afternoon.

He stressed that these results should not be seen as a matter of short-term expediency as the Government had always regarded the combating of illegal employment one of its priorities.

He said prosecution of both illegal workers and employers of illegal workers had been increasing since 1993.

"We prosecuted 2,531 illegal workers in 1993; we prosecuted 4,683 illegal workers in 1995.

"In 1993, we prosecuted 519 employers of illegal workers; in 1995 we prosecuted 1,170 employers," he said.

The increases, since January, in the maximum fines for employing illegal workers (from \$250,000 to \$350,000) and for taking up unapproved employment (from \$5,000 to \$50,000), have helped enhance the deterrent effect of enforcement actions.

Mr Lai noted that after the revisions, there had been a conspicuous increase of fines imposed by the courts on both illegal workers and their employers.

"For example, fines for employers of illegal workers have increased from the \$2,000 to \$7,500 range in December 1995, to the \$2,000 to \$50,000 range in July and August 1996.

"Fines for employers aiding and abetting breaches of condition of stay (including employment) have also increased considerably from the \$2,000 to \$5,000 range in December 1995, to the \$2,500 to \$20,000 range in July and August 1996.

"In early August this year, a restaurant was fined \$50,000 for employing a person not lawfully employable. In serious cases, custodial sentences of three to 12 months were imposed," he said.

Mr Lai said legislative and administrative measures were being taken to overcome two obstacles to effective prosecution of employers who employ contract workers illegally.

To clarify the current definition of the term "lawfully employable" in the Immigration Ordinance, a bill has been introduced to amend the ordinance to make non-permanent residents not lawfully employable if they breach a condition of stay imposed on them.

Mr Lai said the bill was being considered by the Legislative Council, and its enactment would help the authorities to prosecute those employers who hired or directed contract workers to perform illegal work more effectively.

The second obstacle stems from the fact that an identity card does not indicate whether the holder is restricted to a specific job and employer.

"To overcome this obstacle, we are seeking to amend the law to impose a duty on the employer to inspect both the Hong Kong identity card and the travel document held by job-seekers who are not holders of permanent identity cards," Mr Lai said.

To assist employers in checking the travel documents of their prospective employees, a new bilingual and enlarged immigration stamp for contract workers has been introduced setting out clearly that the travel document holder is only allowed to work for a specific employer under a specific contract, and that change of employer is not permitted.

Mr Lai noted that the new stamp had been put on the travel documents of foreign domestic helpers and imported workers with effect from May this year; and that it was anticipated that the travel documents of all contract workers would bear the new stamp in about a year's time.

Another measure to facilitate employers to ascertain the employability of prospective employees is to issue all contract workers with identity cards carrying the W-prefix.

Workers imported under the various importation of labour schemes have already been issued with such identity cards. Starting in December last year, W-prefix identity cards have also been issued to foreign domestic helpers who enter Hong Kong for the first time, or who apply for replacement of lost or damaged identity cards.

"We are looking at ways to accelerate this process in order to complete the replacement of their ordinary identity cards by W-prefix cards in two to three years' time," Mr Lai said.

On public education, Mr Lai pointed out that successes were tangible: 782 complaints of illegal employment were received from January to August through the 24-hour complaints hotline and faxline of the Immigration Department, providing very valuable information to facilitate enforcement actions.

In addition to posters and TV announcements to publicise the criminal liability of both employers and employees, Mr Lai said new TV APIs would be introduced to coincide with the introduction of new legislative measures when enacted.

End

Ways to curb overseas property sales advertisement issued

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A sub-committee of the Law Reform Commission today (Thursday) issued a consultation paper on the ways to curb misleading advertisements for overseas uncompleted residential properties advertised or offered for sale in Hong Kong.

The sub-committee, chaired by Professor Derek Roebuck of the Department of Law of the City University and includes among its members lawyers, architects, surveyors and others with relevant expertise, was appointed by the Commission in November 1992 to consider the sales descriptions of uncompleted residential property.

The study on the first part of the reference relating to local uncompleted flats was finished in September 1994 and the proposals for reform was made to the Commission.

The proposals, which were largely adopted, formed the basis of the Commission report published in April last year on the sales descriptions of local uncompleted residential property.

The consultation paper issued today covers the second part of the sub-committee's study, namely the sales descriptions of overseas uncompleted residential properties including those in the People's Republic of China. The paper also carries interim recommendations.

Professor Roebuck said prospective purchasers of these properties are sometimes given inaccurate, insufficient or even misleading sales information in advertisements and sales literature.

The sub-committee had come to the interim conclusion that these materials should be subject to regulation, he said.

The sub-committee would welcome submissions on the proposals contained in the consultation paper, he said, inviting the public to make their views known in writing by November 18. The sub-committee will present their final proposals to the Commission after taking into account views on consultation.

The main recommendations in the consultation paper are:

- * Any vendor of overseas uncompleted residential property must engage a licensed estate agent in Hong Kong. However, this requirement shall not apply to the sale of a single dwelling.
- * No media in Hong Kong (including television, radio and printed media) shall publish an advertisement for sale of overseas uncompleted residential property unless it refers to a licensed estate agent in Hong Kong, together with the estate agent's licence number. However, the requirements shall not apply to advertisements for the sale of a single dwelling, nor to advertisements of overseas property not put up for sale in Hong Kong.
- * The estate agent who is referred to in the advertisement shall be liable for all false or misleading information in the advertisement and in all sales brochures not forming part of the advertisement.
- * Anything in any advertisement or sales brochure which is false or misleading should constitute a breach of the proposed legislation.
- * Up-to-date sales brochures must be made available to prospective purchasers. It should be the licensed estate agent's responsibility to make available the sales brochure.
- * The sales brochure must be available in Chinese. If there are discrepancies between the Chinese and any other version of the sales brochure, purchasers can choose which version or part thereof is applicable.
- * The sales brochure must state the date of the property being ready for occupation and the grounds on which the date of completion can be extended.

- * The sales brochure must state whether there are any mechanisms for protecting all deposits and instalments paid by purchasers in the event of delayed completion or project failure.
- * Any description of the fittings and finishes in the sales brochure must be accurate.
- * Anything stated in advertisements or sales brochures about gifts and benefits including nationality schemes must be accurate and not misleading.
- * The Hong Kong definition of saleable area must be adopted in all sales brochures and advertisements of overseas uncompleted residential property. The saleable area must be disclosed in the sales brochure.
- * All the recommendations should be enforced by legislation.

End

Government statement on the outcome of judicial review

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The government issued the following statement on the judgment delivered by Mr Justice Sears today (Thursday) to dismiss the application for judicial review filed by the Senior Non-Expatriate Officers Association:

"We are naturally very pleased that the Court has found our guidelines to be reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances.

"Our aim has all along been to balance two important principles. The first, the civil service must be and must be seen to be impartial and politically neutral. The second is the legitimate expectation of civil servants in general to participate in public affairs.

"We think the balance we have struck is the right one and we are pleased that the Court has agreed."

End

CS to launch first Hong Kong promotion in Australia

* * * * *

The Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, will lead a delegation to Australia in late September to launch the first Hong Kong promotion in the country.

This promotion is jointly organised by the Government, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) and the Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA).

This is part of a continuing effort by the Administration to promote Hong Kong overseas. In June, the Chief Secretary had led an overseas promotion in the United States following a successful one in Japan in September last year.

Announcing details of the Australia visit, a government spokesman said today (Thursday) the "Hong Kong-Australia, Partners in Asia Pacific" promotion would take place in three Australian cities - Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne - from September 23 to 27.

The main objectives of the promotion are to strengthen economic links and trading relationship between Australia and Hong Kong, and to boost Australian confidence in Hong Kong's future, the spokesman said.

Mrs Chan will also take the opportunity to officially open the Hong Kong and Economic and Trade Office (HKETO) in Sydney on September 23 and to sign the Hong Kong/Australia Agreement on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters.

During the visit, the Chief Secretary will call on other senior Australian politicians, government officials and community leaders.

Business delegates will join her in roundtable discussions with local business leaders in Sydney and Melbourne and she will also deliver keynote speeches at business luncheons in the two cities. In Canberra, Mrs Chan will make a luncheon speech at the National Press Club.

HKTDC will organised a half-day seminar entitled "Hong Kong-Australia: building a new Pacific partnership" in both Sydney and Melbourne.

Speaking at the seminar and associated workshops will be some of Hong Kong's leading businessmen. Plenary speakers include the Secretary for Economic Services, Mr Stephen Ip; Executive Director of HKTDC, Mr Michael Sze; Chairman of the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, Mr Alfred Chown; Vice Chairman and Chief Executive of Hang Seng Bank, Mr Alexander Au; Chairman and Chief Executive of Gold Peak Industries (Holdings) Ltd, Mr Victor Lo; Managing Director of Cathay Pacific Airways, Mr Rod Eddington; and Managing Director of Leighton Asia Ltd, Mr John Falkner.

Workshop speakers include the Deputy Chief Executive of the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Ltd, Mr Herbert Hui; Managing Director of Salomon Brothers Hong Kong Ltd, Mr Trevor Rowe; Director of Maunsell Consultants Asia Ltd, Mr Richard Garrett; Chairman of Hong Kong Coalition of Services Industries (HKCSI), Mr Brian Stevenson; Chairman of Professional Services Committee, HKCSI, Mr Anthony Griffiths; President of Law Association for Asia and the Pacific, Mr Donald Yap; Senior Assistant Director (Regulatory), Office of the Telecommunications Authority, Mr Anthony Wong; and Chairman of INFA Telecom Group, Mr Peter Tsang.

Apart from business seminars and luncheons, the promotion will also feature a pop concert produced by Television Broadcasts Ltd (TVB) at the Sydney Town Hall on September 24.

Pop singer Frances Yip and an Australian singer will stage a cabaret show at a gala dinner hosted by HKETO on September 23.

For events organised by HKTA, an 18-metre tall lantern, the world's biggest, will be put on display for two weeks in Queen Victoria Building, Sydney, from September 20 to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival.

On September 27, HKTA will launch a Hong Kong Food Festival at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Melbourne.

End

New measure to encourage hotel development

* * * * *

The Government has decided to exclude back-of-the-house facilities from plot ratio calculation for hotels, the Director of Buildings, Dr Choi Yu-leuk, announced today (Thursday).

"This is to encourage the development of more new hotels in Hong Kong," he said.

Under the existing policy, hotels are regarded as non-domestic development with a plot ratio up to 15 times of the site area, depending on the limits set on statutory outline zoning plans.

Areas designed for setting-down and picking-up of hotel users have already been exempted from the plot ratio computation.

Dr Choi said the new measure will indirectly increase the gross floor area for about five per cent.

"Hong Kong, as one of the most popular travel destinations in the world, attracts millions of overseas visitors each year. The demand for hotel rooms has been on the increase.

"In the first half of this year, the Buildings Department received seven new hotel building plan submissions, compared with a total of eight submissions in 1995.

"The Government is committed to promoting the territory's tourism industry. We hope that the new concession will encourage the building of more new hotels with a view to further boosting our tourism," he said.

To qualify for exemption from the new plot ratio computation, the back-of-the-house facilities should comply with the following criteria:

- * in reasonable size, its location practical and designed only for the intended purpose;
- * accessible to hotel staff only; and
- * abuse of use is impossible or unlikely.

The areas acceptable as back-of-the-house facilities include workshops, storage areas, or facilities for the welfare of staff. While shops, restaurant, cinemas and any commercial areas to which the general public has access will not be approved.

A practice note containing details of the new measure has been issued to all authorised persons and registered structural engineers.

End

External trade statistics by country and commodity for July

* * * * *

Detailed statistics on external trade with breakdown by country/territory and commodity for July 1996 was released by the Census and Statistics Department today (Thursday).

In July 1996, the value of re-exports grew by 11% over a year earlier to \$111.1 billion, while the value of domestic exports decreased by 6.1% to \$20.8 billion. Meanwhile, imports increased by 3.5% to \$138.6 billion.

Changes in the value of Hong Kong's re-exports to 10 main destinations are shown in Table 1.

Comparing July 1996 with July 1995, increases were recorded in the value of re-exports to the United Kingdom (+27%), Japan (+16%), France (+16%), China (+13%), the Netherlands (+13%), the United States (+12%), Germany (+11%) and South Korea (+4.4%).

However, the value of re-exports to Taiwan and Singapore decreased by 3.5% and 1.8% respectively.

Comparing the first seven months of 1996 with the same period in 1995, the value of re-exports to most main destinations showed increases of various magnitudes: Japan (+24%), the United Kingdom (+16%), France (+13%), China (+8.9%), Germany (+8.6%), the Netherlands (+8.5%), Singapore (+6.7%), South Korea (+6.0%) and the United States (+1.5%).

However, the value of re-exports to Taiwan decreased by 4%.

Taking all destinations together, the value of re-exports in the first seven months of 1996 was \$661.9 billion, 7.6% higher than that in the same period in 1995.

Table 2 shows changes in the value of re-exports of 10 principal commodity divisions.

Comparing the first seven months of 1996 with the same period in 1995, the value of re-exports of most principal commodity divisions rose.

More notable increases were registered for office machines and automatic data processing machines (by \$7.4 billion or 24%); electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof (by \$7.2 billion or 12%); clothing (by \$5.2 billion or 11%); miscellaneous manufactured articles consisting mainly of baby carriages, toys, games and sporting goods (by \$4.9 billion or 6.7%); photographic apparatus, equipment and supplies, optical goods, watches and clocks (by \$3.5 billion or 13%); and footwear (by \$3.1 billion or 8.9%).

Over the same period, a decrease in the value of re-exports was registered for telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment (by \$698 million or 1.1%).

Changes in the value of domestic exports to 10 main destinations are shown in Table 3.

Comparing July 1996 with July 1995, the value of domestic exports to most main destinations showed decreases of various magnitudes: Taiwan (-34%), Singapore (-21%), the United States (-9%), Japan (-5.2%), Canada (-4.4%), the Netherlands (-2.6%), France (-2.3%), Germany (-2.3%) and China (-1.9%).

However, the value of domestic exports to the United Kingdom increased by 6.9%.

Comparing the first seven months of 1996 with the same period in 1995, the value of domestic exports to most main destinations showed decreases of various magnitudes: Singapore (-12%), the United States (-11%), Canada (-9.8%), Taiwan (-9.5%), the Netherlands (-9.4%), France (-8.7%), Germany (-7.6%), China (-5%) and Japan (-1.9%).

However, the value of domestic exports to the United Kingdom increased slightly, by 1.3%.

Taking all destinations together, the value of domestic exports in the first seven months of 1996, at \$120.1 billion, decreased by 7.8% over the same period in 1995.

Table 4 shows changes in the value of domestic exports of ten principal commodity divisions.

Comparing the first seven months of 1996 with the same period in 1995, decreases in the value of domestic exports were recorded for office machines and automatic data processing machines (by \$3.1 billion or 28%); clothing (by \$2.8 billion or 7%); telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment (by \$1.2 billion or 20%); miscellaneous manufactured articles consisting mainly of jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares (by \$1.1 billion or 9.7%); and photographic apparatus, equipment and supplies, optical goods, watches and clocks (by \$775 million or 8.1%).

Over the same period, increases in the value of domestic exports were registered for electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof (by \$790 million or 4.6%); and professional, scientific and controlling instruments and apparatus (by \$176 million or 11%).

Changes in the value of imports from 10 main suppliers are shown in Table 5.

Comparing July 1996 with July 1995, increases were recorded in the value of imports from Italy (+25%), Singapore (+21%), the United Kingdom (+12%), China (+9.4%), Malaysia (+5.3%), South Korea (+4.7%) and Germany (+4.6%).

However, the value of imports from the United States, Japan and Taiwan decreased by 11%, 3.5% and 1.8% respectively.

Comparing the first seven months of 1996 with the same period in 1995, increases were recorded in the value of imports from Italy (+19%), Malaysia (+18%), the United Kingdom (+12%), Singapore (+11%), the United States (+6.5%), China (+5.5%), Germany (+2.3%) and South Korea (+0.8%).

However, the value of imports from Japan and Taiwan decreased by 7.3% and 3.3% respectively.

Taking all sources together, the value of imports in the first seven months of 1996, at \$872.4 billion, increased by 3.2% over the same period in 1995.

Table 6 shows changes in the value of imports of 10 principal commodity divisions.

Comparing the first seven months of 1996 with the same period in 1995, increases in the value of imports were registered for electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof (by \$8.9 billion or 8.7%); office machines and automatic data processing machines (by \$7.5 billion or 20%); clothing (by \$3.2 billion or 6.1%); miscellaneous manufactured articles consisting mainly of baby carriages, toys, games and sporting goods (by \$2.5 billion or 4.4%); and general industrial machinery and equipment, and machine parts (by \$2.3 billion or 8.8%).

Over the same period, decreases in the value of imports were recorded for textiles (by \$3.1 billion or 3.9%); and non-metallic mineral manufactures (by \$832 million or 3.2%).

All the trade statistics described here are measured at current prices and no account has been taken of changes in prices between the periods of comparison.

A separate analysis of the volume and price movements of external trade for July 1996 will be released in early October 1996.

Detailed trade statistics analysed by commodity and by country/territory are published in trade statistics reports.

The July 1996 issue of the Hong Kong External Trade with detailed analyses on the performance of Hong Kong's external trade in July 1996 will be on sale at \$129 per copy around September 23.

The report can be purchased at either the Government Publications Centre, ground floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, or the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th Floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

Enquiries regarding regular subscription to this report may be directed to the Publications (Sales) Office, 28th Floor, Siu On Centre, 188 Lockhart Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong, Tel 2598 8194, and enquiries on trade statistics to the Census and Statistics Department, Tel 2582 4915.

TABLE 1 : RE-EXPORTS TO TEN MAIN DESTINATIONS

DESTINATION	JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JUL 96 OVER JUL 95 (% CHANGE)	JAN-JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JAN-JUL 96 OVER JAN-JUL 95 (% CHANGE)
CHINA	37,572	+ 13.5	10,237,009	+ 8.9
UNITED STATES	25,494	+ 11.6	129,612	+ 1.5
JAPAN	6,846	+ 16.3	44,443	+ 24.1
GERMANY	4,492	+ 10.6	26,897	+ 8.6
UNITED KINGDOM	3,660	+ 26.6	19,134	+ 15.8
SINGAPORE	2,338	- 1.8	15,406	+ 6.7
TAIWAN	2,244	- 3.5	15,076	- 4.0
SOUTH KOREA	1,760	+ 4.4	11,636	+ 6.0
FRANCE	1,789	+ 15.7	10,615	+ 12.6
NETHERLANDS	1,767	+ 13.0	10,076	+ 8.5

TABLE 2 : RE-EXPORTS OF TEN PRINCIPAL COMMODITY DIVISIONS

COMMODITY DIVISION	JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JUL 96 OVER JUL 95 (% CHANGE)	JAN-JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JAN-JUL 96 OVER JAN-JUL 95 (% CHANGE)
MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (MAINLY BABY CARRIAGES, TOYS, GAMES AND SPORTING GOODS)	15,761	+ 9.8	78,703	+ 6.7
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	11,041	+ 13.9	69,095	+ 11.7
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	10,952	+ 3.3	64,164	- 1.1
TEXTILE YARN, FABRICS, MADE-UP ARTICLES AND RELATED PRODUCTS	8,758	+ 11.3	55,266	+ 1.6
ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES	10,283	+ 13.9	53,940	+ 10.7
OFFICE MACHINES AND AUTOMATIC DATA PROCESSING MACHINES	6,365	+ 41.9	38,295	+ 24.1
FOOTWEAR	6,712	+ 14.5	38,008	+ 8.9
PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES, OPTICAL GOODS, WATCHES AND CLOCKS	5,324	+ 27.4	30,860	+ 12.8
TRAVEL GOODS, HANDBAGS AND SIMILAR CONTAINERS	3,328	+ 0.7	20,835	+ 2.5
GENERAL INDUSTRIAL MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT, AND MACHINE PARTS	2,446	+ 8.7	18,907	+ 9.4

TABLE 3 : DOMESTIC EXPORTS TO TEN MAIN DESTINATIONS

DESTINATION	JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JUL 96 OVER JUL 95 (% CHANGE)	JAN-JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JAN-JUL 96 OVER JAN-JUL 95 (% CHANGE)
CHINA	5,595	- 1.9	34,547	- 5.0
UNITED STATES	5,580	- 9.0	29,218	- 11.1
JAPAN	1,009	- 5.2	6,774	- 1.9
GERMANY	1,361	- 2.3	6,443	- 7.6
SINGAPORE	835	- 20.9	6,324	- 11.9
UNITED KINGDOM	1,181	+ 6.9	5,933	+ 1.3
TAIWAN	469	- 33.8	3,913	- 9.5
NETHERLANDS	637	- 2.6	2,752	- 9.4
CANADA	477	- 4.4	2,249	- 9.8
FRANCE	319	- 2.3	1,643	- 8.7

TABLE 4 : DOMESTIC EXPORTS OF TEN PRINCIPAL COMMODITY DIVISIONS

COMMODITY DIVISION	JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JUL 96 OVER JUL 95 (% CHANGE)	JAN-JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JAN-JUL 96 OVER JAN-JUL 95 (% CHANGE)
ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES	8,078	- 4.8	36,962	- 7.0
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	2,627	- 4.3	17,963	+ 4.6
MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (MAINLY JEWELLERY, GOLDSMITHS' AND SILVERSMITHS' WARES)	1,680	- 8.2	10,194	- 9.7
PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES, OPTICAL GOODS, WATCHES AND CLOCKS	1,356	- 7.6	8,740	- 8.1
TEXTILE YARN, FABRICS, MADE-UP ARTICLES AND RELATED PRODUCTS	1,224	+ 3.7	7,896	- 4.1
OFFICE MACHINES AND AUTOMATIC DATA PROCESSING MACHINES	1,038	- 27.7	7,746	- 28.3
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	857	- 16.2	4,888	- 20.3
MANUFACTURES OF METALS	412	+ 0.1	2,468	- 8.8
PLASTICS IN PRIMARY FORMS	379	+ 18.5	2,275	- 12.3
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CONTROLLING INSTRUMENTS AND APPARATUS	284	+ 22.4	1,804	+ 10.8

TABLE 5 : IMPORTS FROM TEN MAIN SUPPLIERS

SUPPLIER	JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JUL 96 OVER JUL 95 (% CHANGE)	JAN-JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JAN-JUL 96 OVER JAN-JUL 95 (% CHANGE)
CHINA	54,035	+ 9.4	314,988	+ 5.5
JAPAN	18,938	- 3.5	119,780	- 7.3
TAIWAN	11,003	- 1.8	71,243	- 3.3
UNITED STATES	9,701	- 11.0	69,574	+ 6.5
SINGAPORE	7,408	+ 20.8	48,238	+ 11.2
SOUTH KOREA	6,105	+ 4.7	43,397	+ 0.8
GERMANY	2,996	+ 4.6	19,349	+ 2.3
MALAYSIA	2,853	+ 5.3	19,111	+ 17.7
UNITED KINGDOM	2,976	+ 12.2	18,743	+ 11.8
ITALY	3,105	+ 25.3	17,825	+ 19.2

TABLE 6 : IMPORTS OF TEN PRINCIPAL COMMODITY DIVISIONS

COMMODITY DIVISION	JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JUL 96 OVER JUL 95 (% CHANGE)	JAN-JUL 1996 (HKD Mn.)	JAN-JUL 96 OVER JAN-JUL 95 (% CHANGE)
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	17,544	+ 8.4	110,812	+ 8.7
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	12,044	- 8.2	79,521	- 0.8
TEXTILE YARN, FABRICS, MADE-UP ARTICLES AND RELATED PRODUCTS	11,201	+ 5.7	75,391	- 3.9
MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (MAINLY BABY CARRIAGES, TOYS, GAMES AND SPORTING GOODS)	11,094	+ 3.8	59,256	+ 4.4
ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES	10,218	+ 10.3	55,853	+ 6.1
OFFICE MACHINES AND AUTOMATIC DATA PROCESSING MACHINES	7,702	+ 24.6	45,008	+ 20.0
PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES, OPTICAL GOODS, WATCHES AND CLOCKS	6,085	+ 12.9	35,952	- 0.1
FOOTWEAR	5,607	+ 15.4	32,687	+ 7.4
GENERAL INDUSTRIAL MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT, AND MACHINE PARTS	3,935	+ 14.7	28,884	+ 8.8
NON-METALLIC MINERAL MANUFACTURES	3,904	+ 4.3	25,080	- 3.2

End

Second dose measles vaccine for P6 pupils to be introduced

* * * * *

A second dose of measles vaccine will be introduced to all primary six students with effect from this academic year, the Department of Health announced today (Thursday).

A spokesman for the department said: "The two-dose regime, in line with the strategies in UK and USA, will boost the coverage of the measles vaccine in the population and hence the herd immunity of the disease.

"The second dose will also enhance the immunity of older children, especially those not protected by the first dose."

The vaccination will be administered in the form of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The first dose will as usual be given to infants at one year of age. The second dose will be given to primary six students as part of the school immunisation campaign.

Given at primary six, MMR second dose will also replace the antirubella vaccine hitherto given to all primary six schoolgirls.

Parents are urged to give consent for their children to receive the vaccination in schools. Health education leaflets and consent forms are now being distributed to primary six school children via the school principals.

"Measles is a highly contagious and serious infection. With increased herd immunity, the chances of measles outbreak will be minimised in the territory," the spokesman said.

End

Parade to mark Royal Air Force farewell

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The Royal Air Force will pay a ceremonial farewell to its last station in Asia at the annual Battle of Britain commemoration parade at its base in Sek Kong on Sunday (September 15).

The Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, accompanied by Commander British Forces, Major General Bryan Dutton, will take the salute.

She will receive a ceremonial parchment from Air Vice Marshal (Air Officer Commanding Directly Administered Units) Terry Sherrington, marking the long and close association between the Service and the people of Hong Kong.

Air Vice Marshal Sherrington is visiting Hong Kong from its headquarters at RAF Strike Command, High Wycombe, in the United Kingdom, specially to take part in the parade.

Mrs Chan, accompanied by Senior RAF Officer Hong Kong, Wing Commander Barrie Simmonds, will also be invited to inspect a 24-man parade flight.

The RAF station at Borneo Lines, Sek Kong, will continue for two more months before closure, and the Wessex helicopters of No 28(AC) Squadron will continue to operate in the territory from Kai Tak Airport until June 1997.

However, the annual commemoration of RAF's finest hour, when it repulsed the German air invasion of Britain in 1940, provides the best opportunity for a fitting farewell ceremony to Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has hosted RAF since 1927, when the very first RAF station in the Far East was established at Kai Tak. For over 20 years, it has also been the home of the last RAF station in the region, first at Kai Tak and then, since 1978, at Sek Kong.

The parade will include the final lowering of the RAF ensign and a formation flypast by four Wessex helicopters. It will then be followed by the last Battle of Britain memorial service to be held in St Martin's, the RAF church at Sek Kong.

End

Insider Dealing Tribunal lay members appointed

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The Financial Secretary had appointed Mr Kennedy Liu Tat-yin and Mr Simon Lam Siu-lun as lay members of the Second Division of the Insider Dealing Tribunal to hear the case of Hong Kong Parkview Group Ltd, a government spokesman announced today (Thursday).

The Parkview case is the fifth insider dealing case referred by the Financial Secretary to the Tribunal since the Securities (Insider Dealing) Ordinance came into effect in September 1991.

The spokesman said both Mr Lui and Mr Lam are accountants by profession. Mr Lui had extensive experience in finance, investment consulting and organisation reviews, Mr Lam was the managing director of an accounting firm.

He said the Second Division of the Tribunal would hold a preliminary hearing on the Parkview case on September 17. Chairman of the Second Division of the Tribunal, Mr Justice Burrell, will preside over the inquiry.

At the preliminary hearing, the Tribunal will announce its terms of reference and procedures for the inquiry, state its duties and powers, receive applications for representation and set a date for the main hearing.

The preliminary hearing will start at 4.30 pm at Court No 16, eighth floor, Supreme Court Building.

End

236 VMs depart on orderly repatriation flights

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Two groups totalling 236 Vietnamese migrants (VMs) returned by air to Hanoi, Vietnam, today (Thursday) on the 59th and 60th flights under the Orderly Repatriation Programme (ORP).

All of the returnees, comprising 106 men, 61 women, 31 boys and 38 girls, are from North Vietnam.

The majority of them arrived in Hong Kong in 1989, with the remaining in 1988 and 1996.

The two groups brought the total number repatriated on ORP flights to 5,723 since November 1991.

End

Monitors' report submitted to CS

* * * * *

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

The two monitors comprised a non-official Justice of the Peace, Mr Ho Sai-chu; and representative from a non-government organisation, Mr Tai Kie-ying from Christian Action.

End

Postal services to Burundi temporary suspended

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The Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman, today (Thursday) announced that due to the present situation in Burundi and the economic embargo imposed by its neighbouring countries, it is now not possible to forward any mail to that country.

All postal services to Burundi are therefore temporarily suspended with immediate effect. A further announcement will be made as and when the services can be resumed.

End

The weather of August

* * * * *

August 1996 was cloudier than normal and there were nine days with thunderstorms.

The total monthly rainfall of 308.3 millimetres was 21 per cent below normal, making the cumulative rainfall since January 1 of 1,596.8 millimetres six per cent below the normal for the same period. The stand by signal No 1 was hoisted on two occasions in the month

Typhoon Herb crossed Taiwan on the first day of August. Its circulation brought a hot continental airstream to Hong Kong. The month's highest temperature of 33.5 degrees was recorded during that sunny afternoon.

Cloudy weather with isolated showers were the order of the next few days as winds turned southwesterly. Showers became frequent and thundery particularly over the eastern part of the territory as winds changed to easterly by August 4.

An area of low pressure developed over the northern part of the South China Sea on August 5 and local winds were occasionally strong offshore. It intensified into tropical depression Lisa the next day and necessitated the hoisting of the stand by signal No 1.

Lisa made landfall near Shantou that evening. For the next five days, the weather remained cloudy with isolated showers and southwesterly winds. There were also a few thunderstorms on August 10, then weather cleared by August 12.

Under the influence of an unstable maritime airstream, occasional showers and thunderstorms affected the territory from August 14 to 18. Torrential rain on August 15 caused flooding in many parts of the territory.

Temperatures fell to 22.6 degrees, the lowest in the month, during heavy showers on the morning of August 18. The rainfall recorded during this five-day period amounted to 206.1 millimetres, two thirds of the monthly total.

Winds turned northeasterly on August 18 with fine weather for the next couple of days.

Meanwhile, Typhoon Niki crossed the northern part of the South China Sea. The stand by Signal No 1 was hoisted on August 20. Easterly winds freshened on August 21 and outer rainbands of Niki brought showers to the territory early the next day. Niki made landfall over Vietnam on August 23 but locally cloudy weather prevailed.

Rain and thunderstorms affected the territory on the morning of August 25. The weather then improved gradually becoming fine and sunny by August 27. The month ended with a trough of low pressure from south China which brought heavy and thundery showers to the territory.

Nine tropical cyclones occurred in the western North Pacific and the South China Sea in the month.

Details of the issuance/hoisting and cancellation/lowering of various warnings/signals in the month are summarised in Table 1.1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal of August are tabulated in Table 1.2.

Table 1.1 Warnings and signals in August 1996

<u>Warnings/Signal</u>	<u>Effective date and time</u>
Tropical cyclone warning signals	
<u>Name of T C</u>	<u>Signal No</u>
Lisa	1
Niki	1
	6 Aug 0900 - 6 Aug 2030
	20 Aug 0945 - 21 Aug 2245
Flood warnings	14 Aug 1200 - 14 Aug 1330
	15 Aug 1445 - 15 Aug 1715
Thunderstorm warnings	1 Aug 2255 - 2 Aug 0655
	2 Aug 1100 - 2 Aug 1400
	4 Aug 0910 - 4 Aug 1110
	4 Aug 1920 - 4 Aug 2220
	10 Aug 1215 - 10 Aug 1715
	11 Aug 1015 - 11 Aug 1215
	11 Aug 1505 - 11 Aug 1905
	14 Aug 0215 - 14 Aug 0415
	14 Aug 0950 - 14 Aug 1350
	15 Aug 0200 - 15 Aug 0700
	15 Aug 0950 - 15 Aug 1900
	16 Aug 0645 - 16 Aug 1245
	16 Aug 2230 - 17 Aug 1030
	18 Aug 0430 - 18 Aug 0730
	20 Aug 2030 - 20 Aug 2230
	21 Aug 1830 - 21 Aug 2030
	25 Aug 0600 - 25 Aug 1000
	31 Aug 0300 - 31 Aug 1000
	31 Aug 1950 - 31 Aug 2200

Table 1.2 Figures and departures from normal - August 1996

Total bright sunshine	177.5 hours; 29.5 hours below normal
Mean daily global solar radiation	16.29 MJ/SQM; 1.32 MJ/SQM below normal
Total rainfall	308.3 mm; 83.1 mm below normal
Mean cloud amount	72%; 6% above normal
Mean relative humidity	81%; normal
Mean daily maximum temperature	30.8 Degrees Celsius; 0.5 Degree Celsius below normal
Mean air temperature	28.5 Degrees Celsius; 0.1 Degree Celsius above normal
Mean daily minimum temperature	26.7 Degrees Celsius; 0.4 Degree Celsius above normal
Mean dew point	24.7 Degrees Celsius; 0.1 Degree Celsius below normal
Total evaporation	131.6 mm; 25.3 mm below normal

Remarks: All measurements were made at the Royal Observatory except sunshine, solar radiation and evaporation which were recorded at King's Park.

End

Air quality model for Hong Kong

The Environmental Protection Department today (Thursday) commissioned a consultancy study to develop the first comprehensive air quality model for Hong Kong.

"Future levels of air pollution in Hong Kong will be determined by urban and transportation growth and the effectiveness of air pollution control measures.

"The air quality model will help evaluate air quality implications of major development proposals and fine tune air pollution control requirements," Assistant Director of Environmental Protection, Mr Tse Chin-wan, said.

The model will be run on a computer, using equations and algorithms, that has been developed, modified and tested to suit the hilly and highly urbanised environment of the territory.

"The study will include the compilation of a set of air pollution emission data. Verification work using actual field measurement data and meteorological data will be done to ensure that results obtained by the air quality model will be in line with real life pollution levels," Mr Tse said.

The \$14.9 million consultancy study, scheduled for completion in early 1998, has been awarded to ERM-Hong Kong Limited.

End

Grading of beach water quality

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The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (Thursday) announced the latest gradings of Hong Kong's beaches, based on the bacteriological water quality, for the 1996 swimming season.

The purpose of the grading system is to inform swimmers and the general public about the state of bacteriological pollution at various beaches.

The grading, based on the most recent E coli data obtained by EPD in its routine monitoring programme, will be announced biweekly during the bathing season to coincide with the frequency at which beach waters are usually sampled.

As with last year, the grading also includes an estimate of the risk of suffering some minor skin or gastrointestinal complaints as a result of swimming at a beach which has some degree of pollution.

The estimate is based on a large body of statistical information gathered in Hong Kong in recent bathing seasons.

The grading of some beaches may vary during the summer. This represents a natural fluctuation in the bacteriological quality of bathing waters in most cases, as rain and tides bring more or less pollution to the beaches.

However, the grades give a good general picture of the water quality at bathing beaches at the time of reporting and form the best available forecast for the immediate future.

Beaches with highly developed hinterlands are likely to be more polluted than the grades suggested during and after heavy rain.

"Bathers should avoid such beaches for two or three days after a storm, longer if the weather remains overcast or less if there is strong sunshine," Principal Environmental Protection Officer, Mr Patrick Lei, said.

The system for grading beach water quality is as follows:

Grade "1" indicates that the water quality is good. The E coli count is no more than 24 per 100 millilitres at each beach so graded, and the expected risk of minor illness to swimmers is undetectable.

Grade "2" indicates that the water quality is fair. The E coli count is no more than 180 per 100 millilitres at each beach so graded, and the expected health risk is no more than 10 cases of minor illness per 1,000 swimmers.

Grade "3" indicates that the water quality is poor. The E coli count is no more than 610 per 100 millilitres at each beach so graded, and the expected health risk is no more than 15 cases of minor illness per 1,000 swimmers.

Grade "4" indicates that the water quality is very poor. The E coli count is more than 610 per 100 millilitres at each beach so graded, and the expected health risk is more than 15 cases of minor illness per 1,000 swimmers.

The decision whether or not to close a beach to swimmers is based on a judgement of what degree of pollution is acceptable.

Normally, the closure of a beach would only be considered by the Urban or Regional Council if a grade "4" occurred repeatedly, so that the average health risk over the bathing season exceeded 15 cases per 1,000 swimmers.

At present five gazetted beaches, namely Anglers', Approach, Castle Peak, Rocky Bay and Ting Kau, are closed to swimmers, while Old Cafeteria is re-opened.

The decision to open or close the beaches has been made by the Regional and Urban Councils on the basis of beach water quality monitoring data for 1995. The public are advised not to swim at the closed beaches.

The grades of the bacteriological water quality of various beaches in Hong Kong today are listed below:

Beach	Previous Grading (as at 29.8.96)	Present Grading (as at 12.9.96)
<u>Hong Kong South</u>		
Big Wave Bay (S)	2	2
Chung Hom Kok (S)	1	1
Deep Water Bay (S)	1	2
Hairpin (S)	2	2
Middle Bay (S)	2	2
Repulse Bay (S)	1	2
Shek O (S)	2	2
South Bay (S)	1	1
St Stephen's (S)	1	2
Turtle Cove (S)	2	2
Stanley Main (S)	2	2
<u>Tuen Mun District</u>		
Golden Beach	3	3
Old Cafeteria	3	3
New Cafeteria	3	3
Kadoorie (S)	3	3
Butterfly (S)	3	3
<u>Sai Kung District</u>		
Clear Water Bay 1st Beach (S)	2	2
Clear Water Bay 2nd Beach (S)	2	2
Hap Mun Bay (S)	1	1
Kiu Tsui (S)	1	1
Silverstrand (S)	2	2
Trio (Hebe Haven) (S)	1	1

Islands District

Cheung Sha Upper	1	1
Cheung Sha Lower	4	3
Discovery Bay*	2	1
Hung Shing Yeh	1	1
Kwun Yam Wan	2	2
Tong Fuk	2	2
Lo So Shing	1	1
Pui O	2	2
Silvermine Bay	3	3
Tung Wan, Cheung Chau (S)	1	2

Tsuen Wan District

Casam (S)	3	3
Gemini	3	3
Hoi Mei Wan	3	3
Lido (S)	4	4
Tung Wan, Ma Wan	2	2

Note: * Non-gazetted beaches.

(S) The beach has a shark-prevention net installed.

The following beaches have changed grading on this occasion: Discovery Bay from "2" to "1"; Cheung Sha Lower and Approach from "4" to "3"; Deep Water Bay, Repulse Bay, St. Stephen's and Tung Wan, Cheung Chau from "1" to "2".

The changes are within the normal range of fluctuation of the bacteriological water quality of these beaches.

End

Prestige annual stamp album will be on sale

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The Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman, today (Thursday) announced that the 1995 Prestige Annual Stamp Album will be on sale on September 19 at the following eight philatelic offices:

General Post Office
Harcourt Road Post Office
Peak Post Office
Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office
Granville Road Post Office
Sha Tin Central Post Office
Tsuen Wan Post Office
Airport Post Office

The Album, at \$220, is a prestige philatelic product for collectors. It is a complete collection of all the special stamps and definitive stamp sheetlets issued last year.

Another special feature of the Album is that it contains descriptions and over 20 attractive colour photographs and illustrations on the theme of each special stamp issue.

The Album consists of a book and a separate package of one set each of the following special stamps and stamp sheetlets issued in 1995 to be inserted into the relevant pages in the book by the collector:

- * Year of the Pig
- * Hong Kong International Sporting Events
- * Hong Kong Rural Heritage
- * The Royal Hong Kong Regiment
- * Hong Kong Movie Stars)
- * Definitive Stamp Sheetlets No 10 (Singapore World Stamp Exhibition)
- * Hong Kong Classics Series No 6 (End of Second World War)

"The Album is ideal both as a gift and for personal collection," said Mr Footman.

A beautifully designed compliment card is enclosed to enable the Album to be used as a gift item.

A restriction of not more than two albums per customer will be imposed on September 19. No advance order service or hand-back-service will be provided.

End

Arch SD exhibition moves to Kwai Chung

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The last one of a series of exhibition to celebrate the Architectural Services Department's (Arch SD) 10th anniversary will be held from tomorrow (Friday) for three day at Level 1 of Metroplaza in Hing Fong Road, Kwai Chung.

The exhibition aims at demonstrating the important role played by the department in the development of Hong Kong and its close involvement with the daily livelihood of the general public.

"Overwhelming response had been received from members of the public to the first part of this series of exhibitions held at Times Square and New World Centre last month," a spokesman for the department said.

The exhibition at Kwai Chung will be the last one of the series.

Through photographic and model displays, the exhibition will show the many public projects designed and completed by Arch SD in the last 10 years.

These include hospitals, schools, office buildings, recreational facilities such as parks and swimming pools, facilities of the two municipal councils such as the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, market complex and town halls, as well as the latest Air Traffic Control Complex in the new airport at Chek Lap Kok.

Architectural awards won by the department during the last 10 years will also be displayed.

The exhibition will be open daily from 10 am to 8 pm until Sunday (September 15). Admission is free.

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	1,812	0930	+248
Closing balance in the account	1,893	1000	+346
Change attributable to:		1100	+346
Money market activity	+346	1200	+346
LAF today	- 265	1500	+346
		1600	+346

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 124.4 *+0.0* 12.9.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes/MTRC				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.96	2 years	2808	6.00	99.46	6.40
1 month	5.00	3 years	3907	6.80	100.27	6.80
3 months	5.20	5 years	5106	7.23	99.85	7.40
6 months	5.38	7 years	7308	7.24	97.86	7.79
12 months	5.76	5 years	M503	7.35	98.90	7.77

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$16,520 million

Closed September 12, 1996

End