



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Friday, March 22, 1974

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Daily guide to wholesale prices and supply of basic food commodities

Release Time: 7.30 p.m.

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NEW RICE PRICES UNDER DISCUSSION

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A slight increase in rice prices at retail level is inevitable in the wake of the six per cent increase in the price of rice from China which comes into effect on April 1, the Commerce and Industry Department announced today.

After preliminary discussions last night, the Rice Advisory Committee will be meeting again next week to decide on the new prices at which importers will sell rice to wholesalers, and the effect on consumer prices will be carefully considered to ensure that no undue increase occurs.

"While the higher import costs have got to be taken into account, the Rice Advisory Committee has agreed that the increase in retail prices should be kept to a minimum," a DC & I spokesman said.

In the meantime, to avoid speculative activity, importers are under instructions from the Commerce and Industry Department to release ample stocks for sale on the local market.

"Our principal concern is to ensure that no unnecessary profiteering takes place until the new prices come into effect, and the Rice Advisory Committee is giving its full co-operation to achieve this," the spokesman added.

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CLEARING MID-LEVELS BOTTLENECK

Bus-Only Lane To Be Introduced

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A major traffic improvement scheme for the Mid-Levels area, embodying priority for buses and providing for better and extended bus services, is to go into operation on April 16, just after the Easter holiday.

The scheme, which could achieve a breakthrough in the use of traffic management techniques to help solve one of Hong Kong's pressing transport problems, has been drawn up by the Highways Office of the Public Works Department in close consultation with the Transport Department and in liaison with the China Motor Bus Company.

A government spokesman said today that the central feature of the scheme is the provision of a one-way lane for buses only (including school buses), with all other vehicular traffic travelling on the other lane in the opposite direction. The only exceptions will be emergency service vehicles like ambulances and fire engines which will be able to use either lane.

The scheme will cover the entire length of Caine Road, the section of Bonham Road from Caine Road to Park Road, all of Park Road and the section of Robinson Road from Park Road to its junction with Glenealy.

Buses will travel in a westerly direction along Caine Road and Bonham Road, and in an easterly direction along Park Road and Robinson Road, returning to Central down Garden Road.

/All other .....

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All other traffic will move in the opposite direction - west along Robinson Road and Park Road and east along Bonham Road and Caine Road.

As part of the scheme, a new bus service will be introduced by the China Motor Bus Company from the Star Ferry to Kotewall Road, terminating at its junction with Conduit Road.

It is expected that this 5-minute frequency service will operate on a guaranteed seat basis, with passengers paying a flat fare of 50 cents for a single journey.

At the same time, the frequency of some of the existing bus services operating through the area will be increased to provide improved facilities for residents who find it more convenient to leave their cars at home and travel by public transport.

Commenting on the thinking behind the scheme, the spokesman said: "There has been much public comment in recent years that if the government is to persuade people to make more use of public transport and less use of private cars, then there must be better public transport facilities.

"This comment is of course justified. And, in the case of the Mid-Levels, where considerable development has caused congestion over the years, the best instrument for facilitating an immediate improvement in public transport services in the bus-lane scheme."

The spokesman pointed out that the scheme had required detailed planning and co-ordination. "New traffic signs have had to be prepared and extra traffic light signals are being installed and signal frequencies adjusted."

/School buses .....

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School buses will be able to use the bus-only lane as well as the general traffic lane.

Because the roads will be made urban clearways, parents driving their children to schools in the area will not be allowed to stop or wait on the side of the roads.

Instead, provision will be made in side-streets for parents to drop off their children at locations closest to their schools.

Special information material is being prepared for distribution to the schools in the area, so that teachers, pupils, parents and school bus operators will be familiarised with the arrangements in advance.

The spokesman concluded: "We are confident that the scheme will make travel to and from school easier.

"We also believe that the improved bus services in the area will offer a real and attractive alternative to private motorists who would like to switch to public transport as a means of travel between Mid-Levels and the main commercial and shopping areas on the Island."

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Note to Editors: Copies of a sketch-map illustrating the scheme are boxed for collection.

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CLOSER RELATIONSHIP URGED

Between Government And University Engineers

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The Secretary for the Environment, Mr. James Robson, this evening called for closer relationship between practising structural engineers and their counterparts at the University of Hong Kong and the Polytechnic.

Addressing the annual dinner of the Structural Engineers Institution (Hong Kong Branch) at Hong Kong Club, he discussed how the engineers and the universities could help the community in its present economic constraints.

The universities, he felt, could be more involved in investigations and research into problems which at present may be unique to Hong Kong but which, in due course, could be of value to the rest of the world.

Mr. Robson noted that Hong Kong had become something of a haven for highly-paid engineering consultants from other countries. But while he regarded this as a healthy reflection of the resolute pace Hong Kong had adopted in its forward planning, he wondered how much of this expertise was brushing off and being retained in Hong Kong.

Commissioning of consultants, he explained, was a long drawn out process and participation of the university or the polytechnic in consultants' activities would require them to meet the time tables agreed between the government and its agents, and hence require a discipline of time usually absent from pure research.

"If there were closer working contacts between the various faculties at the universities and their Government counterparts, it should be possible, while drawing up the consultants' briefs, to consider whether the universities had any part to play.

/"They might .....

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"They might, for instance, be carrying out some parallel investigation which could form part of the project; or the consultants' brief might be expanded to provide data required by the university for some other important research."

Mr. Robson said there was, of course, the alternative of the universities themselves sponsoring research projects which have immediate practical application — just as the polytechnic is charged with developing closer relationships with industry and carrying out research into specific problems posed by local industries.

"In a nutshell," he added, "all I am recommending is investment in research, development and training."

The Secretary for the Environment pointed out that the government's ten-year housing programme would create tremendous opportunities for the construction industry.

More significantly, it would mark a departure from past policy by stretching out the horizons of forward planning. "For the first time, we are going beyond the immediate requirements of the next few years to take a bold and realistic look at the scale of housing we want to provide ten years from now.

"It would be gratifying indeed if our private developers and building contractors were equally far-sighted in anticipating the long-term demands and gearing up to meet them."

/Mr. Robson .....

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Mr. Robson stressed that the public housing programme was not going to develop in a vacuum, divorced entirely from private housing.

"Obviously the levels of demand are going to be very closely related on both sides, so that private housing is going to come under the same degree of pressure to provide more accommodation at a reasonable price."

While appreciating the contribution by private enterprise towards Hong Kong, Mr. Robson doubted the wisdom of continuing to drive speculative building into the future with dipped headlights, studying the next few yards of the road rather than the next few miles.

If looking ahead entailed "thinking big" then, it also suggested breaking away from the traditional approach to building techniques.

He questioned, for instance, whether sufficient use was being made of prestressed concrete or new types of steel and steel sections, particularly in bridge construction, and in view of the shortages in cement and steel reinforcements he wondered whether other materials could not be used.

"Have we given sufficient attention to the methods tried and tested overseas? Even if they are not entirely appropriate for Hong Kong, could they not be adapted?" he asked.

Mr. Robson said some more imaginative developers had already shown the way, but there seemed to be plenty of scope for systems not yet attempted in this environment.

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Note to Editors: Copies of the full text of Mr. Robson's speech are boxed for collection.

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ADDITIONAL HOUSING BLOCKS FOR VILLAGERS

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Two more new housing blocks built on the Sai Kung reclamation for villagers who will have to move from the High Island Reservoir, were handed over to the New Territories Administration this morning.

A total of eight blocks is now available. Balloting for the shops and flats is expected to be held soon.

These eight blocks comprise 288 flats and 72 shops. Each flat has a floor area of more than 750 square feet, and includes such facilities as piped water, electricity, proper kitchens, baths and toilets.

An amenity area which includes a basketball pitch, a skating rink, gardens and rest places is being built in a traffic-free precinct between the blocks.

The Deputy Commissioner, New Territories, Mr. Ian MacPherson, and the District Officer, Sai Kung, Mr. Clive Oxley, and some 20 village representatives made a brief tour of the completed blocks after the handing over ceremony.

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NEW CDO SUB-OFFICE AT ABERDEEN OPENED

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The government will make every effort to eliminate all hardship which would be faced by people affected by development projects.

This assurance was given today by the Director of Home Affairs, Mr. Eric Ho, when he spoke of the constant change and development in Aberdeen at the opening of the Aberdeen sub-office of the Western City District Office.

To achieve this goal, he said, mutual understanding and mutual assistance were of vital importance. He explained that he was not only referring to the relationship between the government and the people but also to the relationship among individuals and groups.

"The object of this new office is to work towards these ends," Mr. Ho said.

Referring to the contributions which the City District Officer could offer, Mr. Ho said that through community involvement, he would draw all sectors of the community together, to make it more harmonious and cohesive. He was certain that all local organisations, such as kaifongs, voluntary agencies, fishermen's societies would play an important role in assisting the CDO in his tasks.

"Secondly," Mr. Ho said, "by constantly extending and deepening his contacts, the CDO will be better able to appreciate all kinds of difficulties and problems faced by the people, particularly people affected by change and development, and to feed this information into the policy making processes of the government."

The new sub-office, situated at 52-64 Aberdeen Main Road, Ground floor, replaces the former and much smaller sub-office to cater for the increasing needs of the community in the district,

Note to Editors:      .....

Copies of the full text of Mr. Ho's speech will be distributed in the G.I.S. press boxes this evening.

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FAMILY EDUCATION SEMINAR

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Parents of 60 primary students in Tai Hang Tung Housing Estate have been invited to attend a seminar on Family Education tomorrow (Saturday).

The meeting will take place at the school on the roof of Block 13 in which all the participants reside.

It has been organized by the West Kowloon Children and Youth Guidance Council and the Tai Hang Tung Community Centre as part of a series of recreational and educational services for children living in the estate.

The objective of this seminar is to bring home to parents the importance of parental love and care in the normal development of children while at the same time helping them to achieve a better understanding of the way in which they can help their children in their education.

A Police Officer and a Social Worker will be speaking at the seminar.

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Note to Editors: You are welcome to cover this meeting of parents tomorrow beginning at 3 o'clock. It will be held at the Kwong Yueh School on the rooftop of Block 13, Tai Hang Tung Estate in Kowloon.

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ARBORETUM PLANNED IN N.T.

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Work on Hong Kong's first arboretum, which will contain a comprehensive collection of local plant species, is now being planned in the Shing Mun Plantations north of Tusen Wan.

The project, which is related to the conservation of the local flora, is being carried out by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department. The arboretum will be a valuable source of information for those interested in plant species and to botany students who wish to study the names, forms, colour and flowers of plants.

According to Mr. S.P. Lau, Forestry Officer and Keeper of the Hong Kong Herbarium, it will be some time before it is completed and opened to the general public as the plants will take some time to grow.

The Hong Kong Herbarium, now administered by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, is responsible for the taxonomy (naming) of plants found locally.

Founded in 1878, it now houses more than 30,000 plant specimens which include not only all the known 1,832 indigenous plant species and varieties, but also some 600 exotic species now grown in Hong Kong.

The Herbarium is also responsible for the maintenance of living collections of plants, and members of the public are welcome to consult the botanical reference books and to inspect the plant specimen in the Herbarium during normal office hours. It is located on the 14th floor of the Kowloon Government offices at Canton Road, Kowloon.

/Meanwhile .....

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Meanwhile, the Agriculture and Fisheries Department is again taking part in this year's Urban Council Flower Show where a selection of exotic ornamental plants grown in Hong Kong, together with information on their countries of origin, are on display.

Another exhibit also presented by the department deals with the use of potted plants as a means of beautifying the house.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY SERVICE

Daily Guide To Wholesale Market Prices And Supplies

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The following prices were realised today (Friday) at sales under the Rice Control Scheme and at the Vegetable Marketing Organisation Wholesale Market and the Fish Marketing Organisation Wholesale Market at Cheung Sha Wan, Kowloon:

Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Rice

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>
<u>China Rice</u>		<u>Average</u>
See Mew - old crop	Good	1.96
- new crop		2.00
S.C. Jien - new crop	Good	1.94
Po Ngai	-	-
Chu Cho	-	-
<u>Thai Rice</u>		
100% Whole	-	-
10-15% Brokens	-	-
A1 Super Extra	-	-
A1 Super	Good	1.52
Whole Glutinous	Good	2.00
<u>U.S. Rice</u>	Good	1.82
<u>Australian Rice</u>	Good	1.80
<u>Pakistan Rice</u>	-	-
<u>Taiwan Rice</u>	Good	1.60

/Supplies and .....

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Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Marine Fish

<u>Species</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>		
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Average</u>
Golden Thread	Good	5.3	3.0	4.0
Big-Eyes	Good	2.8	0.8	2.0
Squid	Normal	5.2	3.5	4.0
Hair-Tails	Good	2.9	0.8	2.0
Lizard Fishes	Normal	3.2	1.1	2.0
Croakers	Good	2.4	0.7	1.5
Conger-Pike-Eels	Normal	2.8	1.9	2.5
Melon Coat	-	-	-	-
Breams	Normal	4.5	3.0	4.0
Yellow Belly	Good	2.3	0.7	1.4
Mackerels	Good	4.8	3.2	4.0
Red Goat Fish	Good	2.0	0.6	1.5
Fork-Tail	Normal	1.8	0.9	1.2
Horse-Head	Normal	6.0	3.5	5.0
Melon Seed	Limited	2.5	1.8	2.2
Pomfrets	Scarce	9.0	8.2	8.5
Garoupas	Normal	7.0	5.5	6.0
Yellow Croaker	-	-	-	-

/Supplies and .....

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Supplies and Wholesale Prices of

Locally Produced Vegetables

<u>Type</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>		
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Average</u>
Flowering cabbage	Limited	2.5	1.0	1.8
White cabbage	Limited	1.8	0.6	1.2
Chinese lettuce	Limited	1.2	0.4	0.8
Chinese kale	Limited	2.0	0.8	1.4
Spring onion	Good	0.8	0.3	0.5
Spinach	Limited	1.8	0.6	1.4
Water cress	Limited	1.2	0.4	0.8
Leaf mustard cabbage	Limited	1.2	0.4	0.8
Tomato	Limited	1.8	0.8	1.4

Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Pork (Live weight)

	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/picul)</u>
		(Average)
Pork	Good	300

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