



## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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### Commitment to care for people of HK reaffirmed

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The year ahead for health and welfare promises to be an active and challenging one, the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, said.

Speaking at a press conference today (Saturday), Mrs Fok said the Government would spend \$37 billion on health and welfare in 1995/96, representing 18.2 per cent of the Government's total expenditure (the figure was 15.8 per cent in 1991/92).

"This shows the increasingly high priority within Government spending placed on my policy areas," she stated.

Out of the \$37 billion, \$22.1 billion will be spent on health and \$14.9 billion on welfare. These figures represent a substantial real growth of 7.7 and 24.1 per cent respectively over last year's total.

Mrs Fok noted that the extra money would enable her to implement a package of policies that demonstrate integration, improvement and initiative in the Government's commitment to care for the people of Hong Kong.

On the welfare side, the largest share - \$7.7 billion - goes to social security. This compares with \$3.7 billion in 1991/92.

Of the total, almost \$100 million will be spent on a package of improvements to the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme as from April this year.

The package includes the following improvements:

- \* give each single parent family a supplement of \$200 a month;
- \* increase the standard rates for children by \$205 a month; and
- \* grant \$420-\$555 more a month to full time students aged 19-21.

"And all these figures will be increased by 8.5 per cent to cover inflation when they come into effect in April," Mrs Fok said.

"But we recognise the need to ensure that CSSA support for all those in need is adequate. The current scheme had developed over more than two decades.

"We have, therefore, started a comprehensive review to assess how well our social security arrangements are meeting the needs of CSSA recipients. We shall be drawing up proposals at the end of the year," she said.

On welfare services for the elderly, Mrs Fok said \$1.1 billion had been earmarked for 1995/96, an increase of some 20 per cent over last year.

Under this item, 23 more social centres, three multi-service centres, four day care centres, 1,489 care-and-attention places for the elderly, and 150 home for the aged places will be provided.

In addition, the Government is set to implement the recommendations of the Working Group on Care for the Elderly during the year, which include the setting up of an Elderly Services Development Fund to encourage private sector investment in the development of elderly services, training for 400 health workers for private homes for the elderly, introduction of elderly volunteers programmes, and a consultancy study on the needs of the elderly for welfare services.

To enhance the provision of outreach medical services for elderly people residing in subvented residential homes, Mrs Fok said the Hospital Authority would establish four additional specialist teams at an annual recurrent cost of \$19 million.

The teams will endeavour to improve the way in which elderly people are assessed for placement in appropriate institutions and pass on their skills to carers who look after elderly persons outside a hospital setting.

Turning to rehabilitation, Mrs Fok reiterated the Government's firm commitment to promote further the integration of people with a disability into the community.

"This is why we will be spending over \$1 billion next year on direct services in this area," she said.

New initiatives include the provision of over 470 additional places in pre-school centres for children with a disability and an extra 2,295 places for adults with a disability in day and residential centres.

The recommendations made by the Working Party on Services for Autistic Persons will also be implemented at a cost of \$5.3 million in 1995/96, rising to \$30 million in 1999/2000.

Furthermore, \$7 million will be spent on public education in the next financial year as part of Government's four-year \$32 million public education package on integration.

On family and child welfare, the Government has earmarked an extra \$175 million, on top of the massive \$924 million spent in 1994/95, to strengthen its support for the family and protection of vulnerable children.

The new money will be used on a wide range of new initiatives and services, including the provision of additional family caseworkers, clinical psychologists, home help teams and family aid workers, foster care places, aided places in day nurseries and creches, and a third refuge for battered women and their children.

Welfare for young people has not been neglected. In 1995/96, the Government plans to spend \$745 million to provide, among other things, another 22 school social workers to improve the social workers- students ratio; to fund the Youthline Service run by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups from August 1995; and to set up in October 1995 a team of specially trained social workers to deal with youngsters who take drugs.

On the health side, a major undertaking during the coming year will be the construction of the 450-bed Tseung Kwan O Hospital to cater for the population build-up in this new town. The project, at an estimated capital expenditure of \$1.2 billion, is scheduled for completion in 1999.

Another 807 hospital beds will also be provided to meet rising demand in other parts of the territory.

For those falling sick and seeking medical treatment, the Secretary for Health and Welfare pledged to minimise their discomfort by reducing waiting times significantly.

Citing examples, she said the waiting time for elderly patients requiring cataract surgery would be cut from 15 months to less than nine months at an annual recurrent cost of \$11 million.

The Government is also aiming to reduce by the end of this century:

- \* the average waiting time for first appointment in all specialist clinics from three months to five weeks;
- \* the average waiting time for all non-urgent operations from nine months to four months; and
- \* the average queuing time in all specialist clinics from 120 minutes to 60 minutes.

Services to women over the age of 45 and to elderly people will be increased with the opening of a second Woman Health Centre and the third and fourth Elderly Health Centres in the coming year.

On food surveillance, Mrs Fok announced that a food control office would be set up at Man Kam To border crossing in December this year. This will enable the Department of Health to quadruple its inspection of vegetables from about 18,000 cases a year to 73,000 cases a year.

Despite the extra money earmarked for 1995/96, Mrs Fok stressed that there was a need to make better use of the existing resources.

In this respect, she said, the Government would be working with the subvented sectors to increase membership of day care centres for the elderly, to provide as from March 330 additional supported employment places in sheltered workshops, to establish in September the Student Health Service to offer promotive and preventive health care to all primary students, to install new facilities in five hospitals to improve safety and security for patients, and to develop advanced technologies in surgery to improve patient care and speed up their recovery.

"And none of these involve new money.

"We will achieve our aims by re-targeting our resources," Mrs Fok said.

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#### Effective Customs administration vital to HK

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An effective Customs administration is vital to both the security and the integrity of borders, particularly as seen by Hong Kong's international trading partners, the Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, said.

Speaking at the passing-out parade of nos. 58 and 59 Inspector Induction Course and nos. 211 - 215 Customs Officer Induction Course today (Saturday), Mrs Chan said the Customs and Excise Department played a key role in Hong Kong's continuing economic growth.

The department has many facets, such as revenue protection, anti-smuggling; narcotics control, protection of intellectual property, import and export controls, and protection of consumers' rights.

She noted that the parade marked the highest number of female officers graduated at one time from the Customs and Excise Training School.

"You have competed on an equal footing with your male counterparts in a rigorous training environment and have come through with distinction," she added.

Mrs Chan also pointed out that customs officers would spend much of their time dealing with people and members of the public.

"No matter how trying the circumstances, you must never forget that everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy and understanding."

End/Saturday, February 25, 1995

#### Investigation on Route 3 accident underway

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A team of five experienced Factory Inspectors has been formed and has begun investigating into the causes of the industrial accident happened yesterday (Friday) in Kwai Chung in which two Thai workers died and four were injured, Chief Factory Inspector Mr Chan Tat-king said today (Saturday).

The team is working closely with the Highways Department and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department.

Mr Chan, who went to the scene of the accident yesterday with the Assistant Commissioner for Labour, Mr Mak Sai-yiu, said the Labour Department would make every effort to find out the cause leading to the tragedy.

"The Factory Inspectorate is co-ordinating the investigation. We hope to identify the cause of the accident as soon as possible. Based on these findings, we will formulate advice to contractors carrying out similar operations so that accidents of this kind will not recur.

"If we discover that any party has been at fault and that safety law has been breached, the culprit will be prosecuted," Mr Chan said.

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Audio tapes on candidates for needy electors

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The Registration and Electoral Office (REO) has produced audio tapes introducing candidates of the forthcoming Municipal Council elections and District Board by-elections on March 5 for those electors in need.

The tapes were distributed to the following five voluntary agencies:

- \* Ebenezer School and Home for the Blind;
- \* Hong Kong Society for the Blind;
- \* The Hong Kong Association for the Mentally Handicapped;
- \* Hong Kong Federation of the Blind;
- \* Hong Kong Association of the Blind.

The tapes contained information provided to REO by the candidates themselves.

An REO spokesman said today (Saturday) that the production was made for the blind electors and those electors who could not read.

A full set contains 62 tapes, each for one particular constituency. Each agency received one full set.

There are 59 constituencies for the Municipal Council elections. Two district board by-elections will be held, one for Lower Ngau Tau Kok constituency and the other for Yau Ma Tei constituency.

Those electors in need can contact these agencies to borrow the tapes.

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Public urged to exercise voting rights on March 5

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Kowloon City District Officer Mr William Yap has called on residents to exercise their voting rights on March 5.

Speaking at a closing ceremony for the 1994/95 Kowloon City District Civic Education Campaign tonight (Saturday), Mr Yap stressed that "to vote" was not only a matter of community participation, but more importantly, it was a major step in the direction of electors' civic rights and responsibilities.

As a Hong Kong resident, he added, one should take an active role in the territory's affairs.

The District Civic Education Campaign has organised a host of activities in the past year including a slogan competition, film shows, inter-school debates, a good citizenship scheme and the production of a district information kit.

End/Saturday, February 25, 1995

#### More support for probationers

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A new community-based programme, called Community Support Service Scheme, was set up by Social Welfare Department at the end of last year to provide more intensive support for probationers within the community.

This was stated by Mr Justice Patrick Chan when he officiated at the Volunteer Scheme for Probationers (VSP) Certificate-Presentation Ceremony at the Salisbury YMCA of Hong Kong this (Saturday) afternoon.

Mr Justice Chan said service projects would be planned to help probationers to develop a sense of achievement, and most of all, a sense of responsibility.

"Structured programmes and supervised intensive activities will be arranged to supplement office-based, casework intervention.

"These programmes aim to stimulate probationers' interest in school or at work, discovering constructive and healthy hobbies, developing social skills and reducing anti-social behaviour.

"To achieve this end and to enhance community concern, many more volunteers will be needed," he added.

Also speaking at the ceremony, the Assistant Director (Youth and Rehabilitation) of the Social Welfare Department, Mr Anthony Chan, appealed to members of the public to join the VSP as volunteers.

Mr Chan said the VSP was established by the SWD in 1976 to enlist suitable volunteers to complement the effort of probation officers in the social rehabilitation of probationers in need of such volunteer service.

"The scheme was later extended to juvenile offenders residing in or discharged from probation home and reformatory schools.

"Over the years, improvements have been made in the means of recruitment, training, scope of service and annual programmes, with a view to promoting greater involvement of the public and giving fuller expression to the volunteer's potentials," Mr Chan said.

Mr Justice Chan and Mr Chan later presented certificates of appreciation to 29 volunteers and long service souvenirs to another 27 volunteers.

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#### Sound building management important

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Sound building management can help improve and sustain a good living environment as well as resolve building problems, the Senior Housing Manager of the Home Affairs Department, Mr Lai Ip-cheung, said this (Saturday) afternoon.

Speaking at a Kwun Tong District Building Management Seminar, Mr Lai said flat owners, management companies and owners' corporations should familiarise themselves with their rights and responsibilities and should co-operate with each other.

Another representative of the Small Claims Tribunal, Ms Ella S L Kwok, also gave advice on the proper methods of recovering outstanding management fees and other expenses.

About a hundred Kwun Tong residents and flat owners attended the seminar which was organised by the Kwun Tong District Office and the District Board.

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1995 Music Office Annual Gala

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More than 500 young musicians taking part in the Music Office's Instrumental Music Training Scheme will perform publicly next month.

The performance, entitled the 1995 Music Office Annual Gala, will take place at 8 pm on March 12 (Sunday) at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre.

The event also provides an opportunity to review all the trainees' achievements in the past year.

Performing in the concert will be the Hong Kong Youth Chinese Orchestra; Hong Kong Youth Chinese Plucked String Orchestra; Hong Kong Youth Symphonic Band; Hong Kong Youth Strings; Music Office Youth Choir and Children's Choir; and Hong Kong Youth Symphony Orchestra.

The evening's programme include pieces such as "Moonlight Kung Fu", "Homeland of the Panda", "Bamboo Hut Nocturne", "The Four Seasons", "Prince Igor" and "The Little Green Factory".

The chairmen of the municipal councils, Dr Ronald Leung and Mr Cheung Yan-lung, and the Secretary for Recreation and Culture, Mr James So, will jointly present certificates of merit and awards to the outstanding trainees, orchestral, choir and band members.

Tickets for the Annual Gala, at \$30 and \$50, are now on sale at all Urbtix outlets.

Half-price tickets are available to full-time students and senior citizens aged 60 or above.

Enquiries can be made on tel 2734 9009.

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**Firing practice scheduled for nine days in March**

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Firing practice will take place at the Ha Tsuen-Castle Peak Range on nine days next month.

The public is advised not to enter the area when red flags are hoisted.

Following are the dates and times for the firing practice:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
March 1 (Wednesday)	8.30 am - 11.59 pm
March 2 (Thursday)	00.01 am - 5 pm
March 3 (Friday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
March 8 (Wednesday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
March 9 (Thursday)	7 am - 5 pm
March 15 (Wednesday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
March 16 (Thursday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
March 17 (Friday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
March 22 (Wednesday)	8.30 am - 5 pm

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**Fresh water cut in Central**

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Fresh water supply to some premises in Central will be temporarily suspended from 11 pm on Monday (February 27) to 6 am the following day to facilitate water mains leakage detection.

The affected areas will include 8A to 58 Des Voeux Road Central, 8-18, 11-65 and 54-56 Queen's Road Central, On Hing Terrace, 10-38 Ice House Street, Duddell Street, Zetland Street, 18-28 Wyndham Street, 1-17 and 12-20 Pedder Street, Theatre Lane, Chiu Lung Street, Li Yuen Street East, Li Yuen Street West and 2-30 Pottinger Street.

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	<u>\$ Million</u>	<u>Time (Hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative Change (\$ Million)</u>
Opening Balance in the account	2,179	09:30	+348
Closing Balance in the account	797	10:00	+348
Change Attributable to:		11:00	+348
Money Market Activity	+348	11:30	+348
Laf Today	-1,730	15:00	

Laf Rate 4.25% Bid/6.25% Offer TWI 120.3 \*+0.0\* 25.2.95

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