



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Transcript of Governor's media session	1
Transcript of Chief Secretary's media session	2
UN committee's observations on racial discrimination	3
HAD plays important role in owners' corporations formation	5
HK to promote sales of services overseas: DGT	7
Insurance industry enjoys 20% growth in 1994	9
1996 Population By-census to start tomorrow	11
Pharmacists registration examinations results announced	12
Teaching kit on helping and caring pupils in schools	13
Five sub-contractors summonsed for late payment	14
Language Fund applications close on March 31	14

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<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Four lots of land up for auction	16
Roadside emergency telephone system for highways	16
Pak Shek Kok to be used as public dump	17
Formation work for San Tsuen Pai Northeast Platform	18
Improvement to elevated walkway system in Central	19
Water cut in Wan Chai	20
Tenders invited for noise insulation work at Tsing Yi	20
Prequalification tenders invited for Tai Po treatment works	21
Hong Kong tops the world's container throughput	21
Air Quality Report for February	22
Family day of Government Supplies Department	24
Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations	24

Transcript of 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 opening the Wong Chuk Hang Complex for the Elderly this (Friday) afternoon:

Question: About yesterday's decision made at the JLG expert talk, do you feel that Britain has implicitly given the veto power to China to veto the next budget?

Governor: No. Let's be absolutely clear what the position is. The transfer of sovereignty takes place after three months of the next financial year. Now there are two choices for us in Hong Kong, and I think people had better face up to which choice they want to make. First of all, we could have a budget for three months and then another budget after July 1, 1997. Now if that happens, there will be uncertainties about people's tax rates; there will be uncertainties about the provision of services, and frankly I don't think it would be very encouraging for the financial markets which would be concerned that there wasn't continuity in our financial arrangements through 1997. So we could have a budget for three months and then another budget for nine months. Or we can try to have a consensus between the present Hong Kong Government and those representing the future Hong Kong Government to have a twelve-month budget, a proper budget for Hong Kong. What we are working for is a consensus and by the time we make the most important decisions, the leading players on the other side of the table will of course be the Chief Executive (Designate) and his or her team of senior officials (designate).

When people talk about veto, what do they really mean? They mean that if either the future Hong Kong Government or the present Hong Kong Government or the Legislative Council or the community doesn't like the look of our twelve-month budget next Spring, then there won't be one. That's perfectly correct. Either side could walk away from the table. The community could give it the thumbs-down. But at the end of the day, the Legislative Council, don't forget, have to vote for it, yes or no. I think if people walk away from the idea of a twelve-month budget, the community will suffer. I don't think it would be a sensible way of proceeding.

Question: Sources ...

Governor: Can I just, let's not talk about sources, let's talk about what is actually said on what I am saying on the record, on what the Chief Secretary is saying on the record, and don't forget whatever sources, private sources, sources behind closed hands, sources behind closed doors, whatever sources say, the Government of Hong Kong is run today by me, and it's run by Mrs Chan, the Chief Secretary, and it's run by Donald Tsang, and in the future the Hong Kong Government will continue to have autonomy in budgetary and financial affairs. What do sources say? I will tell you what one source says. I will tell you what Chinese officials say to us behind closed doors, and I am sure they'd say it outside as well.

They say that the future SAR Government will have all the autonomy in fiscal matters in the future it has today. Indeed some of them say that Hong Kong will have more autonomy. I don't quite know what that means, because Hong Kong has complete autonomy today. Does the Governor of Hong Kong go back to London to check the budget before a budget is announced? The first thing the British Treasury know about a Hong Kong budget is when they read about it in the newspapers. And that is exactly what is promised for Hong Kong after July 1, 1997. So sources this or sources that, but that is the situation. I do think there is one thing which is extremely important and which I hope that sources either publicly or privately will make absolutely clear. The 97-98 budget is the only budget in Hong Kong's history where we will have to have this sort of arrangements. And it is the only budget like this in Hong Kong's history because it's the only budget which actually straddles a transfer of sovereignty. Okay. Thank you very much indeed.

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Transcript of Chief Secretary's media session

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Following is the transcript of the Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan's media session after addressing the Conference on Work Ethics of Young People in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre this (Friday) afternoon:

Chief Secretary: I want to say something about preparation of the 1997/98 budget because I don't want there to be any misunderstanding about this. As you know, at the moment, preparation of all our budgets is solely the responsibility of the Hong Kong Government. The UK Government has no role to play in this and that will be so after 1997. Under the Basic Law, Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of financial autonomy and the Chinese side has made it abundantly clear that they see no role for themselves in the preparation of our budget after 1997. It will be solely a matter for the SAR Government. Of course the 1997/98 budget is a rather special one because three months fall on this side of 1997 and nine months fall on the other side of 1997.

It is clearly in the interest of the entire community that we should have what I would call a through budget, i.e. a budget covering the normal 12-month cycle. This is what the community of Hong Kong wants because continuity is what we want and continuity in administration and continuity in our financial provision is clearly very important. It is also important from the business point of view particularly from the international financial market. And it is because of this that the two sides have agreed that we should co-operation and together work out the 1997/98 budget. As you know, the Secretary for the Treasury and the Chinese side have held useful talks over the last two days. We've reached agreement on a number of important areas. But the important point to stress is that we have a shared objective in ensuring preparation of the 1997 budget according to our usual timetable. Clearly both sides wish to reach consensus on this budget and both sides will be doing our very best to reach this consensus. And of course that budget - the 1997 budget - will have to reflect the views of the community and the views of the Legislative Council.

Question: Is this sacrificing Hong Kong's autonomy?

Chief Secretary: I don't see that there is any sacrifice of Hong Kong's autonomy. I have already explained why it is necessary to involve the Chinese side on the preparation of the 1997/98 budget because it is in the community's interest to have a budget that covers the normal 12-month cycle. People in Hong Kong wish to know what financial provisions there will be, covering various services after 1997. The international investing public wishes to know what our budget is going to be after 1997.

End

UN committee's observations on racial discrimination

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The Government today (Friday) received the concluding observations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination following its consideration on March 4 and 5 of the 13th periodic report submitted by the United Kingdom under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

The Committee viewed the Hong Kong Government's proposal to study racial discrimination later this year "as a constructive means of determining the extent of problems in the area of racial discrimination."

It added that "where discrimination is found to exist, the study could serve as an important basis for the development of solutions".

Commenting on the observations, a government spokesman said the Administration would take careful note of the Committee's views and would respond to all of them in the 14th report.

"The UK Government aims to submit its report to the Committee in August this year. We will ensure that our contribution, which will deal with all the points raised by the Committee, is ready in good time to ensure its inclusion," the spokesman said.

On the Committee's comments about the population census, the spokesman said the 1991 Census included questions about place of birth and usual language (these were included in the 13th report). It did not include direct questions about racial or ethnic origin as such questions might themselves be construed as racist and give rise to unease amongst some members of the community.

"Clearly, it is too late to take account of the Committee's views in the 1996 By-Census which starts this month. But we note that the United Kingdom included such information in its most recent Census and we will keep an open mind on the subject," the spokesman said.

With respect to the two-week rule, the spokesman said the rule existed to deter overstaying and job-hopping which had been serious problems before its introduction. It applied to all domestic helpers and imported workers whatever their country of origin and did not entail any element of racial discrimination.

"If termination is not the helpers' fault - for example, if they have suffered maltreatment or if their employers are in financial difficulties or are emigrating - they can, with the agreement of the Immigration Department, change employers without leaving the territory. Helpers with claims against their employers can also remain here pending the outcome of their cases.

"As to the need for measures against racial discrimination on the part of private individuals, groups or organisations, this is something that the Government will look at later this year in the course of its study of - and subsequent consultation on - racial discrimination," said the spokesman.

Commenting on the Committee's recommendation on citizenship for the ethnic minorities the spokesman said the Hong Kong Government's stance on citizenship for this unique group was well known.

"We welcome the additional move announced by the Prime Minister to respond to their specific concerns and to seek to reassure them about their future in Hong Kong," the spokesman said.

Copies of the Committee's observations (English only) are now available at the Marketing Office of Government Information Services on 17th floor, Siu On Centre, 176-192 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai.

End

HAD plays important role in owners' corporations formation

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The Home Affairs Department (HAD) plays an important role in facilitating the formation of owners' corporations (OCs) among building owners by providing them with procedural and technical advice, the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Michael Suen, said today (Friday).

Speaking at a luncheon meeting of the Lions Club of Metropolitan Hong Kong, Mr Suen said HAD had been providing a wide variety of services to encourage and facilitate owners to incorporate themselves.

"For example, the liaison staff of district offices will explain the formation procedures to the owners, such as obtaining sufficient quorum and giving sufficient notice for the formation meeting," he said.

"And after the formation of OCs, the liaison officers will maintain contact with them by attending their annual meetings and functions.

"They will also give advice to the OCs whenever they encounter problems in managing the buildings."

Up to the end of last year, there were over 4,500 OCs in Hong Kong, of which about 75% were established with the assistance of HAD staff.

Noting that the Building Management Ordinance provided a comprehensive framework for the formation and effective operation of OCs, Mr Suen said OCs, individual owners and residents should seek legal advice from professionals in case of legal arguments.

"Whilst HAD will endeavour to render as much advice and assistance as possible, the department maintains a neutral and impartial stance in case of legal disputes among owners or residents," he said.

Meanwhile, HAD has formed nine Building Management Co-ordination Teams (BMCTs) to help owners and occupants to resolve building management problems.

These teams work closely with other government departments to identify "target buildings" with serious management problems for inclusion in an improvement programme.

Mr Suen pointed out that since the formation of the first BMCT in 1985, over 1,000 target buildings had been identified.

Among these buildings, over 400 have seen promising improvements after the joint action of various government departments and the respective owners and residents.

On HAD's work to enrich the knowledge of owners in building management and to enhance their awareness, Mr Suen noted that the department had been organising training courses, publicity and educational activities, such as seminars, exhibitions and workshops on a regular basis.

A number of booklets, leaflets and videos on building management have also been produced to promote public understanding of building management.

Two booklets - "Building Management" and "How to Form an Owners' Corporation and Achieve Effective Building Management" - were published last year and are free of charge from various district offices.

Mr Suen said: "The annual building management seminar will be held on May 18 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Professionals in the field will be invited to speak on various aspects of the topic."

To conclude, Mr Suen said HAD will continue to allocate the necessary resources to publicise effective building management and to help the public manage their buildings better.

End

HK to promote sales of services overseas: DGT

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Hong Kong will be looking to identify ways of promoting sales of services overseas, including through constructive involvement in negotiations under the World Trade Organisation, the Director-General of Trade, Mr Tony Miller, said today (Friday).

"We will also be looking at our own regulatory systems with a view to ensuring that they enhance rather than impede competitiveness," he said.

"We will also be giving a new emphasis in education and training to meet the needs of our services sector for the future."

Addressing a luncheon meeting of the Japan Hong Kong Society in Tokyo, Mr Miller said: "In the early days, Hong Kong made its money from warehousing, trade finance, insurance, shipping and port services. Manufacturing came much later, almost by accident, during the quarter century when China was shut off from trade and investment with the rest of the world.

"At the end of the 70s, China re-opened its door. During the 80s, Hong Kong's manufacturers moved land and labour intensive processes north of the border and invested in new production there.

"Yet, unemployment was kept very low as new jobs were created to service the growing re-export trade."

Describing Hong Kong as a community which cultivates competition rather than resisting it, Mr Miller said Hong Kong had not simply gone from manufacturing to services, but rather from low skill to higher skill jobs, and from low value-added to higher value-added functions.

"Our burgeoning new services economy is not simply the shipping, warehousing, insurance and trade financing of the pre-war entrepot days, but now covers an enormously broad range of highly skilled professional, business, social, artistic and entertainment services, as well as tourism, transportation and communications," he said.

"We have also developed our own way of doing things, our own skills, our own solutions to problems, our own designs, our own culture.

"This is evident too in the dramatic grace of our architecture, whose spacious interiors defy impressions of crowded streets, in our imaginative films, which Hollywood is beginning to watch, and the lyrical dynamism of Canto-pop music, song and dance."

Noting that services now account for 80 per cent of Hong Kong's GDP and 80 per cent of employment, Mr Miller said this transformation had been market-driven, not Government-led but it is Government supported.

"It reflects a shared vision of Hong Kong's role in the future and the measures needed to ensure that we are properly placed to play that role," he added.

The Director-General told the luncheon gathering that last week, the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, set out the action agendas for Hong Kong's leading services industries and unveiled the following initiatives to strengthen Hong Kong's position as an international finance and services centre:

- A HK\$50 million Service Support Fund to benefit the further development of service industries and improve their competitiveness;
- A HK\$50 million Tourism Development Fund;
- Plans to create a Hong Kong mortgage corporation, with the US Federal National Mortgage Association assisting in a study for the project;
- Plans to launch 10-year Exchange Fund Notes;
- The establishment of a fourth Hong Kong Industrial Estate;
- A Science Park to help nurture technology-based industries and promote technology transfer;
- A tax allowance for hotels to write off refurbishment expenditure over a five-year period;
- A reduction of Ad valorem fees on company registration by half from 0.6 per cent to 0.3 per cent, and
- An initiative to enhance language proficiency in both English and Chinese (including Putonghua) in schools.

"Cities only prosper and grow when they have a clear economic role and when those who live and work in them have a clear-eyed perception of that role and how it can be enhanced," Mr Miller said.

"Hong Kong has survived and prospered precisely because it has both. Our natural role is that of entrepot. Geography and a deep-water harbour dictate that.

"But it is the shared vision of business and government of Hong Kong as the region's pre-eminent service centre, and their collective determination to build and plan for that vision which guarantee us success," he added.

End

Insurance industry enjoys 20% growth in 1994

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The Hong Kong insurance industry grew by 20% in terms of premium income in 1994, according to the Annual Report of the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance and Office of the Registrar of Occupational Retirement Schemes released today (Friday).

Speaking on the publication of the Report at a press conference, the Commissioner of Insurance, Mr Ros Lam, noted that this was the fourth consecutive year that the industry recorded a double digit growth since 1991.

As detailed in the Report, total premium income in respect of general and long-term business in 1994 amounted to \$39.2 billion which represents about 3.8% of the Hong Kong gross domestic product of the year.

Gross premiums in respect of general business maintained a healthy growth of 16% to \$19.7 billion. Property damage business remained the largest class, accounting for 27% of total gross premiums.

Except for motor vehicle business, all major classes experienced growth in gross premiums, with general liability business achieving the highest growth of 46%.

Highlighting other achievements, Mr Lam noted that the general insurance industry continued to enjoy an underwriting profit for the second consecutive year, with the amount increasing to \$1,119 million in 1994.

Office premiums for long-term business increased by 26% to \$19.5 billion. The increase is mainly due to the significant growth in individual life business of 30% to \$14 billion. At the end of 1994, the total number of individual life policies in force exceeded 2.5 million which covers about 40% of the population in the territory.

At present, there are 222 authorised insurers operating in Hong Kong with 160 writing general business, 42 writing long-term business and the remaining 20 engaging in both types of business. Of these insurers, 100 are incorporated in Hong Kong and the others being incorporated in 28 different countries with the UK and USA taking the lead.

Mr Lam said: "As the Commissioner of Insurance, my primary responsibility is to ensure the overall financial soundness of the Hong Kong insurance industry.

"Hong Kong has an effective insurance regulatory system which combines adequate protection of the insuring public while allowing maximum opportunity for industry growth."

He pointed out that 1995 marked an important year for the development of insurance legislation in Hong Kong. The legislative changes which came into operation during the year affected both insurers and insurance intermediaries.

"The most important ones are that insurance intermediaries have, for the first time, been brought under the regulation of the Insurance Companies Ordinance with effect from June 30, 1995; a long-term business insurer is required to maintain a new solvency margin which is commensurate with its liabilities; and a general business insurer is required to value its assets and liabilities in accordance with a prudent standard.

"As an on-going process to review and update the Insurance Companies Ordinance, the Insurance Companies (Amendment) Bill 1996, gazetted on February 2, 1996, seeks to revise the minimum capital and solvency margin requirement to compensate for the effect of inflation as well as bring them in line with international standards," he explained.

On the work of the Office of the Registrar of Occupational Retirement Schemes, Mr Lam said that the transitional period for employers to register their retirement schemes expired on October 15, 1995.

As at December 31, 1995, the Registrar's Office had received 15,352 applications for registration of the schemes. Of the 13,378 schemes approved, 93% were defined contribution schemes while 7% were defined benefit schemes.

As regards the regulatory framework for retirement schemes, Mr Lam noted that the Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance was amended on July 6, 1995 to allow assets of schemes participating in pooling agreements to be pooled together. Besides, scheme administrators are allowed to invest, up to 15% of the assets of a registered scheme, in listed shares on stock exchanges in emerging markets which are not recognised by the Securities and Futures Commission.

The Report in English is now on sale at \$46 each at the Government Publications Centre at Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong. The Chinese version of the Report will be available shortly.

End

1996 Population By-census to start tomorrow

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The nine-day operation of the 1996 Population By-census will commence tomorrow (Saturday).

About one-seventh of all quarters in Hong Kong have been selected according to a probability sampling scheme for enumerating all households living therein. From March 16 to 24, enumerators will visit sampled households.

All members therein will be asked about their particulars, including year and month of birth, sex, place of birth, marital status, language, nationality, educational attainment, place of work/study, employment details, income, household rent and previous residence.

The Commissioner for Census and Statistics, Mr Frederick Ho, appealed to members of the public for co-operation and support, asking sampled households to provide accurate information at the interviews.

Other people can help in facilitating our enumerators' work, he added.

"Statistics compiled from the information collected in the by-census are vital to Government in planning, particularly in such fields as housing, education, transport, medical care and social services, and to the private sector in formulating business strategies," said Mr Ho.

"Through assisting the by-census, every member of the public directly or indirectly helps build a better Hong Kong."

The 1996 Population By-census is conducted under the provisions of Section 9 of the Census and Statistics Ordinance. Under the law, persons specified to give information are legally obliged to do so.

The department has despatched letters informing all sampled householders of the visiting enumerator's name.

During the visit, each enumerator will identify himself/herself with a Census Officer Certificate of Identity issued by the department. If in doubt, households can verify the enumerator's identity by telephoning the department on 2590 8000.

"Information on individual persons and households collected in the by-census will be used for statistical purposes only.

"The Census and Statistics Department is legally prohibited to allow access to this information by any other government departments or organisations.

"Enumerators are also required to keep the collected information regarding individual persons and households in strict confidence and not to disclose such information to any person not perform functions relating to the by-census.

"All questionnaires containing collected information will be destroyed within one year after the by-census operation," Mr Ho stressed.

End

Pharmacists registration examinations results announced

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The Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong today (Friday) announced results of the registration examinations for pharmacists held in December.

A total of 75, 80 and 73 candidates sat for the examinations in Pharmacy Legislation in Hong Kong, Pharmacy Practice and Pharmacology respectively with corresponding passing rates of 52 per cent, 21.3 per cent and 30.1 per cent.

Apart from meeting other conditions set by the Board, a pharmacy graduate returning from overseas who intends to be registered as a pharmacist is required to pass all the three subjects.

The Board conducts its examinations twice a year, normally in June and December.

End

Teaching kit on helping and caring pupils in schools

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The Education Department will produce a teaching kit on Whole School Approach to Guidance with a \$1.6 million grant from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust.

The project is aimed at equipping primary and secondary schools with professional suggestions and resource materials for the development of a helping and caring system for their pupils.

The kit will focus on how to enhance pupils' self-esteem, improve their social skills and maintain effective communication with parents. It will also help teachers to identify pupils who are "at risk" so that pupils' problems, if any, can be addressed at an early stage.

The teaching kit will comprise guidelines for school heads and teachers, worksheets, aids and resource materials for classroom teachers and videotapes.

The Education Department has begun research and preparation work. The kit is expected to be completed and ready for distribution to primary and secondary schools in early 1997.

End

Five sub-contractors summonsed for late payment

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The Labour Department has recently issued a total of 29 summonses to five sub-contractors, all engaged in the works contract of the Airport Railway's Tsing Yi Station, for suspected late payment of wages to a group of imported workers from China between July and October last year.

Two summonses were served on Benco Engineering Company, six on Construction Limited, six on Croft Engineering Limited, six on Sun Wing Kee Foundation Engineering Limited and nine on Cheukman Engineering Company Limited, under Section 23 of the Employment Ordinance.

Section 23 stipulates that wages shall become due on the expiry of the last day of the wage period and shall be paid as soon as is practicable but in any case not later than seven days thereafter. The maximum penalty for each summons is \$200,000 and imprisonment for one year.

The 29 summonses have been set down for hearing on May 7 in Tsuen Wan Magistracy.

A Labour Department spokesman said the sub-contractors, except Manstone Construction Limited, had been charged earlier for suspected non-grant of a statutory holiday to a number of imported workers from China in August last year.

That case, involving 16 summonses, will also be heard in the same court on the same day.

End

Language Fund applications close on March 31

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Interested parties are reminded to send in their applications to the Language Fund on or before March 31.

Mrs Joyce Lui of the Secretariat for the Language Fund said applications were invited once a year.

"Organisations, schools including kindergartens, and individuals are invited to apply for funds to undertake projects or activities to improve the proficiency in the use of Chinese (including Putonghua) and English languages in Hong Kong," she said.

The fund was set up in May 1994. It is a trust fund held under the Director of Education Incorporation Ordinance with an initial allocation of \$300 million.

It's main objective is to support proposal and initiatives which will raise the standards in Chinese (including Putonghua) and English, enhance existing efforts and meet temporary shortfalls in language teaching resources.

In addition, it will encourage research into problem areas and initiations of new approaches.

Projects or activities to be funded should be able to fulfil any one or more of the following objectives:

- * improving the motivation for language learning;
- * enhancing the quality of teacher education for language in education;
- * increasing the supply and quality of textbooks, reference materials and appropriate teaching aids; and
- * launching innovative projects which maximise proficiency.

Application forms are available for collection from the General Enquiry Office of the Education Department, 15th floor, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, or by writing to the Language Fund Secretariat, Room 1141, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai.

Further enquiries can be directed to the Language Fund Secretariat on 2892 5772 and 2892 6642 or by fax on 2574 0340.

End

Four lots of land up for auction

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The Lands Department will auction four lots of land on Monday (March 18).

The public auction will begin at 2.30 pm in the Concert Hall of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui.

The first lot located in Hong Man Street, Chai Wan, has an area of 1,590.7 square metres for non-industrial use, excluding godown, hotel, and service apartment.

Located at the junction of Wyndham Street and Arbuthnot Road in Central, the second lot has an area of 1,585 square metres. The lot is intended for non-industrial use, excluding private residential, hotel, service apartment and godown.

With an area of 15,073 square metres, the third lot is located at Hung Hom Bay Reclamation, southwest of Whampoa Street and Po Loi Street. It is earmarked for non-industrial use, excluding godown and petrol filling station.

The fourth lot located in Area 2, Tai Po, has an area of 465.8 square metres for non-industrial use, excluding godown.

End

Roadside emergency telephone system for highways

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The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) is inviting tenders for the supply and installation of a territory-wide second-generation roadside emergency telephone system for highways.

The system would include both central computerised equipment and roadside handouts, a spokesman for EMSD said today (Friday).

"It will allow motorists to dial up from a roadside telephone and communicate with Police's Control Centres for emergency assistance in all types of traffic incidents.

"A computerised control equipment to be provided for the Police Control Centres will allow for speedier response to the motorist and easy identification of the location of the incident to effect any necessary rescue or recovery operation," he said.

The new system will be deployed to new road networks commissioned in 1996-97 and early 1997-98, including a major portion of the expressways leading to the new airport in Chek Lap Kok.

Details of the tender are contained in the Government Gazette published today.

Tender forms and further particulars may be obtained from the Contract Section of EMSD, Room 811, eighth floor, 98 Caroline Hill Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong.

Tenders must be clearly marked and addressed to the Chairman of the Central Tender Board. They must be placed in the Government Secretariat Tender Box at the lift lobby, lower ground floor, Central Government Offices, East Wing, Lower Albert Road, Hong Kong, before noon on Friday, May 3.

Late tenders will not be accepted.

End

Pak Shek Kok to be used as public dump

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The Government intends to use about 89 hectares of foreshore and sea-bed in Tolo Harbour near Pak Shek Kok for disposal of surplus construction material that is suitable for reclamation.

A government spokesman said a total of 68 hectares of land would be formed.

"The findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment Study have concluded that the implementation of the project, with suitable mitigation measures, is environmentally acceptable," he said.

Work will commence in September and scheduled for completion in seven to eight years.

The extent of the area affected is contained in a notice published in the Government Gazette today (Friday).

Any person who considers that his interest, right or easement in or over the foreshore and seabed involved would be injuriously affected may submit a written claim for compensation to the Director of Lands on or before March 15, 1997.

He should state in the submission the sum of money which he is willing to accept in full and final settlement of his claim and should submit particulars to substantiate his claim.

The notice (in both English and Chinese) together with related plans can be seen at the Lands Department, Survey and Mapping Office, 14th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong, (where copies can be purchased on order); the Tai Po District Office, ground floor, Tai Po Government Offices Building, Ting Kok Road, Tai Po, New Territories; and the Sha Tin District Office, first floor, Kowloon-Canton Railway House, Sha Tin Station, New Territories.

End

Formation work for San Tsuen Pai Northeast Platform

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The Civil Engineering Department (CED) is inviting tenders for the formation of San Tsuen Pai Northeast Platform in Tsuen Wan under the Rural Planning and Improvement Strategy.

The project comprises the formation of 1.2 hectare of site supported mainly by about 700 metres of retaining wall, together with the construction of an access road, a footpath, stormwater drains and sewers.

It will also include slope improvement works underneath the proposed access road.

On completion, the works will provide new serviced sites for 31 small village houses at the San Tsuen Pai Northeast Platform.

Construction is expected to commence in July and will take 15 months to complete.

Tender forms and further particulars of the project can be obtained from the Chief Engineer, Development and Airport Division, Civil Engineering Office, CED, second floor, Civil Engineering Building, 101 Princess Margaret Road, Ho Man Tin, Kowloon.

Tender offers for the project will close at noon on April 12.

End

Improvement to elevated walkway system in Central

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The Highways Department proposes to construct a covered pedestrian footbridge at Pedder Street across Connaught Road Central connecting World Wide House and Exchange Square.

The proposed project includes a lift access for disabled people and related ancillary road realignment work.

The proposed footbridge is required to meet the anticipated pedestrian demand arising from the development of the Central Reclamation area.

It will, in conjunction with the existing footbridge, serve to ensure the safe and effective conveyance of pedestrians crossing Connaught Road Central upon completion.

The lift will facilitate the access of people with a disability to the elevated walkway system in Central and supplement the one provided near the Star Ferry.

A notice of the proposed works is published in the Government Gazette today (Friday).

The plan and scheme showing the proposed works may be inspected at the Public Enquiry Service Centre, Central and Western District Office, ground floor, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Hong Kong; and at the District Lands Office, Hong Kong West, 19th floor, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong during normal office hours.

Any person objecting to the proposed works must send his/her objection in writing to the Secretary for Transport, Central Government Offices, second floor, East Wing, Lower Albert Road, Hong Kong not later than May 14, 1996.

End

Water cut in Wan Chai

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Fresh and flushing water supply to some premises in Wan Chai will be suspended from 11 pm on Monday (March 18) to 6 am the following day to facilitate testing of watermains.

The suspension will affect Convention Avenue, all odd number premises between 1-27 and even number premises between 2-28, Harbour Road and all odd number premises between 5-7 Gloucester Road.

End

Tenders invited for noise insulation work at Tsing Yi

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The Territory Development Department is inviting tenders for noise insulation work at Cheung Ching Estate in Tsing Yi as part of the programme for the Duplicate Tsing Yi South Bridge project.

Works will involve installation of single glazed windows, split type air-conditioners, exhaust fans, double burner gas hotplates, power upgrading and associated works.

Construction work will commence in June and scheduled for completion in 20 months.

Tender forms and further particulars may be obtained from Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick (HK) Ltd, 38th floor, Metroplaza I, 223 Hing Fong Road, Kwai Fong.

Tenders must be clearly marked and addressed to the Chairman of the Central Tender Board. They must be placed in the Government Secretariat Tender Box in the lift lobby, lower ground floor, Central Government Offices (East Wing), Lower Albert Road, Hong Kong before noon on Friday, April 12.

Late tenders will not be accepted.

End

Prequalification tenders invited for Tai Po treatment works

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The Water Supplies Department is inviting approved contractors to participate in prequalification exercise for the construction of raw water and treated water aqueducts for the proposed Tai Po treatment works.

The contract will involve the design and construction of the treated water aqueduct and the raw water aqueduct for the Tai Po treatment works project.

It will also include the formation of the northern quarter of the treatment works site, other associated areas for access to the tunnel portals and shafts, and the construction of the postal structures and a building on the Shing Mun shaft.

A notice of prequalification of tenderers was published in the Government Gazette today (Friday).

Those interested in the project are invited to apply for prequalification documents from Binnie Consultants Limited, 11th floor, New Town Tower, Pak Hok Ting Street, Sha Tin, New Territories.

Completed applications should reach the Chief Engineer, Special Duties, Water Supplies Department, Immigration Tower, 46th floor, 7 Gloucester Road, Hong Kong, not later than noon on April 12.

End

Hong Kong tops the world's container throughput

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Hong Kong handled more than 12.5 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of containers in 1995, representing an increase of 13.4 per cent over 1994, according to figures compiled by the Marine Department.

Commenting on the figures, the Deputy Director of Marine, Mr S Y Tsui, said today (Friday) that the annual container throughput was in line with our projections.

With an annual throughput at 12,528,692 TEUs, Hong Kong for the fourth consecutive year tops the world's container throughput to be the busiest container port in the world.

Hong Kong acquired the world's busiest container port status first in 1992 when it handled 7,971,758 TEUs. In the following years, the annual container throughput rose by 15.5 per cent to 9,204,236 TEUs in 1993; and 11,050,030 TEUs in 1994.

"These annual figures showed a sustained and growing demand. They underline the urgent need for the development of additional container terminal facilities to meet the projected demands," Mr Tsui said.

The container terminals in Kwai Chung and on Stonecutters Island handled 8,256,171 TEUs in 1995, representing an increase of 13.4 per cent over 1994.

The throughput of river trade and the stream sector also rose to 1,344,620 TEUs and 2,927,901 TEUs, or an increase of 44.2 per cent and 3.1 per cent over 1994, respectively.

The comparative container statistics in TEUs are :

	<u>1995</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>Percentage Increase</u>
Kwai Chung & Stonecutters	8,256,171	7,278,117	13.4
Stream and Elsewhere	2,927,901	2,839,319	3.1
River Trade	1,344,620	932,594	44.2
Total	12,528,692	11,050,030	13.4

These figures and other essential port statistics are also available at the Marine Department Homepage on the Internet. The address is: <http://www.info.gov.hk/mardep>.

End

Air Quality Report for February

The Environmental Protection Department today (Friday) released air quality information for February.

The purpose of the announcement is to keep the public informed of the air quality levels in the territory and to explain the measurements.

The announcement contains monitoring results from Mong Kok, Central/Western and Kwai Chung, which represent three important land use types in the territory:

- * locations close to road traffic in built-up urban areas,
- * combined commercial and residential districts, and
- * districts close to industrial areas.

The reported air pollutants include sulphur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), total suspended particulates (TSP) which comprise all sizes of dust particles, and the respirable fraction of the dust (RSP). All these pollutants can affect respiratory health in sufficient concentration.

In February, there was no exceedance of the 24-hour Air Quality Objectives (AQO).

The monthly mean levels of all pollutants were lower than those in January.

The gases and particles described originated from various sources. SO₂ is mostly produced when fuels that contain sulphur are burned. NO₂ is formed during combustion by the combination of nitrogen and oxygen, and by the atmospheric oxidation of nitric oxide (NO), also a product of combustion.

Vehicle exhaust is an important source of NO and NO₂ in terms of impact on local air quality. It is also a major source of airborne particulate matter, especially the smaller respirable particles.

Diesel-engined vehicles such as taxis, public light buses, passenger coaches, franchised buses and light and heavy goods vehicles are the greatest contributor of particulate matter. Other sources include industry, furnaces and boilers, construction activities, the sea and the soil.

It is worth noting that while the weather and climate always affect the concentrations of pollutants in the air, the only sure way of reducing the levels is to reduce emissions from the man-made sources.

End

Family day of Government Supplies Department

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The Government Supplies Department will hold a party for some 2,000 staff members and their families on Sunday (March 17) in the compound of its headquarters in Oil Street, North Point.

The party will start at 1 pm with an eye-dotting ceremony by the Director of Government Supplies, Mr Nigel Shipman, for the lion dance to be followed by band and music performances by the Auxiliary Medical Services and the Tai Tam Gap Girl Pipers and marching Team.

Other programmes will include game stalls, fire appliance display, lucky draw, karaoke singing competition, marital art display and a demonstration of cycling skills by the Civil Aid Services.

End

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	1,859	0930	+941
Closing balance in the account	2,089	1000	+941
Change attributable to :		1100	+941
Money market activity	+942	1200	+942
LAF today	- 712	1500	+942
		1600	+942

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 123.7 *+0.0* 15.3.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.54	2 years	2802	5.16	98.57	6.05
1 month	4.94	3 years	3901	5.57	98.36	6.30
3 months	5.17	5 years	5012	6.38	98.73	6.80
6 months	5.29	7 years	7302	6.02	94.23	7.21
12 months	5.53	5 years	M502	7.30	101.20	7.11

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$29,522 million

Closed March 15, 1996

End