



8 April 1997

## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES  
GARDEN ROAD, 5th-8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,  
HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

Dear DIB Clients

I write to thank you for your support over the past years in subscribing to the Daily Information Bulletin (DIB).

In the meantime, I am glad to inform you that DIB has now been uploaded onto the Hong Kong Government Home Page on the Internet (<http://www.info.gov.hk/isd/news/index.htm>) from April 1, 1997.

This arrangement has ensured that existing DIB subscribers as well as the general public can have quicker access to the press releases issued daily by the Hong Kong Government through the Information Superhighway.

Following the upgrading of services, the DIB will no longer be printed in hard copies and distributed by post to subscribers with effect from May 1, 1997.

This decision will do good to the community at large in terms of environmental protection as 3.1 million sheets of A4-size paper will be saved each year, not to mention the saving of postage and large quantity of ink for printing.

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It is the policy of this department that we should aim at running a paperless office in the long run, but if you have difficulties in the new arrangements, please contact the undersigned at 2842 8738.

*Robert Yip*

(Robert YIP)

for Director of Information Services

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### Return Slip

To : GIS, 8th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong  
(Attn : Robert Yip)

I would like to receive the Daily Information Bulletin  
through my Internet e-mail account \_\_\_\_\_  
from May 1, 1997.



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ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES  
GARDEN ROAD, 5th-8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,  
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Tuesday, April 8, 1997

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Governor's transcript

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is the transcript of the remarks made by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, after visiting the fire victims at Princess Margaret Hospital this (Tuesday) afternoon:

Governor: This has been another bad and sad day in Hong Kong. In not much more than a year, we have seen terrible fires. We have seen a fire in one of our country parks, we have seen a fire in a commercial building, a terrible fire in a karaoke bar, and now a very serious fire in a block of residential flats. Each time one of these tragedies happens, the whole community asks how we can prevent anything like it happening again. But we never seem to do quite enough. We appear to be chasing after these tragedies rather than preventing them happening.

Today, as you know, as a result of the fire 45 people have been brought to this excellent hospital and two other of our excellent hospitals. Of those 45, seven people have died and there are two who are in intensive-care.

I would like to, straightaway, thank once again our hard-pressed medical staff and social workers for the way, once again, that they are coping with this disaster. And obviously, I would like to thank the Fire Services for what they did so promptly to try to deal with this tragedy.

We spent this morning, in the Executive Council, among other things examining a series of proposals on fire-safety which will be emerging in the coming weeks, not least when we give evidence to the LegCo Panel next week. We legislate - we finished one bill in March and we are already trying to tighten it up. We are looking at questions like the licensing of karaoke bars, we are looking at what more can be done by government departments to tighten-up fire-safety standards.

There is, obviously, a huge job of public education to do. One of the proposals we were looking at this morning was how we can provide more public education, about what people need to do in their own homes and in their own blocks of flats. But it does appear - though of course we won't know the major causes of the tragedy until the Fire Services have completed their report - it does appear as though one of the reasons for the scale of this disaster was that some of the fire-doors were left open rather than closed. Now that is one of the basic fire-safety measures which everybody has got to take in their own lives, in their own blocks of flats. So many of these things are known, so many of these things people understand, but then don't bother to do.

We saw that with the Garley Building, with the things that were piled on the stairs and which helped to produce the incineration. Where there are fire-doors, people have got to make sure that they are closed. Because if they are not closed, smoke gets into the stairs and into the whole building and we have seen today, again, how quickly people are overwhelmed by smoke in these conditions.

So I just want to repeat this message, and I am sorry that each of these tragedies makes it all the more bleak but all the more important. Government has to do more to raise safety standards, but the community has to be part of that campaign. We are good as a community, in some areas, at joining together to prevent bad things happening.

The Fight Crime Committees are one of the reasons why we have managed to reduce crime in Hong Kong. We have got to show as much concern about safety-standards and particularly about fire safety-standards, otherwise we are going to go on seeing awful tragedies like this one.

The Fire Services Department will of course be producing a report as soon as possible, and we will see whether there are lessons that can be learned from that. But there is one lesson the whole community has got to learn, and that is we have to take care and we have to recognise how appalling a menace fire can be, particularly in a city like this where so many people live in high-rise blocks and work in high-rise blocks.

I would like to offer my sympathy and my condolences to all those who have been bereaved, to all those who have lost a loved one, whether a close friend or a member of their family. And I would like to offer my sympathy to all those who have been injured and all those who are related to the injured.

The best tribute we could pay to those who have been bereaved is to try our hardest to stop this sort of thing happening with such appalling regularity in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is a great city in most respects, but in this respect I am afraid it is not. Any questions?

Reporter: How about the patients' conditions?

Governor: That is not for me to say, I must leave that to the medical staff. But as you'll know, the patients are getting the best possible treatment in a very good hospital. Thank you very much.

End

Government statement on land supply for housing

\* \* \* \* \*

In response to press enquiries relating to Hong Kong Government information contained in two reports produced by the Research and Library Services Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat, namely, "Land Supply in Hong Kong" and "Supply of Flats" both dated 3 April 1997, a Government spokesman today (Tuesday) said, "We would like to clarify that the information was supplied by the Government to the Legislative Council Secretariat to facilitate its research. The information should be read in context. We are afraid that the information has been quoted out of context and given incorrect interpretation in the press reports."

Referring to Appendix 20 of the report "Land Supply in Hong Kong" entitled "New Residential Land Supply from 1996 to 2005 (Net Area in Hectares)" (note), the spokesman said, "The information in the table is based on the draft 1996 Territory Development Department (TDD) Development Programmes which show new residential land to be formed by TDD in the forecast period on the basis of the secured funding situation in the department in September 1995.

"Under the Government's Resource Allocation System, the department's funding is secured for five years, to be rolled forward on an annual basis. This explains why the department's land formation target in 1996-97 to 1999-00 is considerably higher than in the following years. The land to be formed in 2000-01 to 2004-05 refers to the residual amounts to be formed under projects already funded. Land to be formed under new projects will be added into the Development Programmes once funding is secured."

"Moreover, the information does not include the supply of land through other means such as redevelopment, rezoning and intensification of development density," the spokesman added.

"The press reports have made the incorrect assumption that the information in the table represents the Government's Land Disposal Programme, which of course is different from the land formation programme. It would be incorrect to assume that the information in the table represents the full picture in the supply of land for housing. It follows that any interpretation and conclusion drawn from this incorrect assumption would be erroneous," the spokesman said.

"We would like to make it clear that as the Financial Secretary has said in the 1997 Budget Speech, the Government plan to release 327 hectares of land for public and 260 hectares for private housing over the next five years, which is an increase of 46 per cent over the previous five years.

"For the period beyond 2001, the Government has announced in the Territorial Development Strategy Review and the Long Term Housing Strategy Review a number of measures to ensure that there will be an adequate supply of land for housing. These include -

- a) developing reserved sites on current town plans; and redeveloping existing sites in the public and private sectors;
- b) developing strategic growth areas; and
- c) rezoning land and increasing development density in selected locations.

"These measures will produce sufficient land to meet the housing requirement of 390,000 new flats in the period from April 2001 to March 2006.

"Action is already in hand to commission the necessary planning and feasibility studies for a number of major strategic growth areas, such as the North West New Territories to ensure that no time is lost in supplying adequate land in good time to meet the community's housing needs," he said.

End

#### HK representatives to APEC business council reappointed

\* \* \* \* \*

The Government today (Tuesday) announced the re-appointment of three Hong Kong representatives to the Business Advisory Council of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) for another term ending December 31, 1998.

The three are Dr Victor Fung Kwok-king, Chairman of Prudential Asia Capital Limited; Mr Gordon Wu Ying-sheng, Managing Director of Hopewell Holdings Limited; and Mr Victor Lo Chung-wing, Chairman and Chief Executive of Gold Peak Industries (Holdings) Limited.

The Secretary for Trade and Industry, Miss Denise Yue, said: "The Government is grateful to Dr Fung, Mr Wu and Mr Lo for their significant contributions to the work of the Council.

"With their rich business experience and active participation, I have no doubt that they will continue to contribute to the Council's mission of fostering closer cooperation and involvement of the business sector in APEC activities," she said.

Dr Victor Fung currently heads a steering committee under the APEC Business Advisory Council to assess the individual action plans of APEC members for liberalising their respective economies. APEC has invited the Council to comment on these plans towards their future improvements.

Mr Gordon Wu is the co-chairman of a committee under the Council charged with addressing finance, investment and infrastructure issues in the Asia-Pacific region while Mr Victor Lo is a member of a committee dealing with impediments to cross-border flows in the region.

The APEC Business Advisory Council was established in June 1996 as a permanent advisory body to provide business/private sector insight and counsel to APEC.

The Council has two main functions: to advise on the implementation of the Osaka Action Agenda adopted by APEC to achieve free trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific, as well as on other specific business sector priorities; and to respond to APEC's request for advice on business-related issues.

The Council reports its work to APEC Economic Leaders and Ministers.

End

#### Efforts made to trace TB source

\* \* \* \* \*

The Department of Health (DH) said today (Tuesday) that all efforts would be made to trace the source of tuberculosis (TB) cases in a Tsuen Wan kindergarten.

DH's consultant Chest Physician i/c, Dr Tam Cheuk-ming, said the Department had all along been obtaining information from the school of any casual workers and former staff so that a thorough investigation could be conducted.

"The Department would trace all clues in an attempt to track down the source," he said.

On the results of the tests and examinations, Dr Tam pointed out that one more student of the kindergarten who had been screened earlier and closely monitored was just confirmed as having TB. This student was given appropriate treatment and was granted sick leave.

This brought the total number of TB cases in the kindergarten to five, four involving students and one a former worker, he said.

Dr Tam, however, stressed that the parents and the public should not be over-worried about the situation so long as they followed the health advice of their attending physicians and DH.

He said that the Department was receiving good co-operation from all parties concerned in carrying out the control measures.

"Some former students also turned up for tuberculin tests and examinations as a result of the wide publicity.

"This makes our investigation more thorough and control measures more effective."

To date, of the 302 present and former students in the kindergarten, only about 17 have not done the tests and arrangements have already been made for them.

The result of the contact screening showed that about 27 percent of those tested were positive. This is in line with the overall trend in Hong Kong.

He reiterated that positive results only indicated that follow-up work was required and not necessarily indicative of TB disease.

"Early diagnosis and treatment are some of the most effective measures that could be taken and present treatment programme is very effective," Dr Tam said.

As regards another case involving a nursery in the Tsuen Wan district, Dr Tam noted that to date, contact screening had been conducted for some 117 of the 122 children.

Of the 110 results available, only 12 students (i.e. 11 percent) were found positive and follow-up measures would be taken for these students.

He said the recent cases reminded us the importance of keeping alert on TB but there was no need for over reaction adding that the control programme in HK is very effective.

He once again reminded the public to take the following measures to prevent tuberculosis:

- \* to take children for BCG vaccination if they have not been vaccinated before,
- \* to consult doctors promptly if they have symptoms suspicious of TB, like cough over three to four weeks, blood in sputum, loss of weight, fever and night sweating,
- \* to ensure good indoor ventilation,
- \* to maintain good bodily resistance by leading a healthy life-style, including balance diet, adequate rest and avoiding overwork and stress.

End

Review report released

\* \* \* \* \*

The Education Department today (Tuesday) released a report by its working group on the review of prevocational and secondary technical education in Hong Kong.

The report confirms that there continues to be a need for a technical curriculum in schools for students with such aptitudes and abilities. Other major recommendations in the report include:

- \* The technical curricula of prevocational and secondary technical schools should be suitably updated. It should aim at imparting to students generic but fundamental and transferable skills, and include, in general, stronger emphasis on languages and business and technological subjects.
- \* Appropriate support and resources, including improvements to physical facilities, teaching furniture and equipment, and teacher retraining, should be provided for the implementation of the recommended technical curricula.

\* To enhance the quality of teaching, the graduate/non-graduate teacher ratio in prevocational schools should be improved from the present 1:1 to 7:3, bringing the provision in line with that of secondary grammar and technical schools.

\* Prevocational and secondary technical schools should be allowed to remove their specific reference from their names if they so wish.

The working group was set up last year under the chairmanship of a Senior Assistant Director of Education, Mr S M Tsui, to comprehensively review the two types of education.

Mr Tsui said that the major areas covered by the review were the roles of prevocational and secondary technical schools, their technical curricula, physical facilities and teaching furniture and equipment, training and retraining of teachers, graduate/non-graduate teacher ratio in prevocational schools and interface between secondary schools and the Vocational Training Council.

During the review, formal and informal contacts were made with the relevant educational bodies, and visits were paid to prevocational and secondary technical schools and institutes under the Vocational Training Council. In addition, two public forums were held and written submissions were received from the public.

"It is hoped that the recommendations of the working group will provide a useful basis for the Government to map out the longer-term development of technical education in schools in the context of Hong Kong's overall manpower planning and training. We would welcome any views from the public on the report," Mr Tsui said.

Copies of the report are available from the Education Department's Schools Division, 14/F, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong; Yau Tsim District Education Office, 7/F, Kowloon Government Offices, 405 Nathan Road, Kowloon; and Sha Tin District Education Office, 3/F, Citylink Plaza, 1 Shatin Station Circuit, Sha Tin, New Territories.

End

### SWD assists fire victims

\* \* \* \* \*

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has set up a special hotline to offer welfare assistance to victims and families affected by the No. 3 alarm in Mei Foo Sun Chuen today (Tuesday).

The hotline, 2990 3560, will be manned by medical social workers in Princess Margaret Hospital round the clock tonight.

Staff of the SWD have so far contacted the families of six deceased persons at the hospital to see what kind of services they needed.

Emergency relief articles will also be provided to five other families comprising 14 persons. Two temporary shelters, one in Nam Cheong Community Centre and the other in Mei Foo Sun Chuen, have been set up to accommodate the fire victims.

Meanwhile, the department will continue to approach other victims to offer appropriate assistance.

End

### No mussel found in salt water inside service main

\* \* \* \* \*

In response to media enquiries concerning a newspaper report today (Tuesday) on mussel found by a resident in the inside service salt water main of an unit at Yue Tin Court in Sha Tin, a spokesman for the Water Supplies Department said:

"Upon receipt of report on the incident on February 26, the department carried out thorough investigations immediately. Our colleagues carried out a detailed inspection of the flushing supply system of the estate including the sump tank and roof tank, as well as the inside service mains of the concerned unit. No sign of mussel was found."

The spokesman added that salt water samples were also taken from Yue Tin Court, nearby housing estates and the salt water supply system of Sha Tin area for laboratory analyses. Results of the analyses also confirmed that the system was operating normally and the salt water quality meeting the required standards.

He stressed that the department so far did not receive any other similar report from Sha Tin and other part of the territory where sea water is also used for flushing purposes.

"This is indeed an individual incident," he said.

End

#### Unlicensed guesthouse operators fined

\* \* \* \* \*

Guesthouse operators were reminded today (Tuesday) that they must operate their establishments only after they have obtained a licence from the Home Affairs Department (HAD) or risk facing a maximum penalty of \$200,000 in fines and two years' imprisonment.

An HAD spokesman issued the warning after two guesthouse operators were fined a total of \$20,000 by the Fanling Magistracy for operating unlicensed guesthouses in Yuen Long.

The proprietor of one of the guesthouses was advised by HAD's Licensing Authority in August 95 to complete the required upgrading works in order to get a licence. He was then reminded last July to cease operation unless a licence had been obtained.

The operator of another guesthouse, whose certificate of exemption expired last August, was reminded in September that operating without a licence was an offence. However, when an inspection was conducted in December, the two guesthouses were found in operation without licences.

Both operators were subsequently charged under Section 5 of the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance and were each fined \$10,000.

The spokesman said unlicensed guesthouses would not be tolerated and enforcement action would continue to be taken to eliminate such premises.

He also appealed to members of the public to continue to help in the crackdown on unlicensed guesthouses by reporting them to the Licensing Authority on 2881 7034.

End

[Missing 2 pages in the original document]

The Asia Direct Marketing Symposium is organised by the Times Direct Marketing Group and hosted by the Hong Kong Direct Marketing Association. The Hong Kong Post Office is the main sponsor.

On April 9, 1997 (Wednesday), a forum session - "The Postal Forum" will be held. Staff of the Hong Kong Post Office will speak on how and where direct marketing fits into its overall business strategies; and give an overview of the services currently provided to direct marketers and the new initiatives being looked into. Mr Footman and his staff will be available to answer questions from the floor.

End

#### New book marks Navy's Hong Kong history

\* \* \* \* \*

More than a century and a half of history is marked with a new book to be published this week. *White Ensign, Red Dragon* - a history of the Royal Navy in Hong Kong 1841-1997, a full-colour, hard-back publication, marks the final chapter in the Navy's long association with the Territory.

Edited by Senior Naval Officer and Chief of Staff, Commodore Peter Melson, the book describes the vital role played by the Royal Navy in the founding of the colony and its transformation from the barren rock claimed by Commodore Sir Gordon Bremer on January 26, 1841, to the commercial success it is today.

The book will also help local Hong Kong Chinese ex-Servicemen, with all proceeds from its sale going to the Locally Enlisted Personnel Trust, established to provide assistance to Locally Enlisted Personnel who may fall on hard times post 1997.

*White Ensign, Red Dragon* will be formally launched at a reception at the Conrad International Hong Kong on Thursday (April 10), attended by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jock Slater. More than 200 guests have been invited to witness the launch, and competition for signed copies - a bargain at only \$1,000 - is expected to be fierce.

*White Ensign, Red Dragon*, published by Edinburgh Financial Publishing, will be available from all leading bookshops from Thursday (April 10) at \$300 per copy.

End

### Mei Foo Fire Roundup

\* \* \* \* \*

Seven persons were killed and 38 others injured in a No. 3 alarm fire in Mei Foo Sun Chuen, Lai Chi Kok today (Tuesday).

A domestic unit of about nine by seven metres was severely damaged in the fire which occurred at 6D, 3 Glee Path at 11.55 am. The fire was upgraded to No. 3 alarm 19 minutes later.

Firemen used six jets and mobilised 15 Breathing Apparatus teams to put out the blaze at 2.25 pm.

Force entry was made by firemen to 19 units on various floors of the affected building for search and rescue operation. A total of 95 persons were rescued by firemen through building staircases and turnable ladders.

The deceased comprised four women, two girls and a man. They were certified dead on arrival at Princess Margaret Hospital.

The other injured persons, including three firemen, were rushed to Princess Margaret Hospital, Caritas Medical Centre and Yan Chai Hospital for treatment.

Most of the casualties were overcome by smoke and were discharged from the hospitals after treatment.

Seven persons comprising four women, two men and a boy, were admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital. Two women are in "critical" condition while another two women, two men and a boy are in "stable" condition.

Eight persons, including seven women and a man, were taken to Yan Chai Hospital where a 46-year-old woman was admitted in "satisfactory" condition while the others were discharged.

A fireman and a boy were in "stable" condition at Caritas Medical Centre.

The Fire Services Department has set up an investigation team to look into the cause of the fire and circumstances leading to multiple casualties and fatality.

The Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, accompanied by Acting Director of Home Affairs, Mr Lui Hau-tuen, and Director of Social Welfare, Mr Andrew Leung, visited the victims at Princess Margaret Hospital.

The Social Welfare Department has set up a special hotline to offer welfare assistance to victims and families affected by the fire.

The hotline, 2990 3560, will be manned by medical social workers in Princess Margaret hospital overnight.

Staff of the department have so far contacted the families of six deceased persons at the hospital to see what kind of services they needed.

Emergency relief articles have also been provided to 37 persons coming from 10 other families.

Meanwhile, two temporary shelters have been set up to accommodate the fire victims. One of the shelters is at Nam Cheong District Community Centre, 1 Cheong San Lane, Sham Shui Po and the other at the Mei Foo Sun Chuen Stage II community centre. Liaison Officers of the District Office will be at the centres to assist the victims.

The police have also set up a hotline 2761 2553 to answer public enquiries about the fire.

End