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Transcript of the Governor's media session

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Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, to the media after opening an exhibition at St Paul's Convent School this (Thursday) afternoon:

Question: Mr Patten, just one question. There's been a lot of sayings about who's the candidate for the Chief Executive of the SAR. So what sort of ... effect it will ... Hong Kong?

Governor: Well, this is not a question for me. It's a question for the election committee. But I am sure that they would want to choose somebody as chief executive who is whole-heartedly dedicated to the interest of Hong Kong, to standing up for Hong Kong's autonomy and for Hong Kong's way of life. I am sure that they would want to choose somebody who understands Hong Kong and what has made Hong Kong successful and somebody who can command the loyalty of the civil service, the police and the whole community. You don't have to have a particular job in order to do that. But you have to be a particular sort of person. The only other thing I would say is that whoever does the job will, I am sure, recognise that it is one of the most difficult and important jobs in the world. That's not an exaggeration. But the whole world is going to be looking to see what happens in Hong Kong and how the chief executive does the job, whether it is a man or a woman. So it is difficult and it is challenging and I am sure whoever is asked to do the job will have the support and prayers of the whole community because whoever it is, everybody will want to do the job as well as possible.

End

SEM's statement on protection of wages on insolvency

* * * * *

The Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, today (Thursday) issued the following statement in response to the decision by Legislative Councillor, Mr Lee Cheuk-yan, to table a resolution in the Legislative Council on January 31 to revise the coverage of arrears of wages and wages in lieu of notice under the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Ordinance:

"We will oppose Mr Lee Cheuk-yan's resolution because it is arbitrary and seeks to further revise unilaterally the package agreed by the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund Board (Fund Board) and the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) which comprise representatives from employers and employees.

The Fund Board and LAB have already agreed to increase the maximum payment of arrears of wages and wages in lieu of notice. The package represents substantial improvements over the present level (details at annex).

If Mr Lee's resolution were passed, it would destroy the present tripartite arrangement to discuss labour matters and to take decisions on proposals at the LAB.

Also, the passage of the solution would seriously hinder our continuing efforts to promote rational discussions between employees and employers representatives and make it extremely difficult for the Government to play its mediating role.

We have therefore submitted a notice to the Legislative Council to move an amendment so as to bring into effect the proposal agreed by the Fund Board and the LAB."

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Annex

Facts on the package agreed by the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund Board and the Labour Advisory Board on the coverage of arrears of wages and wages in lieu of notice under the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Ordinance (PWIO)

Nature of Fund

* provides prompt relief in the form of ex-gratia payments

* not a substitute for insolvent employers to effect full compensations to employees

Coverage of the Fund

* maximum payments covered were reviewed periodically

* the Fund Board, which comprises employers and employees representatives, has proposed to increase the maximum payment of:

  (1) Arrears of Wages (AW) from $18,000 to $32,000
  [Median wage ($8,000) x 4 (4 months coverage period under the PWIO)]

  (2) Wages in lieu of notice (WILON) from $6,000 to $10,000
  [Median wage ($8,000) plus safety margin for higher-paid applicants]

  (3) No change to Severance Payment (SP) [the level was increased in July 1995 from $8,000 plus 50% balance entitlement to $24,000 plus 50% balance entitlement]

* Over 90% of applicants will have AW and WILON entitlement fully covered for next 2 years.

End

Views sought on proposed firearms licensing policy changes

* * * * *

The Government today (Thursday) issued a consultation paper to seek public views on the proposed changes to the firearms licensing policy and legislation.

A government spokesman said the proposals included the control of shooting clubs, holders of arms licences, arms dealers, air guns, deactivated firearms, and the use of modified firearms for film production.

"To ensure that licensed firearms are used safely, it is necessary to tighten the existing law and licensing arrangements regulating the possession of, and dealing in, firearms and ammunition," the spokesman said.

The Government intends to require all new applicants for a licence for possession of firearms to pass a test on the safe handling of firearms before they can be eligible for such licence.

In addition, the number of firearms and amount of ammunition to be possessed by a licensee will also be restricted.

The Government also intends to regulate all shooting clubs under licences for possession issued under section 27 of the Firearms and Ammunition Ordinance.

The Government will also amend the ordinance to empower the Commissioner of Police to determine the criteria for approving any range, armoury and facility in connection with the use of any arms and ammunition.

As regards deactivated firearms, the licensing authority intends to follow a set of standard guidelines to ensure that they can only be used for decorative purpose and reversion is made impossible.

Since the misuse of air guns could be dangerous, the Government considers it desirable to amend the Summary Offences Ordinance to make it an offence to discharge any air gun in a public place to the danger or annoyance of any person.

The Commissioner of Police also intends to impose greater licensing control over the arms dealers who hire out modified firearms for use in film or television production.

"Such control requires that modified firearms should be examined by the Commissioner of Police annually," the spokesman said.

"During filming, an approved instructor has to be at the scene to inspect the modified firearms and give instructions on their use," he said.

The consultation period will end on February 24 this year.

End

Bill seeks to reform Coroner's Court

* * * * *

A bill which seeks to replace the existing Coroners Ordinance will be gazetted tomorrow (Friday) and introduced into the Legislative Council on February 7.

This follows the Government's acceptance of the recommendations of a sub-committee appointed by the Law Reform Commission (LRC) in April 1984 to review the current arrangements with regard to the reporting of deaths to coroners, the investigatory role of the coroner and the functions of the Coroners' Court relating to a death, as well as whether any changes are necessary in the law and practice relating to the holding of or procedure at an inquest.

During its deliberation which was completed in October 1986, the sub-committee identified a number of defects in the existing system and recommended a comprehensive reform of the system.

In view of the substantial changes required to implement the majority of the recommendations in the LRC report, it was necessary to draft a Coroners Bill to repeal and replace the existing Coroners Ordinance, a government spokesman said today (Thursday).

Under the proposed Bill, the investigatory powers of a coroner are enhanced, and a duty to report to a coroner as soon as practicable is imposed on certain categories of persons, including doctors, the Registrar of Births and Deaths and the Police. A list of reportable deaths is prescribed in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Bill.

Recommendations which did not require legislation would be implemented administratively, the spokesman added.

End

Solicitor General to reassure US of HK's legal system

* * * * *

The Solicitor General, Mr Daniel R Fung, QC, will engage in an intensive speaking tour in the United States in the coming two weeks to reassure influential members of the American Government, Congress and the investing public of the continuation of Hong Kong's legal system in the future.

He will be supported by a team of three lawyers from the Attorney General's Chambers - Principal Crown Counsel of the Legal Policy Division, Mr Stephen Wong; Senior Crown Counsel of the division's Human Rights Unit, Mr Peter Wong; and acting Senior Crown Counsel of the China Law Unit, Ms Adeline Wan.

During his tour, Mr Fung will meet officials of Capitol Hill, Congressmen, businessmen, lawyers, academics, members of influential think-tanks, and be giving interviews to both print and electronic media.

Mr Fung will depart tomorrow (Friday) and before his return to Hong Kong on February 11 will have taken up 32 speaking engagements and briefings in Washington, New York, Atlanta, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

While in Washington, Mr Fung will meet with the President of the US-China Business Council, Mr Bob Kapp and the US Solicitor General, Mr Drew Days; and call on the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, Mr Winston Lord. He will attend briefings for US think-tanks and Congressional staffers, and a dinner with the US business community. He will also address the Heritage Foundation and Georgetown University as well as the DC Bar. He will also meet with former US Attorney General, Mr Richard Thornburgh.

His programme in New York includes a briefing with the Council on Foreign Relations, luncheon meetings with the HK Association of New York and Asia Society, the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, and a speech to the NY University Law School.

In Atlanta, Mr Fung will meet with the Hong Kong Association of Atlanta and Metro Atlanta Chambers of Commerce and legal contacts of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office.

In Chicago, he will attend a luncheon meeting of the International Institute of the Chicago Bar Association.

In Los Angeles, Mr Fung, will take part in a seminar jointly organised by Loyola Marymount University and the HK Association of Southern California, address students of UCLA and USC Law Schools, and members of the International Law Society of UCLA and UCLA Pacific Rim Studies Centre, and attend a breakfast meeting with members of the LA County Bar Association. He will also give a dinner talk to the Alumni Associations of Hong Kong University, Diocesan Boys' School, Wah Yan College and Maryknoll School.

Mr Fung has also lined up interviews with leading newspapers during the course of his visit and will speak on Cable News Network while in Atlanta.

As the theme of the speaking tour is on the "Rule of Law in Hong Kong", Mr Fung will speak on:

* the continuity of the independent judiciary after 1997

* impact of Hong Kong law on China, and mutual understanding and increased exchanges

* human rights in Hong Kong

* international rights and obligations, and Hong Kong's continued role in the international community after 1997

* the legal profession, foreign lawyers, and Hong Kong's role as the leading centre for legal services and dispute resolution in East Asia.

End

HK's rapid economic growth underpinned by legal system

* * * * *

The remarkable maturing of the legal system in Hong Kong over the last 15 to 20 years is both a reflection of and a requirement imposed by Hong Kong's quantum leap from sleepy entrepot for China trade to economic world power, the Solicitor General, Mr Daniel Fung, QC, told a group of dispute mediators this (Thursday) evening.

"It forms also a crucial factor for Hong Kong remaining the jurisdiction of choice for international businesses and multinationals seeking to locate regional headquarters in East Asia and the Western Pacific," he said.

Addressing the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre Mediation Group at its annual dinner this evening, Mr Fung pointed out that an efficient and reliable legal system gave contracting parties the assurance that their agreements would be honoured because they knew that if they were not, they would have a ready and effective remedy.

"Hong Kong is where it is today with its development of Alternative Dispute Resolution as a consequence of rapid economic development," he added.

He noted that Hong Kong's current arbitration law was a dual system, with one set of provisions applying to domestic arbitrations and the UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration applying to international arbitrations, after this model law was incorporated in the Arbitration Ordinance in 1989.

He pointed out that in recent years, it had become apparent that improvements could be made to the ordinance, and a committee of the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre was set up to consider what, if any, amendments were required.

"The committee has been considering the possibility of introducing a unitary system of arbitration in Hong Kong, that is one system that would apply to both domestic and international arbitrations.

"No firm conclusions have yet been reached on this issue. The committee has, however, identified a number of areas in the existing dual system which could be improved. The Attorney General has agreed to prepare and promote a bill to implement the committee's recommendations in this respect," Mr Fung said.

The proposed legislation indicated yet again the Government's commitment to assist in maintaining Hong Kong's position as a leading centre for arbitration and the same was true for other types of Alternative Dispute Resolution, including mediation, he said.

As regards enforcement of arbitral awards, Mr Fung pointed out that after 1997, those who successfully obtained an arbitration award granted in Hong Kong against a People's Republic of China (PRC) company would not be able to enforce it in the PRC under the New York Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards.

This arose because the Convention did not cover the enforcement within the one sovereign state of awards made in another part of that same state, he explained.

"In order to instil confidence in the rule of law in the Hong Kong SAR after 1997 and to ensure the smooth transition of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, it is imperative that every effort be made to overcome this problem.

"To that end, the governments of both Hong Kong and China have recognised the urgent need to put in place workable arrangements for legal assistance between the two jurisdictions.

"I am sure that active steps will be pursued by the two governments to address these important issues shortly," he said.

Mr Fung also referred to the recommendations by the Attorney General's Chambers for improvements to legal services in Hong Kong.

He reiterated that Hong Kong could not - neither as a government nor as individuals, whether as legal professionals or as consumers of the system - afford to be complacent about the quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of legal services available in this modern and dynamic city.

"Not if we wish Hong Kong to maintain its enviable position in the run-up to 1997 and well beyond that date as the leading centre for legal services and dispute resolution in East Asia and the Western Pacific Basin," he said.

"One thing is crystal clear," he added, "no new arguments have emerged whether from the legal profession or, indeed, from any quarter. The debate on these issues has been simmering, in some cases, for several years. Everyone has had more than ample opportunity to make his or her views known."

"There is clear public support for most of the recommendations we have made and the government would stand rightly accused of shirking its moral responsibility owed to the community if it should fail to take them forward," he said.

End

Water supplied to Leung King Estate clean and safe

* * * * *

Laboratory testing of water samples taken from Leung King Estate in Tuen Mun has confirmed that the water supplied to the estate is clean and safe for consumption, a spokesman for the Water Supplies Department said today (Thursday).

Samples were taken yesterday (Wednesday) and the day before from a consumer's tap, the water meter position and the fire hydrants in Leung Chi House in response to a report saying that an insect was found in the tap water in one of the flats in the building.

"The test results show that the water samples taken are clean, contain no sediment nor insect and are free from bacteria. Apart from one sample taken at the water meter position being slightly turbid, they all comply bacteriologically and chemically with World Health Organisation Guideline Standards for drinking water.

"Water supplied to consumers is fully treated and disinfected. Its quality is closely monitored by regular and frequent testing of water samples taken from all strategic points of the water supply system including service reservoirs, building sump and roof tanks and consumer taps," the spokesman added.

He reminded consumers to ensure that their inside plumbing systems including sump tanks, roof tanks and the associated taps and sinks are clean to prevent contamination of water.

End

Provisional retail sales statistics for November 1995

* * * * *

According to the provisional figures released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department, the value of total retail sales in November 1995, estimated at $17.1 billion, increased by 5% when compared with November 1994. After discounting the effect of price changes over the period, total retail sales dropped by 1% in volume.

Sales of motor vehicles continued to show significant decline compared with a year earlier, by 38% in value and 41% in volume. Sales of fuels and consumer durable goods (other than motor vehicles) also went down, by 3% and 2% in value respectively. In terms of volume, they decreased by 9% and 6% respectively.

Meanwhile, sales in supermarkets rose by 5% in value but dropped by 4% in volume. Sales of food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco also went up by 4% in value but declined by 3% in volume.

Nevertheless, there was a pick-up in sales of clothing and footwear, rising by 16% in value and 7% in volume. Sales of miscellaneous consumer goods and jewellery, watches and clocks and valuable gifts also recorded notable increases, rising by 15% and 12% respectively in value, or by 9% and 8% in volume. Concurrently, sales in department stores in volume terms recovered to an increase of 1%, after showing continued decline for nine consecutive months. In terms of value, they increased by 8% over the same month a year ago.

Compared with October 1995 (but bearing in mind that this comparison may be affected by seasonal factors), total retail sales in November 1995 decreased by 4% in value and 5% in volume.

Comparing the period from January to November 1995 with the same period in 1994, total retail sales rose by 5% in value, but dropped by 1% in volume.

The volume of retail sales is derived from the value of retail sales after adjusting for price changes. The relevant components of the Consumer Price Index are used as deflators.

Table 1 presents the revised total retail sales figure for October 1995 and the provisional figure for November 1995.

Table 2 shows the value and volume indices of retail sales in November 1994, October and November 1995 for all retail outlets and by type of retail outlet, with average retail sales from October 1989 to September 1990 taken as 100. Comparisons of the November 1995 results with those for October 1995 and those for November 1994, as well as comparisons of retail sales in the period from January to November 1995 with the same period in 1994 are also given.

The report containing the analysis of the November 1995 results is now on sale at $4 per copy at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, ground floor, Low Block, 66 Queensway and the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai.

Enquiries about the survey results may be directed to the Wholesale and Retail Trade Statistics Section of the Census and Statistics Department on 2802 1258.

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TABLE 1 : TOTAL RETAIL SALES

Total Retail Sales for November 1995 (Provisional Figure) = HK$17,137.5 million

for October 1995 (Revised Figure) = HK$17,879.2 million

TABLE 2 : VALUE AND VOLUME INDICES OF RETAIL SALES FOR NOVEMBER 1994, OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 1995

(Monthly average of Oct 89 - Sept 90 = 100)

Type of Outlet	Type of Index	Index Number			% Change		
		November 1994 (Revised figures)	October 1995 (Revised figures)	November 1995 (Provisional figures)	Nov 1995 compared with Oct 1995	Nov 1995 compared with Nov 1994	Jan - Nov 1995 compared with Jan - Nov 1994
		(Point)	(Point)	(Point)	(%)	(%)	(%)
(A) FOR ALL RETAIL OUTLETS	Value	174.5	190.4	182.5	-4.1	+4.6	+4.8
	Volume	132.6	138.4	131.3	-5.1	-1.0	-1.3
(B) BY TYPE OF RETAIL OUTLETS							
Food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (other than supermarkets)	Value	134.2	144.0	140.0	-2.8	+4.4	+4.0
	Volume	102.8	101.0	100.0	-1.0	-2.7	-3.0
Supermarkets ϕ	Value	146.6	161.4	154.0	-4.6	+5.1	+7.8
	Volume	102.6	104.3	98.8	-5.3	-3.7	-0.2
Fuels	Value	145.2	162.1	141.0	-13.0	-2.9	+5.0
	Volume	99.9	104.8	91.2	-13.0	-8.8	-2.1
Clothing, footwear and allied products	Value	272.5	297.9	314.8	+5.7	+15.5	+13.7
	Volume	175.6	181.6	188.7	+3.9	+7.5	+3.5
Consumer durable goods	Value	187.8	148.8	154.0	+3.5	-18.0	-12.0
	Volume	151.5	118.4	122.2	+3.2	-19.4	-15.1
- Motor vehicles and parts	Value	201.9	117.7	125.7	+6.8	-37.7	-27.8
	Volume	140.7	77.7	82.9	+6.6	-41.1	-33.7
- Consumer durable goods other than motor vehicles and parts	Value	177.7	171.3	174.5	+1.9	-1.8	#
	Volume	159.4	147.8	150.6	+1.9	-5.5	-3.9
Department stores	Value	142.4	145.7	153.9	+5.6	+8.1	+4.1
	Volume	97.1	94.7	98.2	+3.7	+1.1	-4.4
Jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts	Value	159.0	191.9	177.7	-7.4	+11.7	+6.3
	Volume	150.7	177.0	163.3	-7.7	+8.3	+4.3
Other consumer goods not elsewhere classified	Value	198.3	284.0	227.1	-20.0	+14.5	+14.1
	Volume	153.2	210.1	166.9	-20.6	+8.9	+8.7

NOTE : ϕ Not including supermarkets operating in department stores.
# denotes a figure within ±0.05
The underlined figures were rounded up to 5.

Sixth informal get-together

* * * * *

Informal Get Together between
Senior Hong Kong Civil Servants
and Officials of the Chinese Side

Following consultation with the Xinhua News Agency (Hong Kong Branch), we are pleased to announce that the sixth informal get together between senior Hong Kong civil servants and officials of the Chinese side will take place on February 1, 1996 (Thursday) at the Voting Members' Box, Happy Valley Racecourse starting at 10.30 am. It will end after lunch.

Participating officers will be:

Mr Chau Tak-hay
Secretary for Recreation and Culture

Mr Dominic Chan
Director of Audit

Mr Adolf Hsu
Director of Regional Services

Mr Albert Lam
Director of Urban Services

Miss Cheung Man-yee
Director of Broadcasting

They will be accompanied by Mr Patrick Lau, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service and Mrs Philomena Leung, Principal Assistant Secretary for the Civil Service.

End

Lands Department sets up a new LDC Section

* * * * *

The Lands Department has established a new team to deal with land resumption involving projects of the Land Development Corporation (LDC).

The new team, known as the LDC Section, is formally established today (Thursday).

Speaking at an opening ceremony of the section's new office in Causeway Bay today, the Director of Lands, Mr Robert Pope, said LDC had already completed many major urban renewal projects but its progress to achieve the aims of urban renewal had been hindered as the Lands Department had been unable to respond to its requests for the compulsory acquisition of land which it had been unable to acquire for one reason or another.

"With the setting up of this new LDC Section, we will now be able to respond promptly and efficiently to such requests," he said.

Although the section was being funded by LDC, Mr Pope stressed that it would operate independently and deal with all requests for compulsory acquisition in the same way as the Lands Department dealt with the many other acquisition projects it undertook.

"In the case of the LDC, the section must has to satisfy itself that the corporation has used its best endeavours to acquire all the affected private interests before it can recommend to the Executive Council that the land be compulsorily acquired.

"To assist the section in doing this, we intend to seek independent valuers' assistance to assess the reasonableness of the corporation's offers," he said.

Work by the LDC Section already started in August last year.

"Indeed requests have been submitted by the LDC for processing of resumption for their projects at Queen Street in Sheung Wan, Argyle Street/Shanghai Street in Mong Kok, and Kwong Yung Street," he said.

The LDC Section is mainly responsible for formulating and reviewing the resumption programme of LDC projects; assessment and payment of statutory and ex-gratia compensation offers and claims; and monitoring of consultants, litigation and Land Tribunal referrals.

It also advises the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands on the appropriateness of resumption action and handles public consultation and implementation of the resumption as well as all enquiries and complaints on LDC resumption matters.

End

West Kowloon Transfer Station contract signed

* * * * *

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (Thursday) signed a contract for the development of the West Kowloon Refuse Transfer Station (WKRTS), which has the largest handling capacity of all the nine RTSs built or planned for the territory.

Located at the west Kowloon reclamation area, the transfer station will be built at a capital cost of about $627 million and with an annual operating cost of about $77 million.

The contract was awarded to the South China WMI Transfer Ltd, a joint venture of Waste Management International plc, CITIC Pacific Ltd and Sun Hung Kai Properties Ltd.

As with other waste management projects, WKRTS will be developed under a 'design, build and operate" contract. The contractor will be responsible for the operation of the station for 15 years.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, EPD's Assistant Director, Mr Mike Stokoe, said: "The WKRTS will be capable of handling daily up to 2,500 tonnes of refuse arising from west Kowloon, Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing districts."

"Upon its commissioning in 1997, the Kwai Chung Incineration Plant, which is currently serving part of these districts and is the last of the old-fashioned incineration plants in Hong Kong, will be phased out, and thereby improving the surrounding environment.

"It will also take some of the pressure off the existing Kowloon Bay Refuse Transfer Station which has had to work above its design capacity," Mr Stokoe said.

"The transfer station is located in an area with compatible adjacent land uses, such as shipyards, container terminals, sewage treatment works and industrial development."

WKRTS will be built to very high environmental standards with the provision of a wastewater treatment plant and odour removal equipment to ensure that no nuisance will be brought to the developments nearby.

All wastes received at the station will be properly compacted and containerised before being transported by marine vessels to the West New Territories Landfill for disposal.

"The WKRTS is the fifth transfer station contract awarded by the EPD. At present three transfer stations are already in operation at Kowloon Bay, Chai Wan and Sha Tin, and the fourth one is being built at Kennedy Town," Mr Stokoe said.

End

Vessel operators urged to abide by safety regulations

* * * * *

The Marine Department today (Thursday) issued a fresh appeal to masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels to follow strictly the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREG).

The department warned that they would not tolerate any breach of the rule of the road at sea, particularly in the central part of Victoria Harbour.

"A Marine Department notice incorporating the essential parts of Rules 5, 6 and 9 of COLREG has been issued to remind vessel operators to take heed of the rules," General Manager (Local Services) of the Marine Department, Mr Lo Kwok-tai, said before the launching of a new round of marine safety campaign on Monday (January 29).

"The Marine Department and the Marine Police will deploy extra launches in the harbour to issue warnings to those who fail to follow the rule of the road," Mr Lo said.

"If they ignore our appeals and warnings, officers from the two departments will definitely take enforcement action against them when the one-week grace period expires on February 5," he said.

"We hope to send them a clear message that we will not tolerate the non-compliance of the rules on safe navigation," he said.

Vessel operators found contravening COLREG will be summonsed and may face a maximum fine of $25,000 upon conviction.

Last (1995) year, the Marine Department prosecuted 22 people for breaching COLREG.

Masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels are advised to observe the following good practices of seamanship:

* To maintain a constant and proper lookout by sight and hearing as well as by all available means to determine whether there is a risk of collision;

* To proceed at a safe speed appropriate to the circumstances and not to exceed the maximum permitted speed;

* Not to enter marine works areas;

* To keep the Tsim Sha Tsui Light Buoy on the port side when proceeding along the Hung Hom Fairway;

* To use proper sound signals whenever it is required to do so; and

* When vessels engaged in towing:

  - The tow line should not exceed the length of the vessel being towed or two and a half times the length of the towing vessel, whichever is greater and in no circumstances other than in an emergency should a tow line be longer than 100 metres;

  - Appropriate lights and signals must be displayed; and

- Not more than two vessels may be towed by a single tug at one time.

The Marine Department also reminded mariners using principal fairways in the central part of Victoria Harbour to keep to the starboard side of the fairways as far as it is safe and practicable, in accordance with Rule 9 of COLREG.

End

Fire fighters commended for skilful rescue

* * * * *

Two Fire Services members were today (Thursday) awarded the Chief Fire Officer's Commendation and another two the Favourable Entry for having successfully rescued a woman who attempted to jump from a multi-storey building in Kennedy Town last month.

At a presentation ceremony, the Chief Fire Officer (Hong Kong), Mr Paul Chan Hoi, praised the four personnel for their outstanding performance in the operation.

"They have demonstrated high standard of professional efficiency, skill, courage and team work," he said.

The woman was found lingering along a ledge on the 24th floor of a building in Holland Street at about 8.40 pm on December 20.

As the woman attempted to jump from height, the officer-in-charge of the rescue operation, Senior Station Officer Kwong Kin-hung, ordered the setting up of a rescue cushion.

After a two-hour persuasion which failed to convince the woman to come down, a snatch rescue was carried out by a team of firemen who successfully grasped the woman and brought her to safety.

Firemen Cheung Hok-kwong and Cheng Chi-wai received the Chief Fire Officer's Commendation.

The recipients of Favourable Entry are Senior Station Officer Kwong Kin-hung and Fireman Wu Yu-pui.

End

Postage label to change from pig to rat

* * * * *

The Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman, today (Thursday) announced that the label paper and machine die plate impression of the electronic postage label (Frama label) vending machine at the General Post Office and Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office will be changed from the Pig design to the Rat design on February 28.

No official first day covers will be issued in connection with this change. However, for the convenience of customers, an advance order service for pre-packaged sets of Frama labels bearing machine codes '01' (General Post Office) and '02' (Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office) will be available as follows:

* from 10c to $2.3;
* from $2.4 to $5; and
* the most common postage denominations of 10c, $1.2, $1.5, $2.1, $2.3, $2.6 and $5

Advance orders will be accepted at any post office from January 29 to February 10. Customers may collect the labels on February 28 from the post office where they place their orders.

A limited quantity of pre-packaged Frama labels bearing the most common postage denominations will be on sale on February 28 at the following eight philatelic offices:

* Beaconsfield House Post Office
* General Post Office
* Granville Road Post Office
* Peak Post Office
* Sha Tin Central Post Office
* Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office
* Tsuen Wan Post Office
* Airport Post Office

Hand-back service will be provided at all post offices on February 28 for privately-made covers bearing the 'First Day' indication.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

* * * * *

	$ million	Time (hours)	Cumulative change ($million)
Opening balance in the account	2,507	0930	-202
Closing balance in the account	3,118	1000	-202
Change attributable to :		1100	-202
Money market activity	-209	1200	-207
LAF today	+820	1500	-207
		1600	-209

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 123.9 *+0.0* 25.1.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.58	2 years	2711	5.60	100.66	5.27
1 month	5.49	3 years	3901	5.57	100.40	5.50
3 months	5.40	5 years	5012	6.38	102.45	5.88
6 months	5.33	7 years	7211	6.82	104.16	6.16
12 months	5.22	5 years	M502	7.30	105.03	6.16

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - $18,341 million

Closed January 25, 1996

End