



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

SUNDAY, JULY 13, 1975.

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**BIG DROP IN FIRE CALLS RECORDED LAST YEAR
BUT NO CAUSE FOR COMPLACENCY, SAYS FIRE CHIEF
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THE NUMBER OF FIRE CALLS DURING THE 1974/75 FINANCIAL YEAR DROPPED BY A HEFTY 29 PER CENT TO 6,283 — THE LOWEST SINCE 1970/71 — THANKS TO THE WEATHER AND GREATER FIRE PREVENTION PUBLICITY.

THIS IS STATED BY MR. HARRY WOOD, DIRECTOR OF THE FIRE SERVICES, IN HIS ANNUAL REPORT WHICH IS TO BE PUBLISHED SOON.

HE NOTES THAT THE NUMBER OF FIRE CALLS IN 1974/75 WERE DOWN BY 2,508 THAN THE PREVIOUS YEAR AND ATTRIBUTES THE DECLINE MOSTLY TO THE REVERSAL OF THE NORMAL DRY WEATHER PATTERN IN OCTOBER — USUALLY THE BEGINNING OF THE DEPARTMENT'S BUSIEST TIME.

DESPITE THE FAVOURABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS, HOWEVER, THERE WERE STILL 723 FIRES IN OCTOBER, THE LARGEST NUMBER FOR ANY MONTH DURING THE YEAR.

IN TERMS OF TOTAL CALLS, THE REPORT SAYS, THE YEAR WAS ALSO THE BUSIEST ON RECORD, WITH 120,059 FIRE, SPECIAL SERVICE AND AMBULANCE CALLS RECEIVED. AND, ALTHOUGH FIRE CALLS WERE DOWN, 5,076 MORE AMBULANCE CALLS WERE ANSWERED.

THE DIRECTOR STRONGLY WARNS AGAINST COMPLACENCY, HOWEVER, AND POINTED OUT THAT A YEAR WHEN THE NUMBER OF FIRE CALLS IS DOWN IS USUALLY FOLLOWED BY ONE IN WHICH THERE IS A 'SIZEABLE RISE'.

HE NOTES THAT, IF PAST TRENDS ARE FOLLOWED, THIS COULD VERY WELL MEAN THAT HONG KONG CAN REASONABLY EXPECT 10,000 FIRES IN 1975/76, OR DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF JUST SIX YEARS PREVIOUSLY.

+THIS IS LOOKING ON THE BLACK SIDE ADMITTEDLY,+ HE SAYS, +BUT IT IS CERTAINLY REFLECTS THE STATISTICAL TREND AND IT IS RIGHT THAT THE PUBLIC SHOULD BE WARNED AGAINST COMPLACENCY AND ENCOURAGED TO TAKE ALL POSSIBLE PRECAUTIONS.+

ON THE FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU, THE REPORT SAYS THAT, WHILE THE UNDERLYING FIRE TREND IS UPWARDS, A WORSE STATE OF AFFAIRS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY EXIST BUT FOR THE WORK OF THE BUREAU WHICH, WITH A STAFF OF 160, GETS THROUGH 'A PRODIGIOUS NUMBER' OF INSPECTIONS EACH MONTH TO EXPOSE AND ELIMINATE THE RISK OF FIRE IN RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS, SCHOOLS, CINEMAS, RESTAURANTS AND NIGHTCLUBS.

/IT GOES ON:

IT GOES ON : +THERE IS QUITE NATURALLY OPPOSITION, ON FINANCIAL GROUNDS MAINLY, TO THE WORK OF THE BUREAU FROM, FOR EXAMPLE, FACTORY OWNERS WHO OBSTRUCT STAIRWAYS AND EXITS WITH THEIR RAW MATERIALS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS WITH SELFISH UNCONCERN FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT VERY WELL LOSE THEIR LIVES THROUGH BEING TRAPPED IN THE EVENT OF FIRE. THE USUAL METHOD OF DEALING WITH SUCH CASES, INITIALLY, IS TO ISSUE A WARNING, BY FURTHER ACTION, INCLUDING PROSECUTION, IS TAKEN AGAINST PERSISTENT OFFENDERS.+

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WERE ENCOURAGED TO REPORT WHAT THEY CONSIDERED TO BE FIRE HAZARDS AND A 24-HOUR SERVICE WAS MAINTAINED TO FACILITATE SUCH REPORTS. AT THE END OF THE YEAR, LEGISLATION WAS IN HAND TO INCREASE PENALTIES SUBSTANTIALLY IN RESPECT OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT NOTICES. THESE WERE RECENTLY APPROVED AND PASSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO BEAR THE BRUNT OF FIRE LOSSES, THE REPORT SAYS, ALTHOUGH THOSE FOR 1974/75 WERE HALF THE AMOUNT OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR. INDUSTRIAL LOSSES WERE \$27.39 MILLION COMPARED WITH \$55.13 MILLION FOR 1973/74. IT IS NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE 1974/75 LOSSES STILL REPRESENTED 71 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL, DESPITE THE FACT THAT ONLY SIX PER CENT OF FIRES WERE INDUSTRIAL.

THE REPORT NOTES THAT, OVER THE YEARS, LEGISLATION HAS BEEN INTRODUCED - AND IS STILL BEING INTRODUCED - WHICH IS DESIGNED TO INCREASE FIRE PROTECTION FEATURES IN INDUSTRIAL AND OTHER BUILDINGS.

IT ADDS : +A FACTORY OWNER MAY BAULK AT THE EXPENSE OF INSTALLING EQUIPMENT SUCH AS SPRINKLERS, BUT, SURELY, LONG TERM PROTECTION FOR HIS FACTORY AND PEACE OF MIND PROVIDED MUST BE A CONSIDERATION.+

THE ATTITUDES OF SOME INDUSTRIALISTS TO FIRE PROTECTION WAS HARD TO FATHOM +GIVEN STATISTICS WHICH SO CLEARLY POINT TO THEIR VULNERABILITY TO HEAVY LOSSES SHOULD THEIR FACTORY CATCH FIRE,+ IT SAYS.

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TRANSPORT DEPT TO GO ELECTRONIC

LICENSING COUNTERS AT THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT WILL GO ELECTRONIC TOWARDS THE END OF THIS YEAR TO PROVIDE SPEEDIER SERVICES TO MOTORISTS.

FINAL DETAILS ARE BEING DRAWN UP ON A COMPUTERISATION SCHEME THAT WILL PUT THE DEPARTMENT'S VEHICLE AND DRIVER LICENSING FUNCTIONS VIRTUALLY AT FINGERTIPS, A DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY.

HE SAID THAT 'ON-LINE' COMPUTER FACILITIES WOULD BE INSTALLED AT THE COUNTERS. THIS WOULD REDUCE WORK AT THE COUNTERS TO A SIMPLE MATTER OF TAPPING THE COMPUTER KEYBOARD AND ELIMINATE TIME-CONSUMING PAPER WORK.

TO THE MOTORIST, HE SAID, IT WILL MEAN HAVING HIS VEHICLE OR DRIVING LICENCE APPLICATIONS PROCESSED BY COMPUTER AND THE DOCUMENTS READY WITHIN MINUTES ON THE SPOT.

'ON-LINE' TERMINAL EQUIPMENT INSTALLED AT THE HONG KONG AND KOWLOON LICENSING COUNTERS WILL BE LINKED TO THE GOVERNMENT COMPUTER CENTRE WHICH KEEPS THE MASTER COMPUTER 'FILES'. THEY WILL PRODUCE OUTPUT DOCUMENTS OR INFORMATION REQUIRED AS SOON AS DATA IS FED IN.

+IT WILL BE REMINISCENT OF THE 'ON-LINE' SYSTEM NOW USED AT COUNTERS IN SOME BANKS,+ THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

HE SAID THE 'ON-LINE' COMPUTER SYSTEM WOULD FORM THE SECOND PHASE OF WHAT IS KNOWN TO THE PLANNERS AS THE VALID (VEHICLE AND LICENSING DATA) SYSTEM, WHICH IS DESIGNED TO COPE WITH THE ENORMOUS WORKLOAD IN VEHICLE AND DRIVER LICENSING.

PHASE ONE INVOLVED TRANSFERRING INTO THE COMPUTER PILES OF MANUAL RECORDS OF LICENSED DRIVERS, OF WHICH THE TOTAL NUMBER HAS NOW GONE UP TO 483,000. THIS WAS COMPLETED EARLY LAST YEAR.

WITH PHASE ONE, AND FOLLOWING LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS, THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT WAS ABLE TO START ISSUING IN SEPTEMBER LAST YEAR THE HANDY LAMINATED TYPE OF DRIVING LICENCES WHICH ARE PRINTED BY COMPUTER.

VALID PHASE TWO, THE SPOKESMAN SAID, WILL TAKE A BIG STEP FORWARD BY ENCOMPASSING IN THE COMPUTER ALL ACTIVITIES OF VEHICLE REGISTRATION AND DRIVER LICENSING, AND HAVING THESE FUNCTIONS CARRIED OUT 'ON-LINE'.

APART FROM MATICULATED SYSTEM ANALYSIS AND PROGRAMMING, IMPLEMENTATION OF VALID PHASE TWO WILL BE THE RESULT OF CO-ORDINATED PLANNING BY VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, AMONG WHICH ARE THE DATA PROCESSING DIVISION AND THE ORGANISATION AND METHODS DIVISION.

/UNDER PHASE

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UNDER PHASE TWO, REVISED APPLICATION FORMS SPECIALLY DESIGNED TO SUIT COMPUTER PURPOSES WILL BE USED FOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION. NEW FORMS FOR DRIVER LICENSING ARE ALREADY IN USE IN CONNECTION WITH PHASE ONE.

COUNTER STAFF WILL BE SPECIALLY TRAINED TO OPERATE THE 'ON-LINE' EQUIPMENT.

+IF EVERYTHING GOES SMOOTHLY, WE CAN EXPECT THE VALID PHASE TWO TO GO LIVE BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR,+ THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

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APPLICATIONS INVITED FOR BRITISH ENGINEERING
SCHOLARSHIPS
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APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FOR ENGINEERING SCHOLARSHIPS TO BE OFFERED BY THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH INDUSTRY FOR PRACTICAL TRAINING IN BRITAIN IN 1976/77.

THE CONFEDERATION IS EXPECTED TO OFFER UP TO FOUR SCHOLARSHIPS TO SUITABLY QUALIFIED HONG KONG CANDIDATES.

THE SCHOLARSHIPS WILL BE OF TWO TYPES -- ONE FOR 12-18 MONTHS, WITH A MONTHLY MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE OF POUND STERLING 110 PLUS TRAVEL COSTS, TO PROVIDE BASIC TRAINING FOR RECENTLY GRADUATED ENGINEERS; AND THE OTHER FOR FOUR TO TWELVE MONTHS FOR MORE EXPERIENCED ENGINEERS WHO HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THEIR CAREERS FOR A MINIMUM OF FIVE YEARS.

THE MONTHLY MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE FOR THE SECOND TYPE SCHOLARSHIP IS POUND STERLING 138, BUT SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES WILL BE REQUIRED TO PAY THEIR OWN PASSAGES. THEY WILL BE REGARDED AS +VISITING ENGINEERS+ AND WILL BE GIVEN SPECIAL TRAINING TO MEET THEIR PARTICULAR NEEDS.

IN BOTH CASES, THE MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCES ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH INDUSTRY.

ALL APPLICANTS MUST POSSESS A RECOGNISED DEGREE OR DIPLOMA IN ENGINEERING, BE ABLE TO PROFIT FROM TRAINING IN AN INDUSTRIAL - AS DISTINCT FROM ACADEMIC - SURROUNDINGS, BE MEDICALLY FIT, ABLE TO SPEAK AND WRITE GOOD ENGLISH, BE OF GOOD CHARACTER AND POSSESS INITIATIVE AND A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, AND MUST UNDERTAKE TO RETURN AND FOLLOW THEIR PROFESSIONS IN HONG KONG.

APPLICATION FORMS AND FURTHER PARTICULARS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE OVERSEAS STUDENTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS SECTION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT BRANCH OFFICE ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF BONAVENTURE HOUSE, 91 LEIGHTON ROAD.

COMPLETED APPLICATIONS MUST BE RETURNED TO THE SAME OFFICE NOT LATER THAN AUGUST 9, 1975.

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