



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Statement by the Governor

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Following is a statement today (Tuesday) by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, on British Government's granting of British citizenship to members of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong who are solely British nationals:

I warmly welcome the announcement today by the British Government that it will grant British citizenship to members of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong who are solely British nationals. This is an excellent Chinese New Year present to Hong Kong. I am grateful to British Ministers and particularly to the Home Secretary who has listened carefully to those of us who have pursued this cause and who has recognised the strength of the arguments that have been made.

It has been widely acknowledged in Hong Kong that the group in question represents a very special case. Without this pledge, their status after 30th June 1997 would have been uncertain: entitled to right of abode in Hong Kong without Chinese nationality and to British nationality without the right of abode in Britain.

The decision today ends this uncertainty. It is a tribute to the patient and determined efforts of Legislative Council members; of members of both Houses of Parliament in Britain; of the Hong Kong Government and other senior figures here; and, above all, of the representatives of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. The case has been put with dignity and vigour; and today the right decision has been made.

The next step will be to bring forward as swiftly and efficiently as possible the necessary legislative measures to make it possible for those concerned to apply for British citizenship.

We campaigned actively to secure a British passport for war widows and equally hard for visa free access to the UK for SAR passport holders. I am delighted that this decision on the ethnic minorities gives us a hat trick.

End

Good response to report on quality school education

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The Education Commission is pleased with the clear public support to its consultation document on the Education Commission Report No. 7 (ECR7) on Quality School Education which was released last November for public consultation until January 15, 1997.

Speaking to the media after the meeting of the Commission today (Tuesday), the Chairman, Professor Rosie Young, pointed out that over 200 submissions had been received and about 20 briefings had been held for Legislative Councillors, District Board Members, school councils, sponsoring bodies, teachers, school heads, teacher education institutions, parents, employers, professional organisations and media.

"There is solid support for the main thrust of the consultation document and useful suggestions have been received on individual recommendations, including the proposed establishment of a Quality Development Committee, the incentive schemes, assessment of school performance and the proposed development of school-based management.

"The Commission plans to submit its final report to the Administration later this year taking into account views of the community collected during the consultation exercise," she said.

The meeting also noted the report on the Education Commission's delegation to the 10th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) held in the United States on January 5 to 8, 1997.

"The Commission's participation in the 10th ICSEI has been a most rewarding exercise. The Hong Kong delegates were able to promote a better understanding of Hong Kong's development of education, as well as to gather a lot of useful ideas regarding quality school education.

"We will draw on these useful exchanges in finalising ECR7," Professor Young said.

The Commission also agreed at the meeting to adopt further measures to enhance the transparency of its work. These include the organisation of open forum on topical educational issues and the issue of a bulletin on Commission business on a regular basis.

End

\$960,000 granted to fire victims

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The Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation (CLEIC) Boards have approved more than \$960,000 to victims and families affected by the arson case in Prat Avenue, Tsim Sha Tsui on January 25.

The money will be given to the families of 16 fatal cases and four injury cases. Applications from other victims are still being processed.

"The CLEIC scheme is designed to provide financial assistance to people and their dependants who are victims of violent crimes or are killed or injured in helping to prevent crime in Hong Kong," a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said today (Tuesday).

"It also provides for the payment of compensation where a person is killed or injured by law enforcement officers using weapons in the execution of their duties."

The scheme, which does not involve a means test and is non-contributory, has paid out about \$10.5 million in 551 cases in 1996.

Enquiries on the scheme may be directed to the department's CLEIC Section on 2838 6079.

Meanwhile, SWD staff will continue to contact the victims and their families to offer appropriate assistance.

End

Volume and price statistics of external trade in November

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In the first 11 months of 1996, the volume of Hong Kong's re-exports increased by 7.7% over the same period last year, while the volume of domestic exports decreased by 8.2%, according to the statistics released today (Tuesday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

Taking re-exports and domestic exports together, the volume of total exports increased by 5%. Meanwhile, imports increased by 4.3% in volume.

Comparing November 1996 with November 1995, the volume of re-exports increased by 9.1%, while that of domestic exports decreased by 4.6%. Taken together, the volume of total exports increased by 6.8%. Concurrently, the volume of imports increased by 7.1%.

The growth in volume of trade is derived from the growth in trade value with the effect of price changes discounted.

As regards price changes in the first 11 months of 1996 over the same period last year, the prices of re-exports decreased by 0.4%, while that of domestic exports increased by 0.4%. Import prices on the other hand decreased by 1.4%.

Comparing November 1996 with November 1995, the prices of re-exports and domestic exports decreased by 1.2% and 0.3% respectively. Import prices also decreased, by 2.1%.

Price changes are reflected by changes in unit value indices which are compiled based on average unit values or, for certain commodities, based on specific price data.

The terms of trade index, defined as the ratio of total export price index to import price index, recorded an increase of 0.9% in the first 11 months of 1996 over the same period last year.

The changes in the value, unit value and volume of re-exports by end-use category are shown in Table 1.

Analysed by end-use category, increases in re-export volume in November 1996 over a year earlier were recorded for all categories: capital goods (+22%); foodstuffs (+17%); raw materials and semi-manufactures (+11%); consumer goods (+2.2%); and fuels (+0.1%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were recorded in the prices of re-exports of fuels (+38%); and foodstuffs (+0.6%).

On the other hand, re-export prices of raw materials and semi-manufactures; capital goods; and consumer goods decreased by 3.1%, 2% and 0.5% respectively.

The changes in the value, unit value and volume of domestic exports by principal commodity group are shown in Table 2.

Comparing November 1996 with November 1995, commodity groups which recorded significant increases in the volume of domestic exports included domestic electrical appliances (+18%); and textile yarn and thread (+17%).

On the other hand, the volume of domestic exports of textile made-ups and related articles; radios of all kinds; footwear; and travel goods, handbags and similar articles decreased by 67%, 64%, 58% and 51% respectively.

Commodity groups which recorded more notable increases in domestic export prices included radios of all kinds (+6.8%); and textile made-ups and related articles (+6.5%).

On the other hand, domestic export prices of electronic components decreased significantly by 6.7%.

The changes in the value, unit value and volume of imports by end-use category are shown in Table 3.

The import volume of foodstuffs increased by 5.4% in November 1996 compared with November 1995.

Significant increases in import volume were noted of soya bean oil, peanut oil, vegetable oil and lard; and sugar. However, decreases were recorded in the import volume of animals of the bovine species, live; and fruit.

Over the same period of comparison, the import volume of consumer goods increased by 1.3%.

Notable increases in import volume were noted of cameras, flashlight apparatus and supplies for photography; and footwear. However, significant decreases in import volume were recorded for watches; and tobacco manufactures.

The import volume of raw materials and semi-manufactures increased by 8.1% in November 1996 compared with November 1995.

Increases in import volume were recorded for most commodities in the end-use category of raw materials and semi-manufactures. Rapid increases in import volume were noted of base metals other than iron and steel; and cotton yarn and thread. However, significant decreases were noted of raw cotton; and yarn of wool and mixtures.

Imports of fuels decreased by 7.3% in volume in November 1996 compared with November 1995.

As regards capital goods, the volume of imports increased by 19% in November 1996 over November 1995.

Notable increases were recorded in the import volume of industrial machinery, other than electrical machinery and textile machinery; and office machinery. The import volume of construction machinery however decreased.

Comparing November 1996 with November 1995, import prices of fuels and consumer goods increased by 27% and 0.7% respectively.

On the other hand, import prices of raw materials and semi-manufactures; capital goods; and foodstuffs decreased by 5.7%, 3.3% and 1.3% respectively.

Details of the above statistics are published in the November 1996 issue of the Hong Kong Trade Index Numbers.

The report will be available on sale around February 10 at \$14 per copy at the Government Publications Centre, ground floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway; or the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

Enquiries regarding regular subscription to this report may be directed to the Publications (Sales) Office of the Information Services Department, 28th floor, Siu On Centre, 188 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong (Tel: 2598 8194).

Enquiries on trade indices can be directed to the Census and Statistics Department on 2582 4918.

Table 1 : Changes in re-exports by end-use category

End-use category	Comparing NOV 1996 with NOV 1995			Comparing JAN-NOV 1996 with JAN-NOV 1995		
	% changes			% changes		
	Value	Unit Value	Volume	Value	Unit Value	Volume
Foodstuffs	17.5	0.6	16.5	16.4	0.1	16.5
Consumer goods	1.8	-0.5	2.2	5.3	0.6	4.2
Raw materials and semi-manufactures	7.6	-3.1	11.1	4.3	-2.2	6.7
Fuels	35.0	37.9	0.1	24.4	17.9	7.2
Capital goods	16.9	-2.0	22.5	13.7	-1.3	18.0
ALL COMMODITIES	7.0	-1.2	9.1	6.9	-0.4	7.7

Table 2 : Changes in domestic exports by principal commodity group

Commodity group	Comparing NOV 1996 with NOV 1995			Comparing JAN-NOV 1996 with JAN-NOV 1995		
	% changes			% changes		
	Value	Unit Value	Volume	Value	Unit Value	Volume
Clothing	3.9	0.3	4.2	-6.0	0.6	-6.3
Textile fabrics	1.3	-0.2	1.5	-3.0	-0.3	-3.6
Textile yarn and thread	22.1	3.8	17.4	23.0	4.9	18.3
Textile made-ups and related articles	-65.6	6.5	-66.7	-37.2	2.5	-38.1
Radios of all kinds	-63.8	6.8	-64.4	-23.9	6.0	-31.3
Electronic components	-15.8	-6.7	-12.7	-13.2	-3.1	-12.2
Footwear	-56.3	-2.1	-58.0	-47.8	-3.4	-45.9
Metal manufactures	-1.4	2.3	-4.4	-7.1	4.4	-11.2
Metal ores and scrap	-16.2	6.0	-21.4	-8.9	9.3	-15.5
Watches and clocks	-26.5	2.2	-27.2	-11.6	0.3	-11.9
Travel goods, handbags and similar articles	-49.8	3.7	-50.8	-23.0	1.5	-24.5
Domestic electrical appliances	8.7	-3.3	17.7	25.4	-3.3	31.4
ALL COMMODITIES	-4.4	-0.3	-4.6	-8.2	0.4	-8.2

Table 3 : Changes in imports by end-use category

End-use category	Comparing NOV 1996 with NOV 1995			Comparing JAN-NOV 1996 with JAN-NOV 1995		
	% changes			% changes		
	Value	Unit Value	Volume	Value	Unit Value	Volume
Foodstuffs	4.2	-1.3	5.4	6.2	-0.2	6.3
Consumer goods	1.2	0.7	1.3	2.1	1.5	0.7
Raw materials and semi-manufactures	2.5	-5.7	8.1	-0.4	-4.0	3.6
Fuels	16.9	26.8	-7.3	18.0	12.6	4.3
Capital goods	15.3	-3.3	19.0	8.8	-3.3	12.3
ALL COMMODITIES	4.9	-2.1	7.1	3.0	-1.4	4.3

End

Land Registry statistics for January released

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A total of 19,727 sale and purchase agreements for building units, including both residential and non-residential properties, were lodged with the Land Registry in January 1997.

The figure represented an increase of 17.1 per cent from that of December 1996 and an increase of 115.5 per cent compared with January 1996.

The total consideration of these agreements in the month was \$86.5 billion, up 24.8 per cent and 280.4 per cent respectively when compared with the amounts for December 1996 and January 1996.

The figures were contained in the monthly statistics released today (Tuesday) by the Land Registry on deeds relating to property transactions received for registration in the urban and New Territories land registries in January 1997.

Relevant statistics for December 1996 and January 1996 were provided for comparison. Figures on sale and purchase agreements received for the past 12 months and the year-on-year rate of change were also released.

These statistics generally related to land transactions executed up to four weeks prior to their submission for registration, as there is usually a time lag between the execution of deeds and their lodgement for registration.

Shortlisted sites to enter final of safety award scheme

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A number of construction sites with good safety performance will be shortlisted to enter the final assessment to compete for the six awards under the Hong Kong Construction Safety Award Scheme.

The six awards are the Best Building Works Site Award, Best Building Works Contractor Award, Best Civil Works Site Award, Best Civil Works Contractor Award, Best Safety Team Award and Safety Workers Award.

"A total of 94 construction sites under 53 contractors have taken part in the scheme," Deputy Commissioner for Labour (Occupational Safety and Health), Mr Lee Kai-fat, said today (Tuesday).

"Factory inspectors have been inspecting all these sites to shortlist those for the final assessment. The results will be announced in mid-February."

Final assessment will be held between mid-February and early March by an assessment team which will visit the construction sites during this period to choose the winners. All participating sites will each be presented a large banner to be hung at the site to show their support for construction site safety.

The team, comprising representatives from the Hong Kong Construction Association (HKCA), the Hong Kong Construction Industry Employees' General Union (HKCIEGU), the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) and the Labour Department, will assess both the physical conditions and safety management system of the sites.

For the Best Safety Team Award and the Safety Workers Award, assessment will be based on the participants' safety performance and safety knowledge.

"We are pleased that so many construction sites have been nominated to join the competition. We will also organise more activities to promote this industrial safety drive," Mr Lee said.

A gala evening will be held on March 24 at the Hong Kong International Trade and Exhibition Centre in Kowloon Bay to present prizes to the award winners.

The Hong Kong Construction Safety Award Scheme is jointly organised by the Labour Department and Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) and co-organised by the HKCA, HKCIEGU and OSHC. This is the first major award scheme which covers projects in both the public and private sectors.

To reinforce construction safety messages, RTHK has been broadcasting a series of 10 episodes of short dramas on construction site safety every Tuesday morning since January 21.

End

21-gun salutes by Royal Navy

The following is issued by the Joint Service Public Relations Staff:

The Royal Navy's saluting guns will fire for the first time in 1997 at noon on Thursday (February 6) to mark the anniversary of Her Majesty The Queen's Accession to the throne.

The 21-gun salute will be fired in Victoria Harbour from HMS Starling, one of the Peacock-class patrol craft of the Hong Kong Squadron.

Other 21-gun salutes to be fired in 1997 are:

April 21 (Monday) The Queen's Birthday

June 2 (Monday) Anniversary of HM The Queen's Coronation

June 10 (Tuesday) The Duke of Edinburgh's Birthday

All salutes take place at noon. Details of other gun salutes during 1997 will be announced in due course.

End

Public reminded not to bring back endangered species

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Members of the public are reminded not to bring back items of endangered species on their return from visits to other countries.

The appeal was made today (Tuesday) by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD) as the Chinese New Year holidays approaches.

An AFD conservation officer, Mr Cheung Chi-sun, said some returning travellers were at times found by Customs and Excise (C&E) officers at control points to have brought in endangered species.

Statistics indicate that items seized from travellers at checkpoints include specimens of sea turtles, crocodiles, and monitor lizards, as well as corals, pangolins, ivory, parrots, eagles, owls and controlled medicines.

He stressed that any person importing, exporting or possessing any endangered species, including their parts and derivatives, without a licence issued by AFD, would have contravened the Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance. This control measure also applies to all individuals including travellers.

Under the ordinance, any person found guilty of importing a highly endangered species item without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000 and one year's imprisonment. If the import is for commercial purpose, the maximum penalty could be a \$5 million fine plus two years' imprisonment.

Highly endangered species include rhinos, tiger, most species of bear, all sea turtles and medicines containing or claiming to contain rhino or tiger ingredients.

Mr Cheung said C&E officers kept close watch on passengers at checkpoints and AFD inspectors conducted checks at retail shops to guard against any smuggling and illegal sale of endangered species.

He reiterated the Government's continued efforts to combat illegal import, export and possession of endangered species and to implement the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Last year, there were 455 prosecutions instituted under the ordinance, resulting in total fines of more than \$9 million.

End

Tunnels remain fully open during Lunar New Year holidays

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The Transport Department announced today (Tuesday) that the five government tunnels will remain fully open during the coming Lunar New Year holiday.

A spokesman for the department said from Thursday (February 6) to February 9 (Sunday), no tunnel tubes would be closed for maintenance and radio broadcasts of safety measures would also be stepped up.

He added that these were additional control and safety measures on tunnel operations during the holidays.

The five government tunnels are: Aberdeen Tunnel, Lion Rock Tunnel, Airport Tunnel, Shing Mun Tunnels and Tseung Kwan O Tunnel.

The spokesman said operators of the three private tunnels - Cross Harbour Tunnel, Tate's Cairn Tunnel and Eastern Harbour Tunnel - would adopt the same measures as far as they could arrange.

He said motorists also had a part to play in avoiding accidents inside tunnels by observing the following safety guidelines:

- * Do not follow too close to the vehicle in front;
- * Observe the speed limit;
- * Keep in lane;
- * Observe traffic ahead;
- * Use dipped headlights;
- * Avoid wearing earphones or using mobile telephones when driving; and
- * Do not drink any alcohol before and/or when driving.

The spokesman urged motorists to drive with care and patience when driving inside tunnels or on open roads.

End

Twenty-eight new building plans approved in December

The Buildings Department approved a total of 28 building plans in December last year - eight on Hong Kong Island, six in Kowloon and 14 in the New Territories.

The approved plans covered 11 for apartment and apartment/commercial developments, nine for commercial developments, four for factory and industrial developments, and four for community services developments.

Consent was given in the month for work to start on 45 building projects, which will provide 225,898 square metres of usable domestic floor area and 130,997 square metres of usable non-domestic floor area on completion.

The department also issued 40 occupation permits - six on Hong Kong Island, 12 in Kowloon and 22 in the New Territories.

Of the buildings certified for occupation in December, the usable floor area for domestic and non-domestic uses was 183,876 square metres and 111,227 square metres respectively.

The declared cost of new buildings completed totalled about \$4,441 million.

In addition, 17 demolition consents involving 17 buildings and structures were issued.

The department's Control and Enforcement Division received 786 complaints of unauthorised building works in December, and issued 193 removal orders on unauthorised works.

End

Public consultation on special number arrangements

The Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) today (Tuesday) released a paper entitled Special Number Arrangements to consult the public on a proposed new mechanism of allocating special numbers to operators and users of telecommunications services in Hong Kong.

"The proposed new arrangements enable an end customer to bid for the right to use a particular number which he or she values highly.

"At present, end customers do not have a choice over such numbers which are valuable public resources. With the proposed mechanism, the allocation of numbers to operators and consumers will be conducted in a more transparent and equitable manner," a government spokesman said.

The proposed new arrangements will cover all fixed network, personal numbering and mobile services in Hong Kong except the paging sector.

"This sector has long established practice of enticing customers with special numbers and giving them a degree of choice in number selection. Any changes to such practice in a highly competitive industry may prove unsettling," the spokesman said.

The consultative paper has identified 4 types of special numbers for allocation under the proposed arrangements. They are Primary Special Numbers; Secondary Special Numbers; Special Number Blocks and Access Codes; and Consumer Requested Special Numbers.

The proceeds from auctioning the designated special numbers or special number blocks will go to a Special Number Fund which will be used basically for charity donations to the Lotteries Fund, with a certain part allocated to telecommunications related educational and research projects.

"The Special Number Fund will be managed by a management committee appointed by the Secretary for Economic Services," said the spokesman.

The local telecommunications industry and concerned parties have been consulted on the proposed Special Number Arrangements and welcome OFTA's initiative.

"Nevertheless, we wish to consult the public on this matter before taking a final decision, especially in respect of whether private transactions of Special Numbers should be allowed and the usage of the proposed Special Number Fund," the spokesman added.

The consultation paper can be obtained from District Office and OFTA's public enquiry counter, or by accessing OFTA's Bulletin Board Service (at 2834 0119) and OFTA's Internet home page (<<http://www.ofta.gov.hk>>).

Comments on the consultative document should be submitted to the following by Saturday, 22 March 1997 -

Office of the Telecommunications Authority
29/F, Wu Chung House
213, Queen's Road East, Wanchai
[Attn. : Senior Administrative Officer (Regulatory)]
(Fax : 2803 5112)
(e-mail : comments@ofta.gov.hk)

End

Victoria Park lit up for Lunar New Year

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Victoria Park has been ablaze with Lunar New Year festive lights from this (Tuesday) evening.

The lighting, funded by the Eastern District Board, features several cartoon oxen sending New Year greetings to passers-by to mark the upcoming Year of the Ox.

The lights will be switched on from 6 pm to 6 am daily from today to the Lunar New Year's Eve (Thursday, February 6), and from 6 pm to 11 pm from the first day of the Lunar New Year (Friday, February 7) to the Lantern Festival which falls on February 21.

Officiating at the switching-on ceremony this evening were the Chairman of the Eastern District Board, Mr Chan Bing-woon; Eastern District Officer, Mr Lee Kam-chung; and District Commander (Eastern) of Police, Mr Yeung Ying-wai.

End

HK trade and industrial organisations directory published

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The Industry Department today (Tuesday) announced the publication of the latest edition of its annual directory - Hong Kong Trade and Industrial Organisations.

A spokesman for the Industry Department said: "Over 250 bodies covering government-funded/statutory organisations; chambers of commerce; representative bodies of various industries; plus other trade, industrial and service organisations are listed in the directory.

"Key information on each of them, such as their addresses, telephone/fax numbers, principal office-bearers and membership size are included to provide a quick source of reference for those who wish to get in touch with these bodies."

Enquiries or requests for a copy of the directory can be addressed to the Development Support Division, Industry Department, 14th floor, Ocean Centre, 5 Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, or by telephoning 2737 2597.

End

No flag selling on Saturday

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The Social Welfare Department today (Tuesday) announced that there will be no flag day on Saturday (February 8).

A spokesman for the department said the flag day permit originally issued to Tuen Mun Hospital for February 8 had been given up by the hospital.

Tuen Mun Hospital has now decided to hold its flag day on August 16.

End

Special topics report on social statistics now on sale

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Special Topics Report No 14 on social statistics was published today (Tuesday). It contains the findings of four special enquiries conducted by the Census and Statistics Department via the General Household Survey in different periods between September 1995 and January 1996.

The four topics included in the report are Hong Kong residents working in China; labour mobility; taxi waiting time; and domestic helpers.

The report is now on sale at \$42 per copy. It can be purchased at the Government Publications Centre, ground floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, and the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

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Tender date : 4 February 1997
Paper on offer : EF bills
Issue number : Q706
Issue date : 5 February 1997
Maturity date : 7 May 1997
Amount applied : HK\$10,660 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$2,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 4.47 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 4.49 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 26 PCT
Average tender yield : 4.62 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning February 10, 1997:

Tender date : 10 February 1997
Paper on offer : EF notes
Issue number : 2902
Issue date : 11 February 1997
Maturity date : 11 February 1999
Tenor : 2 Years
Amount on offer : HK\$500 MN + 100 MN
Coupon : 5.66%

Tender date : 11 February 1997

Paper on offer : EF bills

Issue number : Q707

Issue date : 12 February 1997

Maturity date : 14 May 1997

Tenor : 91 days

Amount on offer : HK\$2,000 MN + 500 MN

Tender date : 11 February 1997

Paper on offer : EF bills

Issue number : H758

Issue date : 12 February 1997

Maturity date : 13 August 1997

Tenor : 182 days

Amount on offer : HK\$1,000 MN + 300 MN

End