



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Thursday, November 8, 1973

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MODIFIED LOAN SCHEME TO STIMULATE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

A modified loan scheme open to the vast majority of manufacturing concerns in Hong Kong was announced to-day (Thursday, November 8) by the Commerce and Industry Department.

The aim of the scheme is to stimulate industrial development by making loans available to buy new machinery and equipment.

"We have taken a fresh look at the original terms of the Loans for Small Industry scheme, and modified procedures will come into immediate effect," said Mr. Roy Porter, Assistant Director (Industry).

"The changes which have been made are quite minor but it is hoped that they will nevertheless provide some new incentive to industrial concerns to seek funds for modernising their factories, increasing their efficiency and boosting their productive capacity."

The revised scheme has been drawn up on the advice of Loans for Small Industry Committee and after consultation with the Trade and Industry Advisory Board.

It is open to factories employing not more than 200 workers and having not more than \$1 million in proprietors' funds.

This means in effect that 97 per cent of Hong Kong's industrial undertakings, of which there are more than 22,000, will be able to apply for loans.

The minimum loan amount has been lowered to \$30,000 to meet the needs of smaller factories which require less expensive equipment and machinery. The upper loan limit remains unchanged at \$250,000.

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The range of manufacturing concerns eligible to seek loans has been extended by raising the upper limit of applicants' funds from \$600,000 to \$1 million.

It is believed that the scheme has also been made more attractive to the smaller firms by introducing a sliding scale of charges for the feasibility studies conducted by the Hong Kong Productivity Centre to evaluate the merit of loan applications.

The charges now range from \$500 for loans between \$30,000 and \$50,000 to \$1,000 for loans of more than \$100,000.

Less strict requirements concerning the production of audited accounts have also been introduced.

Mr. Porter said that, although the need for a feasibility study had come under fire in the past, it was the only practical way of determining the soundness of loan applications, in view of the fact that no collateral security is required.

He stressed that the study was designed to protect applicants from embarking on projects which were likely to lose them money, and to ensure that they obtained the most suitable equipment available for their specific needs.

Another reason for it was to avoid exposing the participating banks to undue risks. This applied equally to public funds, since the Government is committed to underwriting 50 per cent of any losses.

Mr. Porter commented: "The sliding scale of charges is far from being excessive. They are well below what it would cost if a firm of private consultants was engaged to do the job."

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He pointed out that, even if a loan application proved unsuccessful, the feasibility study provided managements with a critical appraisal of their operations, exposing weak points that could be corrected to achieve greater efficiency.

"The modifications to the scheme are of a relatively minor nature," stressed Mr. Porter, "but we believe they have made it more attractive to local industries, and it's up to them now to take advantage of it."

"It is our hope that they will, because there is a great need for our industrial firms to up-date their manufacturing techniques in order to stay ahead of their competitors in world markets."

Details of how the loan scheme works are being mailed direct by the Commerce and Industry Department to industrial concerns.

The majority of Hong Kong's banks are participating in the scheme. Further information can be obtained from them, or from the Commerce and Industry Department's industrial development branch.

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Note to Editors: Copies of a booklet on Loans For Small Industry, in Chinese and English, will be distributed separately in G.I.S. press boxes this evening.

Requests for interviews or further information should be made to Mr. Brian Hickman, Public Relations Officer, Commerce and Industry Department, Telephone 5-257749.

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PUBLIC VIEWS SOUGHT ON FILM CENSORSHIP

The Government is seeking views from the public on the acceptable standard of nude and violent films.

To this effect, the censors have, in conjunction with a professional firm of survey research exponents, started an original series of discussion groups amongst members of the public to try and establish if there is a consensus of opinion on film censorship.

These opinions may subsequently give the censors guidance in interpreting the Film Censorship Codes in the future.

Disclosing this at the luncheon meeting of Y's Men's Club today, the Commissioner for Television and Films, Mr. Nigel Watt, said the discussion groups comprised both men and women from various age groups.

Referring to the discussions, he said they aimed at finding out what the majority of the people thought about their public entertainment and what they felt about censorship in general.

He said: "These and many other questions will be dealt with during these professionally-conducted and impartial discussions."

It is hoped that some useful patterns on some difficult points, such as whether more critical standards should be applied or not to films being seen by the family in the home through television medium, may emerge when the results are analysed.

From the results of these exchanges a questionnaire will be produced and on some of the broader issues a sample public opinion poll will be taken.

/Mr. Watt

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Mr. Watt expressed the hope that this important exercise would be concluded and a report published early next year.

The Commissioner criticised what he called the twin ogres of cheap sex and sickening violence and maiming which "pervade the public entertainment screens of the world today".

"The world," he said, "must take responsibility for the terrible misuse of men's inventive genius which has given us the great communication gifts of the cinema and television."

"And Hong Kong must take its share of the blame since now the jaded palates of world audiences are turning to Hong Kong-made Kung Fu films for fresh emotional stimulus -- films exported in a form which would not pass the censors here."

He urged producers to research public taste more carefully in future before embarking on lavish productions with "debased themes" in the hope of reaping big returns.

Turning to television, Mr. Watt said its influence was "very great indeed". And he was disturbed by the fact that some of the more undesirable 'permissive' films of the late sixties and early seventies are now finding their way on to the television circuits and are circulated to mass audiences in the privacy of their homes whether they like them or not.

On film censorship, Mr. Watt said: "It is difficult enough to write a code of practice but it is even more difficult to draw the practical lines separating the acceptable and the unacceptable.

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"In this respect, the members of the panel of Film Censors exercise great humility. They are ordinary people, like you and me, simply trying to reflect a majority public reaction to some of these borderline sequences."

He pointed out that the censors were not setting themselves up as arbiters of private morals.

"They are solely concerned with public standards in entertainment," he added.

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Note to Editors: Copies of the full text of Mr. Watt's speech will be distributed separately in G.I.S. press boxes this evening.

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SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES APPOINTED

Mr. Derek J.C. Jones has been appointed acting Secretary for Economic Services and will assume his duties later this month when he returns from leave.

His appointment completes the list of secretary posts recommended in the McKinsey report.

Before coming to Hong Kong, Mr. Jones worked in the Cabinet Office, the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office in the United Kingdom from 1950 to 1967.

Between 1967 and 1971, in Geneva, he was a member of the British Mission to GATT with special responsibility for Hong Kong affairs.

He transferred to Hong Kong in 1971, and has since worked in the Economics Branch of the Colonial Secretariat as Deputy Economic Secretary.

Mr. Jones, 46, is married with four children.

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NO DELAY IN PROCESSING OCCUPATION PERMIT APPLICATIONS

The Principal Government Building Surveyor, Mr. Jack Stean, today refuted a reported observation made in the Full Court on Tuesday to the effect that delays in processing building applications within Public Works Department were "leaving the door open for corruption".

Mr. Stean was referring to newspaper reports of a case heard in the Full Court, in which the Crown applied for leave to review a sentence imposed in a lower court on a building sub-contractor convicted of attempting to bribe a public officer.

In increasing the penalty from a fine of \$500 to a fine of \$2,000, plus a nine-month prison sentence suspended for two years, the Court was quoted as saying: "If the P.W.D. continue to allow delays when granting occupation permits, they leave the door open for corruption".

Mr. Stean said today: "In view of this statement, I feel I must publicly deny that there was any delay whatsoever in processing this particular application for an occupation permit. The application was received by the Buildings Ordinance Office on August 29, 1973; the inspection was carried out by a Building Surveyor and his assistant on September 4 and the application was formally rejected on September 10 - well within the required 14-day statutory period.

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"Furthermore, there was no delay when it came to handling the subsequent re-application, which resulted in the occupation permit being granted, on October 5, again within the requisite statutory period.

"I also wish to state that while there have been occasions when the processing of occupation permit applications has been delayed over the statutory period, such delays have in the vast majority of cases been due solely to incomplete applications by authorized architects and I accordingly deny that the door is left open for corruption by the Public Works Department, as implied."

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EXTENSION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES TO RURAL VILLAGES

The Mobile Library Service operated by the Group and Community Work Division of the Social Welfare Department, has been re-organized and renamed the Library and Rural Mobile Services Unit.

"The prevailing feature of the re-organization is the setting up of a mobile children and youth service team for rural villages," said Mr. Wong Pak-chuen, Officer-in-charge of the Unit.

"This re-organization is in line with the Five-Year Plan for Social Welfare development in Hong Kong," he said.

As a result of the re-organization, two types of service are now being provided by the Unit.

The first is the library service for which a total of 27 direct and 15 indirect library stations, spread all over the New Territories, have been established. They are served by two large mobile library vans.

The monthly attendance and book circulation at these stations are approximately 7,000 and 10,000 respectively.

The children and youth service is the second branch of the Unit.

Its programme covers direct recreational services, entertainment parties and assistance in the formation of self-programming groups.

At present, this branch provides services at Tuen Mun, Castle Peak Housing Estate, So Kwan Wat, Tai Lam Chung in the Castle Peak district and Lam Tsuen in the Tai Po district.

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For the coming six months, its operational area will be expanded to cover 26 villages and areas in Castle Peak, Yuen Long, Fanling, Tai Po, Shatin and Sai Kung.

Two upcoming special activities by the service team are planned for next week and the beginning of next month.

On Monday, November 12, a "Children's Friendship Day" has been organized for young people in Lam Tsuen district.

On Saturday, December 1, a games rally for 1,500 children will be held at the Tai Po playground as part of the Festival of Hong Kong celebrations.

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WATER CUT

Water supply to a number of premises near the Western Market will be interrupted for eight hours starting from 10 p.m. Saturday (November 10).

The temporary stoppage will enable work to be carried out to connect fresh water mains in the area.

The affected buildings are No. 8-16 Connaught Road West, No. 1-31 and No. 2-32, New Market Street, No. 1-25 and No. 2-18, Tung Loi Lane, No. 1-9 On Tai Street, No. 114-144, Wing Lok Street and the Sheung Wan Post Office and the Western Market North Block.

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NO SHORTAGE OF OIL AT PRESENT

Commenting on reports that some dealers were withholding supplies of petroleum products such as kerosene and that some members of the public were hoarding and stockpiling, a Government spokesman said:

"There is no shortage of oil in Hong Kong at the present time. Stocks are normal and, as yet, there has been no interruption of deliveries."

He repeated the Government's previous advice to the community that it was obviously prudent for everyone to avoid waste and unnecessary consumption.

"We have had reports that some people are using cans and containers which are not specially designed for the storage of inflammable liquids," he said.

"This could easily result in a serious fire and endanger not only the hoarders but their neighbours' lives and property as well."

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Release time: 7.30 p.m.