HKGIS 香港政府新聞處

DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Monday, March 19, 1973

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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX FOR FEBRUARY

Higher Prices For Foodstuffs Shown

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Higher prices for foodstuffs, durable goods, alcoholic drink and tobacco, as well as for services, have forced up the General Consumer Price index for February, by eight points to 152.

Announcing this today, a spokesman for the Census and Statistics Department said that the index for foodstuffs increased by 14 points, that for durable goods by four, while the index for alcoholic drink and tobacco went up by three points. A two-point increase was recorded for services.

Compared with January, the average retail prices of rice, bread and cakes, fresh water fish, pork, beef, poultry, fresh vegetables and fruits, and other meat had increased considerably, he said, as a result of generally reduced supplies and heavier demand during the Lunar New Year Festival period.

The only exception were eggs, the average retail price of which dropped due to adequate supplies from China and other countries.

He said the average retail prices of rice and fresh vegetables had risen by 18 per cent, while those for poultry and pork had increased by 17 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.

These increases were due to an upward movement in the wholesale prices of rice caused by higher import prices and importers' speculation on future supplies from the major rice-producing countries.

Supplies of fresh vegetables from China and local sources went down by 31 per cent and 21 per cent respectively compared with the supply figures for January.

/Poultry .....

Poultry prices went up as supplies from China dropped by 19 per cent and demand increased during the Festival period. There was also a drop of 33 per cent in the total supply of live pigs.

"Many restaurants also put up their menu prices, resulting in a rise of seven per cent in the average price of meals bought away from home," he added.

Commenting on the increase in the index for alcoholic drink and tobacco, the spokesman drew attention to the fact that prices of some brands of locally made cigarettes had been revised upwards.

"The increase in the index for services", he explained, "was mainly attributable to higher charges for cinema entertainment."

The G.C.P.I. for February also showed increases of one point each for clothing and footwear and for miscellaneous goods, but movements in the indexes for other commodity sections were insignificant.

For non-food items, increases were recorded in the prices of locally manufactured wooden furniture, and crockery and earthenware of China origin.

The Modified Consumer Price Index for February was 156, eight points higher than that for the previous month and 16 points above that for the corresponding month in 1972.

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NEW AND LARGER PREMISES FOR BRITISH PASSPORT SECTION

To Cope With Increased Demand

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The Immigration Department's British Passport Section will be moving at the weekend into new and enlarged premises.

This is another step by the department to provide better services to the public.

At present the British Passport Section is situated on the 11th floor of International Building.

But because of an increasing demand for passports, the offices have become inadequate and are generally unsatisfactory.

Consequently the department has acquired additional space on the 5th floor of the same building and the Section will be moving in after work on outfitting the new office is completed.

The new office will open for business at 8.45 a.m. on Monday (March 26). Besides a much larger public waiting area, there will also be more office and records space for the staff.

Commenting on the move, a spokesman said the demand for British passports had been increasing steadily over the years to the extent that the existing premises no longer provided sufficient space for the proper public accommodation of passport applicants.

In the first two months of 1973, a total of 5,381 passports were issued as compared to 3,762 in the same period last year.

"And for the first 17 days of March we have already issued 2,016 passports and received another 3,191 applications."

/In the .....

In the financial year 1971-72 the Section issued 28,804 passports. The figure for the first six months of 1972-73 totals 19,650 surpassing the number of passports issued in 1967-68.

The spokesman attributed the increased demand for passports to the rising standards of living and cheaper travel costs.

"We have also made it easier to get a passport by doing away with the need for a recommender and the requirement of a confirmed booking," he said.

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Note to Editors: A tour of both the old and new offices of the British Passport Section has been arranged for tomorrow, Tuesday (March 20) at 3 p.m.

You are cordially invited to send a reporter and/or photographer to cover the tour. Officers of the Section will be on hand to answer questions.

Press representatives are asked to meet the Department's Public Relations Officer, Mr. J. Marshall at Room 1201, on the 12th floor of International Building in Des Voeux Road Central, Hong Kong.

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GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE ON MRS. WONG'S DEATH

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The Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, today sent a message of condolence to the family of the late Mrs. Mary Wong.

He said: "I am greatly shocked to learn the tragic news of Mrs. Mary Wong's death. A social worker of pre-eminence and devotion and a sympathetic personality, she was a much loved and highly regarded leader of the community: Hong Kong will be a poorer place for the passing of this very fine lady."

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OVERCROWDING MOST SERIOUS IN PUBLIC HOUSING

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The problem of overcrowded living conditions in Hong Kong is most serious in public housing.

The problem is less intense in private tenements and least of all in private flats.

This is stated in a special review article in the January issue of the Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics just published by the Census and Statistics Department.

The article reports on the overcrowding and sharing of housing accommodation in Hong Kong based on the 1971 Census Main Report.

The 1971 Census showed that there were a total of 654,810 occupied living quarters of all kinds. Of this total, private housing accounted for about 50 per cent, with public housing and temporary housing amounting to 40 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.

The article reveals that sharing of accommodation is most common in private tenements, and very seldom in public housing.

Sharing of accommodation is measured by the number of households in each living quarter.

The review contains two charts and five tables which rank urban districts with respect to overcrowding and sharing. They show the distribution of these two characteristics by type of housing.

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CAPITAL GRANT TO SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

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A capital grant of $80,000 has been allocated from the Lotteries Fund to the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children for laundry equipment.

The Society operates eight creches throughout Hong Kong with a total capacity of more than 500 places.

The daily laundry load of diapers, towels and linen is very heavy and the existing equipment is quite inadequate.

In order to handle the heavy load more efficiently, 17 new washing, drying and extractor machines were installed in these creches last month.

These machines should promote efficient operation and ease staff problems.

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NON-INDUSTRIAL WORKFORCE SHOW INCREASE

Over 70,000 Employed In Restaurants And Cafes

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Employment in certain selected trades and services in the private non-industrial sector increased by 8,647 to 266,142 in the last half of 1972.

This was shown by a Labour Department survey conducted last November.

But the number of establishments engaged in these trades and services remained practically unchanged at 13,547.

Among the trades and services selected, the largest ones, in terms of employment, were restaurants and cafes (70,542); import and export businesses (43,629); day schools (40,065); ocean and coastal water transport (35,005); banks (20,342); hotels (12,706); and hospitals (8,732).

The main changes in employment between May and November, 1972 were: restaurants and cafes (+4,912); air freight forwarding agencies and travel agencies (+2,004); banks (+1,434); hotels (+1,014); and import and export businesses (-1,969).

Women accounted for about 30 per cent of the workforce in this sector. Of the 79,836 women, 25,439 were employed in education services; 15,276 in restaurants and cafes; 11,808 in import and export businesses; 10,579 in medical and health services; and 6,278 in banks.

In addition, 4,920 young persons under the age of 18 were recorded in the survey. Of these, 3,248 worked in restaurants and cafes.

/A total .....

A total of 2,570 vacancies were reported from the establishments surveyed. The main vacancies were: 640 in restaurants and cafes; 613 in import and export businesses; 492 in medical and health services; and 242 in hotels.

The Commissioner of Labour, Mr. Paul Tsui, praised the managements involved in the survey for their remarkably high rate of response to the department's inquiries.

He said 99.8 per cent of managements responded, as compared with 97.5 per cent for the previous survey.

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WATER STOPPAGES

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Water supply to premises at Nos. 15 to 39, Belcher's Street, Hong Kong Island, will be cut off for eight hours on Tuesday (March 20) starting from 10 p.m.

The temporary stoppage is to enable Waterworks Office staff to connect water mains in the area.

At the same time, a number of buildings in Mongkok will also have their water supply cut for five hours on Thursday (March 22) to allow leakage test to be carried out. The stoppage starts at 1 a.m..

Premises within the area bounded by Tung Chau Street, Tong Mei Road, Fuk Tsuen Street and Walnut Street will be affected.

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RICE IMPORT QUOTA FOR SECOND QUARTER OF 1973

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The Commerce and Industry Department today announced that the rice import quota for the second quarter of 1973 had been provisionally fixed at 99,000 metric tons.

This was 12.5 per cent above the basic quota 88,000 metric tons.

Commenting on the quota, a spokesman for the Department said that offtakes of rice in recent months had been higher than usual. "The increase in the quota takes account of this and also provides for a slightly larger stock for Hong Kong as a whole," he said.

The Department would keep developments in the rice trade under close review, and might issue a supplementary quota during the quarter should circumstances so warrant, the spokesman added.

In the first two months of this year, Hong Kong imported 54,223.8 m/tons of rice. Of this amount, Thailand supplied 63 per cent and China 31.8 per cent. The remainder came mainly from Australia, the United States and Burma.

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HEALTH REPORT FOR JANUARY

One Fatal Case Of Poliomyelitis Reported

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A total of 761 cases of notifiable diseases was reported during January, according to the health report for that month issued by the Medical and Health Department today.

Of the 141 deaths, 138 were caused by tuberculosis, one by amoebiasis, one by bacillary dysentery, and one by poliomyelitis.

The notifications of measles rose slightly from 14 in December to 21 in January, but there were no reports of cerebrospinal meningitis or diphtheria.

A Medical and Health Department spokesman said: "Compared with the corresponding month of 1972, the incidence of typhoid fever shows a drop from 32 to 12 cases."

A notable drop was also observed in the notifications of chickenpox, from 91 to 15 cases.

The spokesman said there were only minor variations in the incidence of other infectious diseases.

Hong Kong remained free from cholera and other quarantinable diseases during the month.

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