



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Fast Track System for port formalities introduced

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The Marine Department will adopt a "Fast Track System" to speed up port formalities for ocean-going vessels from January 3, 1995, a spokesman for the Marine department said today (Saturday).

Ship's agents who have confirmed their status in a recent postal survey will be placed on the Confirmed Register of Ship's Agents on January 3, 1995. All these agents will use this revised system for entering and clearing their vessels.

"The Fast Track System will significantly reduce the time that ship's agents spend on attending the Port Formalities Office of the Marine Department, bringing with them the originals of all requisite documents of the ships and proofs of the net registered tonnage," the spokesman pointed out.

When a ship arrives in Hong Kong, its agent should provide the department with documents such as its certificate of registry, tonnage certificate and safety certificate for checking.

An agent whose vessel is on the Fast Track System will only need to produce the documents when his vessel first calls at Hong Kong.

Document details and the net registered tonnage will be entered into the Marine Department's database.

When the vessel is ready to depart, the department will prepare a Port Clearance Permit, checking with the database for confirmation of document validity.

The agent will attend the Port Formalities Office and will be issued with the Port Clearance Permit on payment of the requisite fee, and the ship will be free to depart.

For the second and subsequent arrivals of the vessel, the agent will not be required to attend the Port Formalities Office with the documents except that any document has been renewed or extended since the vessel's previous port visit.

Agents that have not been approved for fast track clearances must produce, at the Port Formalities Office, all original documents relevant to the ships every time within 24 hours of the ship arrival, or if the office is closed, then at the first opening of the office and again on application for Port Clearance Permits.

The spokesman said a pilot scheme of the Fast Track System earlier this year involving a small number of ship's agents had proved successful.

The Port Formalities Office has been holding five seminars on the system for some 450 ship's agents.

There were about 1,400 ocean-going vessels a month visiting Hong Kong in early 1989. The number rose to some 3,240 in May this year.

End/Saturday, December 31, 1994

Labour Department performance pledge enters second phase

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The Labour Department today (Saturday) announced the second phase of its performance pledge which will start in January.

The second phase sets out performance standards for a wide range of services including a number of new service areas.

The new areas include employment service for disabled job-seekers, licensing of employment agencies, careers guidance to young people, attestation of contracts for employment outside Hong Kong and protection of wages on insolvency.

Services already covered in the first phase such as employment service for able-bodied job-seekers, conciliation of labour disputes, employees' compensation, pressure equipment safety, registration of trade unions and General Enquiry Telephone Service will also be covered in the second phase.

A Labour Department spokesman said the new pledge would improve the quality of services offered by the department in 1995.

"Our aim is always to provide efficient, courteous and professional services to the public in a clean and friendly environment," he said.

Reviewing the department's performance in the first phase of the performance pledge from August 1993 to December 1994, the spokesman noted that targets were met in over 98 per cent of all the cases handled.

"No complaint on non-fulfilment of pledges has been received. Nevertheless, we welcome any comments or suggestions on the services we provide," he added.

Copies of a bilingual booklet on the new performance pledge and achievements in 1993/94 are available in all Labour Department offices and district offices of the City and New Territories Administration.

End/Saturday, December 31, 1994

Fund-raising schedule for January

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Twenty-five organisations have been granted permission to raise funds next month (January), a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department said today (Saturday).

They will either sell flags, tokens or similar items, or place donation boxes in designated public places.

Members of the public can call the department's hotline 2343 2255 or the Hong Kong Council of Social Service's 2866 8123 in case of doubt.

The spokesman appealed to organisers to take precautions against any possible fraud.

"Sellers should display the permit or carry copies of the permit for inspection upon request if the fund-raising is mobile," he said.

The spokesman also advised them to prepare guidelines for sellers, setting out the places and the times for selling and the collection points for bags.

"Organisers should inform the Police in case of loss of property, and seek their help when fraudulent acts, such as tampering of collection bags or making unauthorised selling, are found," he added.

Permits are given to the following organisations for raising funds next month:

Flag day

<u>Event date</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
January 7	Hong Kong Playground Association
January 14	The Maryknoll Medical & Welfare Association (Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital)
January 21	Chai Wan Baptist Church
January 28	KELY Support Group

Public subscription

<u>Event day</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
January 1	World Vision of Hong Kong
January 1	The Community Chest of Hong Kong
January 1	Asian Outreach Hong Kong Ltd.
January 1	Helping Hand
January 1	HK Young Women's Christian Association
January 1	Rehabilitation Alliance Hong Kong
January 1	Hong Kong Association of the Blind
January 1	Hong Kong Association for the Mentally Handicapped
January 1	The Hong Kong Joint Council of Parents of the Mentally Handicapped
January 1	SKH Kei Oi Social Service Centre
January 1	Caritas - Hong Kong

January 1	Children's Orthopaedic Research Foundation
January 1	The Parent's Association of Pre-school Handicapped Children
January 1 to 5	Children's Cancer Foundation
January 1, 15, 22 & 29	Sowers Action
January 6	The Society of Homes for the Handicapped
January 14	The Intellectually Disabled & Advocacy League Ltd
January 14, 15, 21 & 22	Raleigh International Hong Kong Committee
January 14 & 28	Land of Virtue Centre Ltd
January 15	Queen Mary Hospital
January 22	Steward's Sha Kok Youth & Children Centre

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	\$ Million	Time (Hours)	Cumulative Change (\$ Million)
Opening balance in the account	5,149	09:30	+1,050
Closing balance in the account	2,207	10:00	+1,050
Change Attributable to:		11:00	+1,050
Money market activity	+1,050	12:00	+1,050
Laf Today	-3,992	15:00	

LAF rate 3.75% bid/ 5.75% offer TWI 121.4 *+0.0* 31.12.94.

End/Saturday, December 31, 1994

Special 301 negotiations

In response to a statement issued on December 31, 1994 by the US Trade Representative (USTR) on the Special 301 negotiations between the US and China, the Secretary for Trade and Industry, Mr T H Chau, said today (Sunday):

"Since China and the US are our two largest trading partners, the Hong Kong Government is naturally concerned about any US Special 301 action against Chinese products. We would be very concerned about any adverse effect such measures might have on Hong Kong's economy."

On December 31, 1994 the USTR announced that the US would take retaliatory actions against China if it did not agree to address US intellectual property rights concerns. The USTR has published a proposed list of Chinese products which are being considered for retaliation. Public comments on the list can be submitted to the USTR until January 30, 1995. In addition to receiving written comments, the USTR will hold public hearings on January 24 to January 25. According to the announcement, the USTR will make a final determination on February 4.

"We note that the US has published the proposed retaliation list not with a view to implementing it immediately, but for the purpose of seeking public comments. We hope that the two sides will continue to work towards resolving their differences at the negotiating table," Mr Chau said.

In 1991 the US made an announcement of proposed retaliatory measures against Chinese products, while continuing with discussions with the Chinese Government. The two sides reached an agreement eventually and no US retaliatory measures were taken.

When asked about Hong Kong Government's role in the matter, Mr Chau said: "This is primarily a bilateral trade issue between China and the US. Hong Kong does not have a direct role."

"As in the past, we will give the US authorities our assessment of the possible impact on Hong Kong of the proposed US action against Chinese products, and emphasise to the US Administration our hope that Hong Kong's interest would be taken into account in any decision which the US may take.

"We will also provide the relevant trade associations and chambers of commerce in Hong Kong with our assessment. In addition, there might be briefings by the Trade Department.

"Relevant traders may find the information useful in considering whether they would wish to provide comments to the US Administration on the proposed US action. But of course before this can be done we will first need to assess the potential impact of the proposed retaliatory measures on Hong Kong. We will do this as soon as possible," he said.

End/Sunday, January 1, 1995

Imported workers to be told of their rights

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The Labour Department will organise 12 briefing sessions this month to help imported workers of the new airport and related projects to familiarise themselves with the relevant ordinances, requirements and contractual liabilities while working in Hong Kong.

"During the briefing sessions, labour officers will explain to the workers their statutory rights and obligations under the Employment Ordinance and the terms of the standard contract," Labour Officer Ms Luk Wai-ling said today (Sunday).

"They will also be told of the general labour management practices in Hong Kong as well as channels for further enquiries and complaints regarding their terms of employment and conditions of stay," Ms Luk said.

A handy information card with complaint hotline numbers, and copies of an information leaflet entitled "What an imported worker should know" printed either in simplified Chinese characters or English will be distributed to the workers.

Copies of the "Concise Guide to the Employment Ordinance" will also be handed to them.

Ms Luk said letters had already been sent to employers hiring imported workers in the new airport and its related projects.

"We hope that employers can make suitable arrangements to release their workers to attend the briefing sessions," she said.

She also urged employers to reserve places for their imported workers by mail or fax (2545 2959) to the Imported Workers Unit of the Labour Relations Division of the department.

The briefing sessions will be conducted in English, Cantonese and Putonghua. Enquiries on the briefing sessions can be made on tel 2852 3513.

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