



## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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### HKMA to act as Bank of Japan's intervention agent

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It has been agreed between the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) and the Bank of Japan (BoJ) for HKMA to intervene in the local foreign exchange market on behalf of the Japanese authorities to enhance the stability of Yen against US dollar.

BoJ has entered into similar arrangements with the Monetary Authority of Singapore while the arrangement with the Reserve Bank of Australia already exists.

Hong Kong, as a leading international financial centre, has a daily foreign exchange turnover of more than US\$91 billion. This places Hong Kong in the fifth position among the world's largest foreign exchange trading centres.

A spokesman for HKMA said: "The HKMA is pleased to assist BoJ as its intervention agent in the Hong Kong forex market. This is another example of practical co-operation between central banks in the region."

End

### Condolences offer to family of hill fire victim

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In learning the death of Yu Hiu-woon who was injured in the Pat Sin Range hill fire, the acting Secretary for Education and Manpower, Miss Jacqueline Willis, and the Director of Education, Mrs Helen C P Lai Yu, expressed their condolences this evening (Tuesday) to her family.

End

### New office to promote sheltered workshop productivity

\* \* \* \* \*

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) will soon set up a new marketing consultancy office to enhance employment opportunities for the disabled.

A \$6 million grant has been approved by the Subventions and Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee for the establishment of the office, which will be operational on an experimental basis.

The new office, which will be heavily involved in the operation of 43 sheltered workshops and 14 supported employment units, has the following responsibilities:

- \* to promote marketing strategies among sheltered workshops;
- \* to promote and provide training for sheltered workshop personnel to enhance their market orientation;
- \* to promote the image of sheltered workshops and supported employment in the local economy;
- \* to co-ordinate sheltered workshops in marketing, business development and management of resources;
- \* to market the product and services of the sheltered workshops and the working abilities of disabled persons engaged in sheltered work;
- \* to seek marketing professional's/training institutes' support for external consultation assistance on marketing and resources for sheltered workshops; and
- \* to provide advice and assistance to SWD on supported employment and marketing issues.

The office will report to the Advisory Committee on Marketing and Resources for Sheltered Workshops formed last October. The committee comprises an SWD representative and members from non-governmental organisations and commercial sector.

"We will shortly launch a recruitment exercise for professionals to run this office," said the Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Youth and Rehabilitation), Mr Carlos Leung, who is also a member of the Advisory Committee.

"It will be headed by a marketing expert who will be assisted by two marketing officers and supporting staff," he said.

End

### Dischargers urged to make early licence applications

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Existing dischargers from industrial, manufacturing, commercial, institutional and construction activities in Phase II of the Victoria Harbour Water Control Zone (VHWCZ) are reminded that they must make a licence application for their discharges before April 1.

Assistant Director of Environmental Protection, Mr John Boxall, said they should apply for a licence as soon as possible and initiate improvement action so that they would have sufficient time to provide for or upgrade their pollution control facilities to meet the required standards.

This water control zone which covers Sham Shui Po, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin and a small part of Sha Tin, has been in effect since September 1 last year.

"Any existing discharger in these areas who does not make a licence application or whose discharge does not meet the discharge standards and requirements of the licence after April 1 will commit an offence and be liable to prosecution," Mr Boxall said.

"Among the 6,100 existing dischargers identified in the Phase II area, only 1,900 of them have made licence applications," he noted.

The maximum fine for discharging polluting matters into a water control zone is \$ 200,000 for the first offence and \$400,000 for any subsequent offence. Offenders may also be liable to six months imprisonment.

In addition, if the offence is a continuing one, a fine of \$ 10,000 for each day may be imposed.

"To help dischargers understand the requirements of the legislation, we have sent to all of them advisory letters and information booklets in the past months.

"Three public seminars also were held in last October," said Mr Boxall.

Dischargers can contact EPD's local control offices on 2402 5200 (for Sham Shui Po, Yau Tsim Mong and Kowloon City area) and 2707 7534 (for Wong Tai Sin and Sha Tin area) for enquiries on licensing and control matters.

End

Advertising signs must be kept safe

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All signs attached to buildings should only be put in place under close supervision of building professionals and be properly maintained, Senior Structural Engineer of the Buildings Department, Mr Koon Chi-ming, said today (Wednesday).

The comment was made following a recent clearance operation undertaken by the department against dangerous and abandoned signs in Kowloon City.

In the operation, a total of 1,248 signs were inspected and 168 were found to be potentially dangerous.

Of the 168 signs, 34 were repairable and had been fixed by their owners following advice by the department.

"Out of the 134 signs which needed to be removed, 124 had been voluntarily removed by the owners. The remaining 10 signs were removed by the government's contractor and the costs incurred were subsequently recovered from the owners," said Mr Koon.

He reiterated that the department was very concerned about the safety of overhanging signs.

"Similar actions against dangerous signs are being carried out in other districts, including Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon Bay, Yau Ma Tei, Tai Po and Sheung Shui.

"To solicit assistance and co-operation from the area committees in the districts and the local residents through their respective District Boards, we have sent letters to the chairmen of the area committees inviting them to report to us of any suspected abandoned and dangerous signs," he said.

People wishing to put up overhanging signs should seek professional advice for safe design and installation, stressed Mr Koon.

"After installation, they should maintain their signs regularly to prevent them from becoming a potential danger or a nuisance to the public," he added.

End

### Green Manager Scheme a success

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The Government's Green Manager Scheme is making contribution to the world-wide "Save Our Forests" effort - thanks to the success of the campaign to reduce paper consumption.

The success is quantified by the significant 25 per cent drop in the Government's paper consumption in the first six months last year compared with the same period in 1994.

The Government had consumed 147,477 reams (over 73 million sheets) of paper less in the first half of 1995.

This was achieved largely through the efforts of its green managers to encourage printing on both sides of a sheet whenever possible, cutting down on photocopying and using the clean side of a used paper for note taking and drafting.

The reduction in paper consumption would roughly save 6,200 trees from being felled for their destination to paper mills.

A government spokesman said: "Our green managers have also achieved saving in electricity consumption through energy conservation measures.

"For example, staff are encouraged to switch off lighting and air-conditioning whenever the office is not occupied, such as during the lunch break.

"The success of the scheme provides new impetus for the Government to produce new guidelines for the Environmental Audit and to encourage the business community to set up their own Green Managers Scheme.

"Apart from achieving cost reduction, the scheme would increase competitiveness and enhance corporate image by turning a business operation into more environmentally friendly.

"The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has produced a guideline on green managers in business for issue to the business community.

"The guideline gives senior management pointers on how to set up a Green Manager Scheme and how to make it work to the benefits not only to them, but to the community as a whole."

The guideline is available for collection from EPD Headquarters at 28th floor, Southorn Centre, Wan Chai. Copies will be sent to various business associations and educational institutes in early March

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#### First Student Heritage Festival to be held

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The first territory-wide Student Heritage Festival will be held from March 11 to 24 with a series of events aims at promoting students' interest in cultural heritage.

It is hoped that students will be able to learn to appreciate the need and importance in preserving historic treasures by participating in the programme.

A major event in the festival will be an exhibition on the Lord Wilson Heritage Project Scheme displaying heritage projects carried out by 20 schools last year.

The free-for-all display will be staged at the Antiquities and Monument Office (AMO) of the Recreation and Culture Branch, 136 Nathan Road, Kowloon.

During the festival, there will also be demonstrations on traditional craftsmanship such as wood carving and wall painting.

Highlights of the festival include heritage tours to be organised for Primary Four to Form Seven students to visit the newly opened Kowloon Walled City Park where historic relics dating back to the Qing Dynasty are on display.

Other historic sites to be visited will be the Liu Man Shek Tong Ancestral Hall in Sheung Shui, Kun Lung Wai in Fanling and Tsang Tai Uk in Sha Tin.

For those who wish to flex their muscles and take an active part in the preservation of monuments, they can join the two grass cutting activities to be held at the Tai Fu Tai in San Tin and Kang Yung Study Hall in Sha Tau Kok on March 18 and 22 respectively.

The more academically inclined students from Forms Four to Seven can, on the other hand, attend the four archaeological workshops which will be conducted at Tung Wan Tsai in Ma Wan or at AMO.

The festival is jointly organised by AMO and the Education Department. Details of the programme can be obtained by calling AMO on 2721 2326.

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#### Cantonese and China studies course for expatriate officers

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A group of nine expatriate civil servants who are prepared to serve beyond 1997 are now attending a special full-time training course to enhance their proficiency in Cantonese and knowledge about China.

Making the announcement today (Wednesday), a spokesman for the Civil Service Branch said the course will give impetus to government's ongoing efforts to help expatriate officers improve their Cantonese ability and understanding of China.

The first part of the course on Cantonese training now being conducted in the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has already begun at the end of January.

On completion of the language programme on March 1, team members will move on to a China studies training programme to be held at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou from March 4 to 15.

The second leg of the course, focusing on China's political, economic, legal and social systems, will provide further chances for course members to improve their Cantonese as they will be using Cantonese when attending seminars, discussion sessions and visiting Chinese institutions in Guangdong.

Registrar of Companies, Mr Gordon Jones, is the course leader. Members include Mrs Rachel Cartland, Mr Peter Mann, Mr Gavin Ure and Mr Jonathan McKinley from the Administrative Service and Mr Kevan Cooper, Mr John Cox, Mr Nigel Ashmore and Mr David Boyton from the Police.

End

Post Office to participate in stamp exhibition

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The Hong Kong Post Office will take part in the HONGPEX '96, a stamp exhibition organised by local philatelic societies from February 23 to 26, Assistant Postmaster General, Mr Allan Chiang, announced today (Wednesday)

To commemorate the Post Office's participation, a specially designed souvenir pack containing the Year of the Rat stamps issued by Hong Kong, China and Macau will be issued.

It will be available at \$30 each at the Hong Kong Post Office booth Nos 66 and 68 at the exhibition to be held at the Hong Kong Exhibition Centre, Wan Chai. A restriction of five packs per customer queuing will be imposed on February 23.

During the four days of exhibition, a cachet will be introduced for general cancellation purposes at the Post Office's booth.

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Environmental Protection Department joins Internet

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The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has joined the Internet to help disseminate to the public general environmental information of Hong Kong.

Through a home page established by the department in the World Wide Web, users can obtain information on environmental legislation and pollution control.

The main ordinances cover including air pollution control, dumping at sea, noise control, ozone layer protection, water pollution control and waste disposal.

"The home page also contains information on the provision and development of waste facilities, including the strategic landfills, refuse transfer stations and the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre.

"Tenders and consultancy notices of projects managed by the department will also be made available on-line," EPD's Technical Secretary, Dr David Ha, said.

In addition, users can have access to the department's performance pledge as well as channels for making enquiries and lodging complaints with the local control offices against environmental nuisances.

There is also information on EPD's Environmental Resource Centre, the facilities of which include a touch-screen environmental information system and a reference library.

"There are plans to progressively add more information to the Home Page. Items that might be available in future could include reports on air pollution levels and beach water quality," Dr Ha said.

EPD's home page can be accessed anytime at: <http://info.gov.hk/epd>.

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#### Labour Department's enquiry service well-received

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The General Enquiry Telephone Service (GETS) provided by the Labour Department was well-received in 1995 during which 1,620,100 calls were received, representing a 14 per cent increase over the previous year.

"To meet the increasing needs of the society, the round-the-clock Interactive Voice Processing System (IVPS) under GETS was expanded last year to enable more people to gain access to this telephone enquiry service," Senior Labour Officer (Labour Inspection), Mr Chan Kwok-kuen, said today (Wednesday).

Since last October, IVPS has been expanded from 30 telephone lines to 36 to enable the public to gain access to the service more easily. Furthermore, Putonghua was introduced in July as a new language option in addition to Cantonese and English.

"According to our statistics, most of the telephone enquiries were related to the Employment Ordinance, Employees' Compensation Ordinance and foreign domestic helpers which, respectively, made up 31 per cent, 10 per cent and 8.5 per cent of the total calls," he said.

Through IVPS, the public can also obtain information on labour relations promotion activities, employment services, Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board, industrial safety and health as well as boilers and pressure vessels.

This computerised answering system is supplemented by staff operators to handle more complicated enquiries during office hours.

"To facilitate more efficient use of our system and for the greater convenience of our users, a User's Guide on GETS, which can be obtained through fax transmission of the system, has been published to provide users with a comprehensive list of number codes for their quick search of corresponding topics that they are interested in," said Mr Chan.

Copies of the Guide can be pick up from all the offices under the Labour Inspection Division and the department's six major offices at Canton Road Government Offices, Kowloon East Government Offices, Tsuen Wan Government Offices, Tuen Mun Government Offices, Citylink Plaza in Sha Tin and Southorn Centre in Wan Chai.

"We will continue to strengthen our role of providing useful information on labour-related matters to serve the public even better in the coming years," said Mr Chan.

End