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## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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### Passage of Government Bills on employment benefits urged

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The Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, today (Friday) urged Legislative Council (LegCo) members to support the series of Government Bills currently before LegCo and which seek to improve employees' rights and benefits.

"These bills aim at enhancing substantially the rights and benefits of employees. The sooner the legislation is passed by LegCo the better it would be. I sincerely hope that these bills can be enacted before the end of this legislative session," Mr Wong said.

Mr Wong was speaking after an informal meeting with LegCo members representing the various political parties, employer groups and trade unions this evening.

Mr Wong stressed that the Government was committed to improving employees' rights and benefits in a way "which is commensurate with Hong Kong's pace of social and economic developments and which strikes a reasonable balance between the interests of the employers and employees."

"Since the commencement of the 1995/96 legislative session in October 1995, the Government has introduced a total of 23 legislative items on labour matters into the LegCo. Up to now, 17 have been enacted, and six are still being considered by the Council. Of these six, apart from the Bill on Occupational Safety and Health, all the remaining five bills have yet been examined by the Council," Mr Wong said.

Two of them are on improvements to maternity protection provisions, definition of wages and protection of wage payments. They were introduced into LegCo last May but have not been examined by the Council since.

The other three seek to give effect to the results of the review of the labour relations system and to strengthen protection of employees against unreasonable termination of employment and variation of employment contracts. They were introduced concurrently into the LegCo on March 19.

Mr Wong appealed to legislators to accord priority to these Government Bills before the end of the current legislative session, as they all sought to give effect to improvement proposals which had been endorsed by the Labour Advisory Board (LAB).

"I am concerned that, despite this heavy agenda of Government bills, some legislators have chosen to push their Members' Bills on labour matters. A total of six such bills have so far been introduced into LegCo. One was introduced in October last year and is being examined by a bills committee. Two were introduced early this year, and three just yesterday i.e. April 10 (Thursday). We understand that a member is planning to introduce two more new Members' Bills by the end of this month," he said.

"I am, however, pleased to see that LegCo members sponsoring the six Members' Bills which were introduced into LegCo have agreed at the meeting this evening that the bills should be considered by the LAB in the first place before they are taken any further in LegCo. The LAB will consider these bills at its next two meetings," he said.

Mr Wong urged all LegCo members to concentrate their attention on those Government Bills which are now before the Council, in view of the limited time to process the bills before the end of the current legislative session.

End

#### Bill to fight family status discrimination announced

\* \* \* \* \*

A Bill to outlaw discrimination on the ground of family status and to extend the remit of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to oversee the enforcement of such legislation was gazetted today (Friday).

Describing the Bill as a result of a two-month public consultation conducted last year, a spokesman for the Home Affairs Branch said it reflected the Government's considered response to the community's demand for legislation against discrimination on the ground of family status.

"The Family Status Discrimination Bill published today has taken into account a wide range of public opinions collected during the public consultation. When enacted, it will enhance equal opportunities for persons of different family status, for example, members of single parent families and those who have responsibility for the care of an elderly or a disabled family member," the spokesman said.

In the Bill, the term "family status" is defined as the status of having responsibility for the care of an immediate family member.

"An immediate family member must be related to the person concerned by blood, marriage, adoption or affinity. The proposed definition, therefore, includes relationship between husband and wife, parent and child and near relatives. Co-habitation, however, would fall outside the definition. This takes account of the strong public objection, received during the consultation exercise last year, to giving legal recognition to de facto spouse relationship," he added.

"We believe the proposed legislation will remove potential injustice and unfair restriction of an individual's prospect on account of his or her family status," he said.

The Bill renders discrimination on the ground of family status unlawful in specified areas of activity similar to those covered by the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO), such as employment, education, the provision of goods and services, and the disposal and management of premises. It also renders unlawful discrimination by way of victimisation.

"With such provisions in the Bill, it will be unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person, on the ground of his or her family status, in matters relating to recruitment, terms of employment, remuneration, promotion and training," the spokesman said.

To oversee the implementation of the new legislation, the Government also proposes to extend the remit of the EOC to handle complaints of discrimination on the ground of family status.

On the judicial mechanism, the spokesman said the court may exercise similar powers as provided for under the SDO and civil claims for damage can be filed through district court proceedings.

On provisions for exemptions, he said that apart from those exceptions provided for in the SDO, which are also relevant to discrimination on the ground of family status, employers would also be allowed to afford special benefits to suit the special needs of employees with a particular family status.

"This will cover arrangements such as offering education allowance for married employees with children only," the spokesman said.

In order to give small employers time to familiarise with the legislation and if necessary, to adapt their existing practices to comply with the legislation, the Bill provides for a three-year grace period for business establishments with not more than five employees.

The Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on April 23.

End

Government Bill on smoking to be gazetted

\* \* \* \* \*

The Government will gazette a Bill to amend the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance next Friday (April 18), a spokesman for the Health and Welfare Branch said today (Friday).

"As part of our ongoing anti-smoking policy, we are introducing further restrictions on tobacco advertising as well as on the use, sale and promotion of tobacco products.

"There will also be a new mechanism to facilitate the setting up of statutory no smoking areas in certain public places", he said.

The main features of the Bill are :

- \* to ban display-type tobacco advertisements, including posters; printed, painted or photographic advertisements on walls, hoardings and public transport; signs on buildings and lightboxes;
- \* to empower the managers of restaurants, department stores, shopping malls, supermarkets and banks to designate any part of their premises as a no-smoking area, if they wish to do so;
- \* and to prohibit the sale of cigarettes in packets of less than 20 sticks and the sale of tobacco products from vending machines, so as to make them less accessible to young smokers.

The Bill would also :

- \* provide for stronger and more prominent health warnings on tobacco product packages and in advertisements;
- \* prohibit the giving and use of tobacco products in connection with promotion or advertisement;
- \* introduce a requirement for cigarette packets and advertisements to indicate both tar and nicotine yields; and

- \* lower the maximum tar yield in cigarettes from 20 milligrams to 17 milligrams and prohibit brands containing more than 9 milligrams from claiming that they are low in tar.

"With regard to tobacco sponsorship, the Bill does not seek to change the status quo", the spokesman said. "In other words, tobacco companies will continue to be allowed to sponsor events in their corporate name and to advertise such sponsorships."

End

#### Post Office announces new arrangements for stamp sales

\* \* \* \* \*

In response to unprecedented demand for special stamps, the Post office announced new arrangements for special stamp sales today (Friday).

Speaking at a press briefing, Mr Robert Footman, the Postmaster General, said "We are determined to do all we can to ensure we have enough stamps to meet demand, and to sell our stamps with maximum convenience to customers."

To do so, the Post Office has developed the following new arrangements to apply from the issue of Migratory Birds on April 27. First, the Post Office will sell new stamps on Sundays, with the opening of some 480 counter positions for special stamps compared to some 270 for this purpose on weekdays.

Second, the Post Office will set quota for each transaction at higher levels, because it has increased the printing quantity by some 7 times over levels a year ago. For the Migratory Birds this means the quota for each transaction at the counter will be 250 sets of stamps, or 5 sheets of each stamp, compared to 100 sets normally. The increased supply in 1997 has in fact worked well already - Year of the Ox stamps could still be purchased at our post offices up to one month after issue.

"These two actions will ensure a free flow of customers, and will also ensure that normal business on weekdays is unaffected," said Mr Footman.

Third, the Post Office will extend its local advance order to include mint stamps, in addition to first day covers. Orders can be placed for Migratory Birds stamps at any post office from April 14-19. There will be no upper limit on such advance orders. Under this arrangement, customers can now satisfy their needs by May 20 without having to queue.

Fourth, the Post Office guarantees to meet all advance orders, even if this means printing more stamps.

Fifth, all post offices will be open from 8 am - 4 pm, compared to 9.30 am - 5 pm for most offices on weekdays.

"These measures, taken together, will minimise the need to queue, and will greatly speed up our ability to handle those who still decide to queue," said Mr Footman.

The Post Office also plans to nearly double the number of security guards on duty from 300 to 570, and to increase its own staff on crowd control by about 100. The Post Office will use discs throughout the day to avoid queue jumping. And it will further strengthen its cooperation with the Police.

To ensure that these and other arrangements work smoothly, the Post Office will be mobilising the management grade from all divisions of the department to monitor arrangements across the network of post offices.

Mr Footman added "These measures have been developed through the Review Committee we established last month to examine arrangements for stamp sales. Membership of the Committee comprises representatives from the Post Office and, at our invitation, from the ICAC." Other measures agreed by the Review Committee include the cessation of staff and customer relations sales.

Mr Footman said "These improvements build on the many improvements we have made over the past few months, in particular the Local Standing Order Service, under which some 57,000 customers have placed advance orders for stamps this year. With the added measures we are in a good position to meet our objectives - to meet demand with maximum convenience to customers."

He said "I must however add a word of caution. Demand for our stamps and related products is at unprecedented levels. It is clear that much of the upsurge in demand is related to this special time in Hong Kong's history. Stamps provide a good souvenir of this time and there are many people collecting our stamps now because of this.

"We are however concerned about speculative activities in the market. Experience around the world has shown that the value of stamps can go down as well as up. For these reasons, especially in the light of our commitment to meeting all advance orders and the dramatic increase in our printing quantities, we are advising our customers to consider their needs carefully before deciding to buy. Our customers should act rationally."

Mr Footman said "In conclusion, we have developed the above measures after listening to comments from the public, and discussions with representatives of the Democratic Party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood. We believe they are a balanced set of measures, which we will continue to review and develop in the light of experience."

End

#### Buildings Bill enhances disciplinary boards' independence

\* \* \* \* \*

The Government intends to revise the appointment system and composition of disciplinary boards under the Buildings Ordinance to remove any perception that they are not independent or impartial.

A Government spokesman said according to the Buildings (Amendment) Bill 1997 gazetted today (Friday), the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands would replace the Building Authority as the authority to appoint members of such boards.

"The proposed changes aim at removing any perception of unfairness arising from the dual role served by the Building Authority in relation to disciplinary proceedings against building professionals and contractors.

"They also promote the principle of self-regulation and modernise the administration of the boards," the spokesman said.

Such changes to the Buildings Ordinance are in relation to the disciplinary boards for authorised persons, registered structural engineers, registered general building contractors and registered specialist contractors.

The Building Authority or his representative will also cease to be the chairman or a member of a board under various proposed amendments.

The Bill is expected to be introduced into the Legislative Council on April 23, 1997.

End

## Extrinsic Materials as an Aid to Statutory Interpretation

\* \* \* \* \*

The following press release supersedes the one GIS970411023 issued at 3 pm. Please note that anyone who wishes to obtain a copy of the report should contact the Secretary to the Commission, 20/F, Harcourt House, 39 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

The revised press release should read:

The Law Reform Commission today (Friday) published a Report on Extrinsic Materials as an Aid to Statutory Interpretation. The report makes recommendations on the way in which disputes as to the meaning of ambiguous legislative provisions can be resolved by the use of material outside the statute itself, such as reports of the proceedings in the Legislative Council at the time of the legislation's enactment, or the contents of specialist reports which prompted the legislation. The Commission report recommends that the criteria for the use of these "extrinsic aids" should be incorporated in legislation by amendment to the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance (Cap 1).

The Secretary to the Commission, Mr Stuart Stoker, said: "Legislation is interpreted every day by officials, professional advisors, (in particular, lawyers) and the general public. Disputes can arise over the meaning of a statutory provision which have to be resolved by the courts. In reaching its decision, it may be helpful for the court to have recourse to extrinsic aids, such as the official record of the debates in the Legislative Council."

Mr Stoker said that the trend in other common law countries has been to relax the rules governing the exclusion or limitation on the use of such aids.

In line with that approach, the report recommends that a list of available extrinsic aids, and the criteria for their use, should be laid down in statute. The criteria that will govern the use of such aids will be that the provision is ambiguous or obscure, or the ordinary meaning, taking account of its context and purpose, would lead to a result that is absurd or unreasonable.

The Commission recommends that the list of extrinsic aids should include the explanatory memoranda of a Bill, the second reading speech of the policy Secretary, any relevant material in the official record of debates in the Legislative Council, relevant international treaties, and relevant official reports, such as Law Reform Commission reports.

The Commission recommends that the sources of legislation should be referred to in a schedule to any bill, which is complex, implements a Law Reform Commission report, or has an international element.

The weight given to any extrinsic aids will still be left to the discretion of the Judge dealing with the dispute.

The Commission believes that their recommendations will be of assistance to judges, legal practitioners and other advisers, officials and the public. By expanding the scope for use of extrinsic aids, the proposed legislation would give the courts more assistance in tracing the source or purpose of a disputed statutory provision.

Anyone who wishes to obtain a copy of the report should contact the Secretary to the Commission, 20/F, Harcourt House, 39 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

End

#### SWD assists fire victims

\* \* \* \* \*

The Social Welfare Department has so far contacted 27 families of those deceased and injured in the Mei Foo Sun Chuen No. 3 alarm fire.

Among the families, 16 of them have requested for welfare services such as financial assistance, counselling and clinical psychologist service.

Burial grants totalling \$32,100 have been given to the families of three people killed in the fire. A sum of \$2,247 from the Li Po Chun Charitable Fund has also been granted to another family.

Applications for financial assistance from other victims are still being processed.

Meanwhile, the department's clinical psychologists will hold a counselling session to help those distressed by the fire overcome their stress problems.

Members of the public who have any distress problems resulting from the fire are welcome to attend the session which will take place at the Mei Foo Community Hall, Mei Foo Sun Chuen, at 2.30 pm tomorrow (Saturday).

End

Appointments to Council of LWHT

\* \* \* \* \*

The Governor has re-appointed the Hon Edward Ho Sing-tin as the Chairman of the Council of the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust for a period of two years from April 1, 1997.

The appointment was announced in the Gazette today (Friday).

The Governor has also appointed one new member and re-appointed seven members to the Council for a period of two years from April 1, 1997.

The following is a full list of the members of the Council :

Mr Andrew Dixon  
Mr Leung Wai-yin, Wayne  
Professor Lung Ping-yee, David  
Mrs Pamela Rumball Rogers  
Dr Sinn Yuk-yee, Elizabeth  
Mr Yuen King-yuk, Jason  
Director of Architectural Services or his representative  
Director of Education or his representative  
Deputy Secretary (Culture and Sport) or his representative (Ex Officio)

End

Appointments to Board of Trustees of LWHT

\* \* \* \* \*

The Governor has re-appointed Mr Au Siu-kee, Alexander, as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust for a period of two years from April 1, 1997.

The appointment was announced in the Gazette today (Friday).

The Governor has also appointed two new members and re-appointed 10 members to the Board for a period of two years from April 1, 1997.

The following is a full list of the members of the Board :

Miss Chiu Kam-hing, Kathy  
Mr Andrew Dixon  
The Hon Edward Ho Sing-tin  
Mr Kwok Ping-sheung, Walter  
Mr Li Tzar-kai, Richard  
Mr Liu Lit-mo  
Professor Lung Ping-yee, David  
Mr Alasdair G Morrison  
Mr Tsui Tsin-tong  
Mr Wong Shou-yeh, David  
Mr Wu King-cheong, Henry  
Ms Wu Suk-ching, Annie  
Secretary for Home Affairs or his representative (Ex Officio)  
Secretary for Broadcasting, Culture and Sport or his representative (Ex Officio)

End

Employment and vacancy statistics of Dec 1996 released

\* \* \* \* \*

According to the figures released today (Friday) by the Census and Statistics Department, employment in all major service sectors recorded notable increases in December 1996 over a year earlier. Employment at construction sites also registered a further significant year-on-year increase. On the other hand, employment in the manufacturing sector remained on a downtrend.

In December 1996, vacancies in all major service sectors increased substantially over December 1995. These increases were partly attributable to a low base of comparison in December 1995. Vacancies at construction sites also registered a substantial increase. However, vacancies in the manufacturing sector continued to decrease when compared with a year earlier. For all major sectors surveyed taken together, there were around 52 700 vacancies in December 1996, up 27.7% from the 41 300 vacancies recorded in December 1995.

In terms of the number of persons engaged, the wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels sector was the largest, employing 1 056 100 persons in December 1996. This was followed by the financing, insurance, real estate and business services sector, with an employment of 395 900; the manufacturing sector, 325 100; the community, social and personal services sector, 320 100; and the transport, storage and communications sector, 181 500. Also, there were 81 700 manual workers at construction sites.

In terms of change from a year earlier, employment of manual workers at construction sites showed the most significant increase, by 19.2% in December 1996. This was followed by employment in the community, social and personal services sector, rising by 6.0%; the transport, storage and communications sector, by 5.4%; the financing, insurance, real estate and business services sector, by 4.7%; and the wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels sector, by 3.7%. Employment in the manufacturing sector, on the other hand, fell by 13.5%. The respective employment figures are shown in greater detail in Table 1.

As regards the vacancy situation in individual sectors, the wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels sector had the largest number of vacancies, at 22 620 in December 1996. This was followed by the financing, insurance, real estate and business services sector, with 11 440 vacancies; the community, social and personal services sector, 8 380 vacancies; the manufacturing sector, 5 240 vacancies; and the transport, storage and communications sector, 3 050 vacancies. Also, there were 2 000 vacancies for manual workers at construction sites.

In terms of change from a year earlier, vacancies for manual workers at construction sites recorded a substantial increase of 92.6%. This was followed by vacancies in the financing, insurance, real estate and business services sector, rising by 54.7%; the transport, storage and communications sector, by 32.3%; the wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels sector, by 27.7%; and the community, social and personal services sector, by 14.8%. Vacancies in the manufacturing sector however fell by 5.1%. Job vacancy figures for selected major industry sectors are shown in Table 2.

Of the total of some 52 700 vacancies (other than those in the Civil Service) recorded in December 1996, the majority fell into four major occupation groups, viz. associate professionals; clerks; service workers and shop sales workers; and elementary occupations. They together accounted for over three-quarters of the total number of vacancies in all the major sectors surveyed.

In December 1996, vacancies in all major occupation groups increased over December 1995. Vacancies in the craft and related workers category showed the largest increase, by 49.0%. This was followed by vacancies in the managerial and administrative occupation category, rising by 45.3%; the associate professionals category, by 41.3%; the service workers and shop sales workers category, by 33.2%; the clerks category, by 22.2%; the elementary occupations category, by 20.3%; the professionals category, by 15.3%; and the plant and machine operators and assemblers category, by 3.2%. Job vacancy figures broken down by major occupation group are shown in Table 3.

The above statistics for December 1996 were derived from the Quarterly Survey of Employment and Vacancies, the Supplementary Survey of Job Vacancies and the Quarterly Employment Survey of Construction Sites conducted by the Department. In the former two surveys, some economic activities (e.g. those where self-employment is predominant, such as taxi operators, hawkers and freelance authors) are not covered and hence the respective employment and vacancy figures relate only to those selected industries included in the surveys. In the latter survey on construction sites, employment and vacancy figures relate to manual workers only.

Detailed breakdowns of the above statistics are available from the Quarterly Report of Employment, Vacancies and Payroll Statistics, December 1996 and the Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies at Construction Sites, December 1996. They will be available at HK\$48 per copy and HK\$19 per copy (both exclusive of postage) respectively at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, Low Block, Ground Floor, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong and at the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department on the 19th Floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

Table 1: Employment figures and percentage changes by selected major sector

Selected major sector	Persons engaged (employment)			Percentage change	
	Dec95	Sep96	Dec96	Dep96 over Dec95	Dec96 over Sep96
Manufacturing	375800	327500	325100	-13.5	-0.7
Construction sites (manual workers only)	68500	76600	81700	+19.2	+6.7
Wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels	1018200	1046600	1056100	+3.7	+0.9

Transport, storage and communications	172200	179800	181500	+5.4	+1.0
Financing, insurance, real estate and business services	378200	391200	395900	+4.7	+1.2
Community, social and personal services	302000	314500	320100	+6.0	+1.8

Table 2: Vacancy figures and percentage changes by selected major sector

Selected major sector	Number of vacancies			Percentage change	
	Dec95	Sep96	Dec96	Dec96 over Dec95	Dec96 over Sep96
Manufacturing	5520	5870	5240	-5.1	-10.7
Construction sites (vacancies for manual workers only)	1040	1460	2000	+92.6	+36.5
Wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels	17710	21160	22620	+27.7	+6.9
Transport, storage and communications	2310	3230	3050	+32.3	-5.5

Financing, insurance, real estate and business services	7390	10640	11440	+54.7	+7.5
Community, social and personal services	7300	8260	8380	+14.8	+1.5

Table 3: Vacancy figures and percentage changes by major occupation group

Major occupation group	Number of vacancies			Percentage change	
	Dec95	Sep96	Dec96	Dec96 over Dec95	Dec96 over Sep96
Managers and administrators	870	990	1260	+45.3	+27.7
Professionals	2850	2980	3290	+15.3	+10.3
Associate professionals	6530	8700	9220	+41.3	+6.0
Clerks	9150	10330	11180	+22.2	+8.2
Service workers and shop sales workers	9440	12770	12580	+33.2	-1.5
Craft and related workers	2730	3470	4070	+49.0	+17.4
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	3400	3800	3500	+3.2	-7.9
Elementary occupations	6340	7600	7630	+20.3	+0.3

End

Volume & price statistics of external trade in Jan 1997

\* \* \* \* \*

In January 1997, the volume of re-exports increased by 2.6% over a year earlier, while that of domestic exports decreased by 7.4%. Taken together, the volume of total exports increased by 1.0%. Concurrently, the volume of imports increased by 3.0%.

The Census and Statistics Department today (Friday) released detailed volume and price statistics of external trade for January 1997.

Comparing January 1997 with January 1996, the prices of re-exports and domestic exports decreased by 1.3% and 1.5% respectively. Meanwhile, import prices decreased by 2.4%.

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

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 1.1% in January 1997 over January 1996.

Caution should be exercised in interpreting the changes in the volume of trade for a single month at the beginning of each year which may be affected by the timing of the Lunar New Year holidays. It is more meaningful to make comparisons over a longer period.

Comparing the three months ending January 1997 with the three months ending January 1996, the volume of re-exports and imports increased by 5.5% and 5.1% respectively. However, the volume of domestic exports dropped by 7.6%.

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 January 1997 over a year earlier were recorded for capital goods (+18%); fuels (+3.7%); consumer goods (+0.6%); and foodstuffs (+0.3%).

On the other hand, the volume of re-exports of raw materials and semi-manufactures decreased by 4.2%.

Over the same period of comparison, increases were recorded in the prices of re-exports of fuels (+13%); and foodstuffs (+1.6%).

On the other hand, re-export prices of raw materials and semi-manufactures; capital goods; and consumer goods decreased by 2.8%, 2.1% and 0.4% respectively.

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

Comparing January 1997 with January 1996, decreases in domestic export volume were recorded for all of the principal commodity groups, except that of textile yarn and thread which recorded an increase of 1.8%. The volume of domestic exports of radios of all kinds; textile made-ups and related articles; and travel goods, handbags and similar articles showed particularly significant decreases, by 74%, 65% and 43% respectively.

Commodity groups which recorded more notable increases in domestic export prices included metal ores and scrap (+15%); and textile yarn and thread (+4.6%).

On the other hand, domestic export prices of electronic components; and footwear decreased significantly, by 12% and 7.2% respectively.

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 17% in January 1997 compared with January 1996.

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

Over the same period of comparison, the import volume of consumer goods increased by 2.8%.

Notable increases in import volume were noted of alcoholic beverages; and passenger motor cars. However, significant decreases in import volume were recorded for tobacco manufactures; and miscellaneous made-up articles of textile materials.

The import volume of raw materials and semi-manufactures decreased by 3.4% in January 1997 compared with January 1996.

Significant decreases in import volume were noted of raw cotton; and leather and dressed furskins. However, rapid increases were noted of cotton yarn and thread; and lime, cement and fabricated building materials except glass, clay construction materials and refractory construction materials.

Imports of fuels decreased by 11% in volume in January 1997 compared with January 1996.

As regards capital goods, the volume of imports increased by 14% in January 1997 over January 1996.

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

Comparing January 1997 with January 1996, import prices of fuels increased significantly by 33%.

On the other hand, import prices of raw materials and semi-manufactures; capital goods; foodstuffs; and consumer goods decreased by 6.0%, 3.5%, 1.0% and 0.3% respectively.

Details of the above statistics are published in the January 1997 issue of the "Hong Kong Trade Index Numbers".

The report will be available on sale around 14 April 1997 at HK\$13 per copy at either (i) the Government Publications Centre on the ground floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway; or (ii) the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department on the 19th Floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai.

Enquiries regarding regular subscription to this report may be directed to the Publications (Sales) Office of the Information Services Department at 28/F., Siu On Centre, 188 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong (Tel. No.: 2598 8194) and enquiries on trade indices to the Census and Statistics Department (Tel. No.: 2582 4918).

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

End-use category	Value	Comparing JAN 1997 with JAN 1996	
		% changes	
		Unit Value	Volume
Foodstuffs	2.0	1.6	0.3
Consumer goods	0.4	-0.4	0.6
Raw materials & semi-manufactures	-7.5	-2.8	-4.2
Fuels	27.0	13.1	3.7
Capital goods	14.9	-2.1	18.3
ALL COMMODITIES	0.9	-1.3	2.6

Table 2: Changes in domestic exports by principal commodity group

Commodity group	Value	Comparing JAN 1997 with JAN 1996	
		% changes	
		Unit Value	Volume
Clothing	-5.9	-0.2	-4.5
Textile fabrics	-12.4	1.3	-14.6
Textile yarn and thread	6.3	4.6	1.8
Textile made-ups and related articles	-65.6	1.2	-65.2

Radios of all kinds	-74.3	-4.1	-73.7
Electronic components	-7.6	-11.9	-0.2
Footwear	-36.1	-7.2	-29.3
Metal manufactures	-19.7	-0.4	-20.7
Metal ores and scrap	3.3	14.6	-12.0
Watches and clocks	-23.8	1.7	-24.4
Travel goods, handbags and similar articles	-43.4	0.7	-42.6
Domestic electrical appliances	-23.2	-2.9	-22.0
ALL COMMODITIES	-9.0	-1.5	-7.4

Table 3: Changes in imports by end-use category

End-use category	Value	Comparing JAN 1997 with JAN 1996	
		% changes	
		Unit Value	Volume
Foodstuffs	15.8	-1.0	17.3
Consumer goods	3.0	-0.3	2.8
Raw materials and semi-manufactures	-8.8	-6.0	-3.4
Fuels	20.3	33.4	-11.0
Capital goods	10.4	-3.5	13.9
ALL COMMODITIES	1.2	-2.4	3.0

End

### Taxi fares increase on Sunday

\* \* \* \* \*

The Transport Department announces that fares for urban and New Territories (NT) taxis will be increased by 6.3 per cent and 7.4 per cent respectively from Sunday (April 13).

New flagfall charge for the first two kilometres for urban taxis will be \$14.5, increased by 50 cents comparing to existing \$14.

The NT taxis' flagfall charge will be increased by 70 cents to \$12.50 from \$11.80.

For every subsequent 0.2 kilometre, the fares for both kinds of taxis will go up by 10 cents to \$1.30 and \$1.20 respectively.

The waiting time charge will rise by 10 cents per minute to \$1.30 for urban taxis and \$1.20 for NT taxis.

The surcharges for luggage carried and every hiring through telephone booking will remain unchanged at \$5 and \$4 correspondingly for urban and NT taxis.

A spokesman for Transport Department today (Friday) said conversion tables for the old and new meter readings of these taxis have been prepared.

"They should be displayed at a prominent position inside a taxi before the taximetre is recalibrated, tested and sealed by the Department," he added.

These tables are now available for collection by taxi owners by showing their taxi registration documents at :

- \* all licensing offices of Transport Department;
- \* Public Vehicle Section, Transport Department, 3/F, United Centre, 95 Queensway, Hong Kong;
- \* Public Enquiry Service Centres of all urban District Offices and of Sha Tin, Kwai Tsing and Tsuen Wan District Offices for urban taxi conversion tables; and
- \* Public Enquiry Service Centres of North, Sai Kung, Tai Po, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun District Offices for NT taxis conversion tables.

End

### Board amends Kwai Chung OZP

\* \* \* \* \*

The Town Planning Board announced today (Friday) amendments to the approved Kwai Chung Outline Zoning Plan.

Five amendments, which were all related to the provision of additional housing flats were made to the plan, a spokesman for the Board said.

"Four of them will facilitate the early rehousing of those residents being affected by the Hong Kong Housing Society's Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme in the Kwai Chung district. The remaining one will facilitate the disposal of surplus government quarters for private residential use," he said.

A 1.41-hectare site in Shek Lei Estate and an existing 0.23 hectare open space (Fuk Tak Garden) to the south of Tai Wo Hau Road have been rezoned from 'Open Space' ('O') to 'Residential (Group A)' ('R (A)') for public housing development.

To make up for the loss of open space, a 2.15-hectare site at the junction of Castle Peak Road (Kwai Chung) and Kwai Chung Circumferential Road, which is partly an existing open space and partly occupied by public housing blocks to be demolished, has been rezoned from 'R (A)' to 'O'.

Another site of about 0.51 hectare in Kwai Chung Estate has also been rezoned from 'R (A)' to 'O'.

A 0.45-hectare site at Lai King Hill Road opposite to the Princess Margaret Hospital has been rezoned from 'Government/Institution/Community' to 'Residential (Group B)' to facilitate the disposal of the site together with the surplus Government quarters for private residential use.

The amendment plan (No. S/KC/12) is available for public inspection until June 11 during office hours at :

- \* Planning Department  
16th floor, Murray Building  
Garden Road  
Central  
Hong Kong;

- \* Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po District  
Planning Office  
27th floor, Tsuen Wan Government Offices  
38 Sai Lau Kok Road  
Tsuen Wan  
New Territories; and
  
- \* Kwai Tsing District Office  
10th floor, Kwai Hing Government Offices  
Building  
166-174 Hing Fong Road  
Kwai Chung  
New Territories.

Any person affected by the amendments may submit written objections to the Secretary of the Town Planning Board, c/o Planning Department, 13th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong, before June 11.

Copies of the draft plan are available for sale at the Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, 14th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong and the Kowloon Map Sales Office, ground floor, 382 Nathan Road, Kowloon.

End

#### Fresh water cut in North Point

\* \* \* \* \*

Fresh water supply to some premises in North Point will be suspended from 11 pm on April 14 (Monday) to 6 am the following day for waste detection work on watermains.

The suspension will affect:

- \* all odd number premises at no. 395-511 King's Road;
  
- \* all even number premises at no. 2-82 and odd number premises at no. 1-87 Marble Road;
  
- \* all even number premises at no. 72-210 and odd number premises at no. 81-173 Java Road;

- \* all odd number premises at no. 31-41 Tin Chiu Street;
- \* all even number premises at no. 22-32 and odd number premises at no. 31-55 Kam Hong Street;
- \* all even number premises at no. 22-32 and odd number premises at no. 29-45 Shu Kuk Street;
- \* all premises along Tong Shui Road;
- \* North Point Vehicular Ferry Pier ;and
- \* North Point Ferry Pier.

End