



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Friday, February 15, 1974

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Daily guide to wholesale prices and supply of basic food commodities

Release time: 8.15 p.m.

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PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SPECIAL ALLOWANCES TO BE INCREASED

The Social Welfare Department will increase from April 1 this year the special allowances paid to certain people drawing public assistance.

The allowances are to help with the expense of medically approved extra diet and certain other expenses such as those related to boarding charges for disabled children, and removal.

Announcing the revision, the Assistant Director of Social Welfare in charge of the Social Security Division, Mr. Frederick Clark, said:

"These new increases will help to ensure that those with special needs do not suffer hardship through the rising cost of food."

He added that special allowances had been of particular concern to him when in the U.K., and, as promised on his arrival in Hong Kong last November, he had undertaken a review which had resulted in these improvements.

Mr. Clark went on to explain that the special dietary allowance is paid to persons who are certified by a doctor at a government hospital or government subvented medical institution as suffering from a post-operative condition or certain other illnesses or who require a fluid diet.

"At the moment people in this category are given an extra \$100 a month on top of the public assistance payments. This higher level allowance will go up to \$140 a month."

Those who are certified as suffering from liver disease, kidney disease or as requiring an ulcer diet, now get an allowance of \$60 but will be getting \$70.

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The other discretionary allowances, he said, would also be more generous. The boarding charges for disabled children will be going up to a maximum of \$75 a month in addition to the basic level of public assistance.

The maximum allowances for removal expenses will be revised from \$250 to \$300 for a single person, from \$500 to \$600 for a family of two to three people, and from \$600 to \$700 for a family of four persons or more.

In addition the allowance of \$20 will be increased to \$26 per month for those who are provided with free board and lodging by friends and relatives.

Mr. Clark said those at present receiving continuing special allowances will automatically be paid the new levels from April 1 if they are receiving public assistance at that date.

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\$242 MILLION DEFICIT RECORDED

For First Seven Months Of Current Financial Year

The government accounts for the month of October 1973 show a deficit of \$88 million compared with a surplus of \$91 million in October 1972.

This has resulted in a total deficit of \$242 million for the first seven months of this financial year.

Total revenue for the month at \$347 million was \$21 million less than in October 1972. The total revenue for the first seven months of the financial year was \$2,319 million - \$283 million more than in the same period the previous year.

Expenditure amounted to \$435 million, an increase of \$158 million over October 1972. This brings the total expenditure for the first seven months of the financial year to \$2,561 million, which was \$612 million more than the same period the previous year.

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EEC TO CONTINUE TARIFF PREFERENCES FOR ANOTHER YEAR

The United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and Denmark have aligned their respective Generalised Systems of Preferences with that of the original European Economic Community.

Announcing this today, the Director of Commerce and Industry, Mr. David Jordan, said that with effect from January 1, 1974, the nine member countries of the enlarged European Economic Community would continue their Generalised Systems of Preferences for a period of one year.

The Commerce and Industry Department will continue to accept applications for Certificates of Origin, Form A, which are required for exports of products under claim to preferential duties on entry into the countries of the enlarged European Economic Community.

Under the E.E.C. Scheme, duty free entry are available for a wide range of manufactured and semi-manufactured products (except textiles and footwear) to pre-determined quota levels.

When the quota level of each category has been filled, subsequent imports of the goods concerned will attract normal rates of duty. Certain agricultural products are also allowed entry into the countries of the E.E.C. at reduced rates of duty.

The origin rules of the present scheme remain basically the same as that of the original scheme. Full details of the method of applying for the Certificate of Origin, Form A, are included in a circular to the trade which the department is issuing today.

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NEW OPPORTUNITY TO REGISTER AS URBAN COUNCIL ELECTORS

Electoral Registration Cycle Begins To-day

Registration of voters for the March 1975 Urban Council elections begins today (Friday).

Those entitled to vote in the elections but who have not yet registered have another opportunity to have their names included in the Urban Council Electoral Register.

The new list of electors will be compiled during the four-month period starting today. The compilation of the new register will be in two stages.

During the first stage, people who are qualified as electors under one of the 23 categories of the Urban Council Franchise, but who have not previously registered, can apply by post to have their names included in the new register.

The applications must be sent to the Registration Officer, Urban Council Elections, Mr. Jack Mitchell, Registration of Persons Department, Head Office, 4th floor, Causeway Bay Magistracy Building, Hong Kong. It is from these postal applications that a Provisional Register will be compiled between June 16 and August 15, 1974.

Electors whose names appear in the current Final Register of Electors published in January last year need not apply again since their names will be carried forward to the new Register. However, they should keep the Registration Officer informed of any changes in their business or residential addresses.

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The second stage is the opening of the Provisional Register for public inspection for two weeks from August 16 to 31. This register will be on display at the Electoral and Jury Section of the Registration of Persons Department at Ka Cheong Building, 4 Sunning Road, 7th floor, Hong Kong.

"It is during this time that latecomers can apply in person to have their names included in the Final Register", Mr. Mitchell said.

Categories under the franchise include taxpayers, jurors, members of the civil service, members of any of the auxiliary services, doctors, lawyers, journalists, rate-payers, teachers, Justices of the Peace, clergymen, nurses, university graduates and school certificate holders.

Since many people are undoubtedly qualified to register under two or more categories of the franchise, the number of eligible voters is thought to be in the region of about 250,000 persons. However, only 31,824 voters are on the present register.

"This is an opportunate time for people who want to show their support for the Urban Council to register as electors. Those who are uncertain under which category they qualify, can check the Urban Council Franchise which has been published in today's newspapers or refer to the application form which also lists all categories of the franchise", Mr. Mitchell said.

People who qualify under two or more categories, may register under the category of their choice.

Besides having to qualify under one of the categories, a person must also be over 21 years of age and have lived in Hong Kong for the past three years.

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Anyone who wishes to register by post must complete a form (called 'Form 1') and return it to the Registration Officer before June 15, 1974.

The form is in English and Chinese. It may be completed in either language and can be posted to the Registration Officer. No stamp is necessary as postage has been prepaid.

Forms can be obtained from any Post Office Enquiry Counter, City District Office, District Office in the New Territories, enquiry counters of government departments as well as from any Registration of Persons Department Office.

Anyone who is not sure whether he is qualified should write to the Registration Officer for advice or telephone 5-762120 or 5-765912.

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REVIEW OF HONG KONG'S PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORT OVERSEAS

The government is to review Hong Kong's public relations effort in Europe.

The Commissioner for Television and Films, Mr. Nigel Watt, will leave for London this (Friday) evening on the start of a tour of countries in the European Economic Community, surveying Hong Kong's publicity output in this area.

In addition to London, Mr. Watt will visit Brussels, Rome, Milan, Bonn, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Paris, the Hague and Amsterdam before returning to Hong Kong at the end of March.

Commenting on this assignment, a government spokesman said: "When he was appointed to his present post in 1972, it was decided that Mr. Watt should undertake this survey as soon as the introduction of the new television stations in Hong Kong was sufficiently advanced.

"Now that the first main transmitter of the competitor stations is operating, the way is clear for an orderly development of the remaining services.

"Therefore it seems appropriate that this survey should not be further delayed."

In the course of his tour, Mr. Watt will hold discussions with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Hong Kong Government Office in London, and with British Embassy officials, Hong Kong Trade Development Council and Hong Kong Tourist Association representatives in Europe.

During his six weeks' absence from Hong Kong Mr. Ian Kingsley will undertake the duties of Commissioner for Television and Films.

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ANOTHER SMOKE CONTROL AREA

Cheung Sha Wan and Sham Shui Po are gazetted today as a smoke control area, bringing to five the number of areas in Hong Kong in which factories or other fuel users can be fined for exceeding smoke pollution limits.

Four other areas have already been declared smoke control areas - Kwun Tong in 1960, Sha Tin in 1962, North Point in 1964 and Tsuen Wan last year.

Under today's gazette notice, members of the public in Cheung Sha Wan and Sham Shui Po are given 21 days to make recommendations or objections to the declaration, which is due to become effective on April 16, 1974.

Under the Clean Air Ordinance, an occupier of any premises within the smoke control area who operates a furnace, oven or chimney emitting dark smoke for more than six minutes in a period of four hours, or more than three minutes at any one time, is liable to a \$2,000 fine. He can also be fined \$50 for every 15 minutes during which the offence continues.

The Labour Department's Smoke Abatement Adviser, Mr. Ken Higginson, said today the emission of smoke darker than the legal limits was simply a result of inefficient combustion techniques, which also unnecessarily increased fuel bills.

He said members of his staff - who could be contacted by ringing 3-688924 or 3-688954 during office hours - could give fuel users free advice on how to increase the efficiency of their fuel usage and reduce their air pollution.

Mr. Higginson

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Mr. Higginson said fuel users in Cheung Sha Wan and Sham Shui Po would be advised by mail of the necessary precautions they should make to comply with the laws.

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WALK FOR CHARITY

The Social Welfare Department's Princess Alexandra Community Centre in Tsuen Wan is organizing a walk this Sunday (February 17) to raise money for the Community Chest's "Walk For A Million".

This is the second occasion that the Centre and its member committees, have organized such a project. Last year they raised \$8,000.

Mrs. Margaret Au, Warden of the Centre, said this year it was planned to have more people participating, particularly non-members, and it was hoped that more money would be raised.

Registrations and sponsor forms are being handled by the Group Work Unit in the Centre which is located at Tai Po Road, Tsuen Wan and anyone interested in joining should apply there.

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NOW IT'S MINI-ROUNABOUTS

First it was mini-skirts, then mini-buses. Now the traffic experts in Hong Kong are to introduce an experimental mini-roundabout.

This new road system will come into force at the junction of Tai Po Road and Ching Cheung Road next Wednesday (February 20).

It is all part of the major traffic diversions necessary to facilitate the construction of the \$8 million Piper's Hill Interchange which forms part of the Kowloon Foothills Road Corridor (Route 4).

The central island of the "mini-roundabout" will have a diameter of only 14 feet. However, the system has been designed in such a way that the configuration of the junction can be adjusted quickly, if necessary, to suit traffic conditions.

A spokesman for the Transport Department said today that to make the system work efficiently it is essential that motorists approaching the junction give way to traffic on their right.

"If all motorists strictly observe this priority system the new roundabout will operate with minimal delays; on the other hand, if the priority system is ignored then it is probable that severe congestion and long delays will occur."

Because of this, the spokesman said, it is in the motorists own interests to observe the priority (and direction) signs which will be in position. The Police will also be on hand for the first few days to assist and advise motorists.

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At the same time and for a period of about three months, there will also be a height limitation of 15 feet 9 inches imposed on both carriageways of Ching Cheung Road at the construction site.

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Note to Editors: Copies of a sketch map showing the location of the mini-roundabout are boxed for collection.

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MORE NON-MANUAL WORKERS TO BE PROTECTED

Under Workmen's Compensation And Employment Ordinances

Two bills aimed at providing statutory protection for many Hong Kong employees are gazetted today.

The bills increase from \$1,500 to \$2,000 the monthly income limit on non-manual employees covered by the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance and Employment Ordinance.

At present, a non-manual worker is not covered by the laws if his monthly earnings exceed \$1,500. All manual workers are covered, regardless of income.

The Employment (Amendment) Bill 1974 will come into operation immediately, if passed by the Legislative Council. The Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Bill 1974 would become effective on a date to be specified.

Commenting on the bills today, the Commissioner of Labour, Mr. Ian Price, said the intention of raising the wage ceiling in the two bills was to keep pace with wage growth.

"In recent years, wages for manual and non-manual workers have increased steadily," he said. "Thus, a non-manual worker who was protected by the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance and the Employment Ordinance in 1970 may well be excluded now from the ambit of the ordinance because his monthly wages have increased beyond \$1,500. This upward revision will give him continued protection under the law."

Mr. Price added that the Workmen's Compensation bill also proposes to increase the scale of workers' compensation payments in line with the increase in wage ceilings.

The two bills will shortly be introduced into the Legislative Council.

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NEED FOR SOPHISTICATED ORGANISATION OF CAREERS MASTERS

"Main Thrust Must Be In Schools" - Mr. Lowe

A more sophisticated organisation of Careers Masters in schools is needed in Hong Kong, the Deputy Director of Education (Administration), Mr. Charles Lowe said today.

It was therefore vitally important, he noted, to build up and improve a regional organisation based on the Education Department to sustain and support such an organisation.

"Much has been done; much more requires to be done," he said.

"Careers guidance is an essential function of the schools.

"The Labour Department can be of help but the main thrust must be in the schools."

Mr. Lowe pointed out that it was only the teachers who have a true insight into the personalities and abilities of their students.

He called for the setting up of top-level and grass-roots machinery because "closer co-operation is vitally important and is required in this enormous field."

Speaking at the Christian Alliance College's Speech Day, Mr. Lowe said Hong Kong was now "at something of a cross-road in education," and he was sure the ideas that interested bodies and the public had been encouraged to express would grow into policy.

"This is an excellent thing. The system of education and the schools in a very real sense belong to the people of Hong Kong.

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"They in fact pay for them and they must have a major say in what the schools offer and how the system works. It is their system."

Mr. Lowe also spoke about the need for a sense of direction.

"Do not forget that education is complicated and the idea that more teachers, more money and more schools are all that is needed has in England been shown wrong," he said.

The English parents did not like the large comprehensive schools on which future policy had been planned.

In Hong Kong, whatever the outcome, the following points must be considered:

- * The rival claim of quantity and quality. Without very great care they cannot both exist.
- * Relevance to the future needs of the students after they have left school and are in a future society.
- * The place of book-learning on the one side and culture on the other in school.
- * The need for increased cost effectiveness. Do we get value for money?
- * The need for adequate financial investment in the Education Service.
- * The need for increased emphasis on attitudes and values.

Mr. Lowe emphasised that "schools must make pupils fit for society but society itself must be fit for students and not contradict the moral values they have been given in school."

The Deputy Director said examinations must be stopped from controlling the education given in Hong Kong schools and from controlling the attitudes of teachers and pupils.

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"Nor must Matriculation and Advanced Levels have a back-lash affecting the whole secondary system.

"A first step would be to examine on the teaching syllabus and not on the examination syllabus. This is easier said than done," Mr. Lowe said.

Hong Kong students are among the most gifted in the world but tend, through no fault of their own and owing to competitive pressures, to concentrate on subjects relevant to the intended examinations and professions.

He urged students not to neglect the cultural field.

A student becoming a doctor must be interested in music and literature, Eastern or Western. The student of art and design must be interested in biology, language and general knowledge. "What is important is some understanding of the whole human experience," he said.

Prizes and certificates were distributed by Mrs. Lowe during the ceremony.

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Note to Editors: Copies of the full text of Mr. Lowe's speech are boxed for collection.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY SERVICE

Daily Guide To Wholesale Market Prices And Supplies

The following prices were realised today (Friday) at sales under the Rice Control Scheme and at the Vegetable Marketing Organisation Wholesale Market and the Fish Marketing Organisation Wholesale Market at Cheung Sha Wan, Kowloon:

Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Rice

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>
<u>China Rice</u>		<u>Average</u>
See Mew -- old crop	Good	-
-- new crop		1.84
S.C.Jion -- old crop	Good	1.78
Po Hgai	Good	-
Chu Cho	Good	-
<u>Thai Rice</u>		
100% Whole	Good	1.74
10-15% Broken	Good	-
A1 Super Extra	Good	1.52
A1 Super	Good	1.42
Whole Glutinous	Good	-
<u>U.S. Rice</u>	Good	1.74
<u>Australian Rice</u>	Good	-
<u>Pakistan Rice</u>	Good	-
<u>Taiwan Rice</u>	Good	-

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Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Marine Fish

<u>Species</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>		
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Average</u>
Golden Thread	Good	5.0	3.5	4.0
Big-Eyes	Good	2.8	0.9	1.8
Squid	Normal	6.3	3.5	5.0
Hair-Tails	Good	1.5	0.7	1.1
Lizard Fishes	Normal	2.75	1.3	2.0
Croakers	Good	2.6	1.4	2.0
Conger-Pike-Eels	Normal	3.2	2.5	2.8
Melon Coat	Good	2.8	1.6	2.0
Breams	Normal	4.5	3.5	4.0
Yellow Belly	Good	2.4	0.7	1.4
Mackerels	Limited	4.5	3.0	4.0
Red Goat Fish	Good	2.95	0.7	1.8
Fork-Tail	Normal	2.2	1.0	1.7
Horse-Head	Limited	6.5	3.5	5.5
Melon Seed	Normal	3.6	2.5	2.8
Pomfrets	-	-	-	-
Groupers	Normal	6.7	5.0	6.0
Yellow Croaker	-	-	-	-

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Supplies and Wholesale Prices of

Locally Produced Vegetables

<u>Type</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>		
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Average</u>
Flowering cabbage	Normal	1.6	0.8	1.4
White cabbage	Limited	1.4	0.5	1.0
Chinese Lettuce	Limited	0.8	0.3	0.6
Chinese Kale	Normal	1.6	0.6	1.2
Spring onion	Good	0.6	0.2	0.4
Spinach	Normal	0.8	0.2	0.5
Water cress	Normal	1.0	0.25	0.6
Leaf mustard cabbage	Scarce	0.8	0.3	0.5
Tomato	Limited	1.8	0.7	1.2

Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Pork (Live weight)

	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price</u>
		<u>(\$/ picul)</u>
		(Average)
Pork	Good	300

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