DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
GARDEN ROAD, 5th–8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,
HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

Dear DIB Clients

I write to thank you for your support over the past years in subscribing to the Daily Information Bulletin (DIB).

In the meantime, I am glad to inform you that DIB has now been uploaded onto the Hong Kong Government Home Page on the Internet (http://www.info.gov.hk/isd/news/index.htm) from April 1, 1997.

This arrangement has ensured that existing DIB subscribers as well as the general public can have quicker access to the press releases issued daily by the Hong Kong Government through the Information Superhighway.

Following the upgrading of services, the DIB will no longer be printed in hard copies and distributed by post to subscribers with effect from May 1, 1997.

This decision will do good to the community at large in terms of environmental protection as 3.1 million sheets of A4-size paper will be saved each year, not to mention the saving of postage and large quantity of ink for printing.

If you wish to have the DIB sent directly to your Internet e-mail account, please complete and return the attached slip to GIS, 8th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong, before May 1, 1997 or by fax through 2845 9078. You can, of course, provide your e-mail account to us through our Internet mail account : isdnews@isd.gcn.gov.hk.

It is the policy of this department that we should aim at running a paperless office in the long run, but if you have difficulties in the new arrangements, please contact the undersigned at 2842 8738.

Robert Yip

(Robert YIP)
for Director of Information Services

Return Slip

To : GIS, 8th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong
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Thursday, April 17, 1997

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Legislation on Right of Abode

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The following statement is issued by the Attorney General, Mr Jeremy Mathews:

"On 1 July 1997 the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will enter into force. The right of abode of permanent residents of the Region will be provided for under Article 24 of the Basic Law. Consistent with the proper interpretation of Article 24, the Legislature of the Region may enact legislation amending the Immigration Ordinance to provide in greater detail for the implementation of the Article. Although it is desirable for the amendments to enter into force on 1 July 1997, it is not essential for effective immigration control that they do so, provided they are enacted and enter into force within a short period of time. Before domestic legislation is enacted, the Director of Immigration can make her decisions in right of abode matters on the basis of the provisions of Article 24 of the Basic Law.

"If legislation to amend the Immigration Ordinance is enacted in a manner which raises a doubt as to the validity of the amending legislation, then it is inevitable that that point will be taken in any proceedings before a tribunal or court in which a person's status as a permanent resident is in issue. Whatever the outcome of such proceedings, until the proceedings and any appeal is finally disposed of, the state of the law in the vital area of immigration will be uncertain. From past experience we know that a significant proportion of judicial review cases each year relate to immigration matters.

"It may have been assumed from the Government's proposal to publish a White Bill that the Government has already prepared a draft bill which could be introduced into the Legislative Council or handed to the Chief Executive (Designate). That is not the case. The Government's proposal to the Chinese side was that a White Bill would be published by end May/early June. No bill in any form has as yet been drafted but a bill will be available for publication by 30 June 1997."

End

Bill to facilitate enforcement of maintenance orders

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A Bill seeking to facilitate the recovery of arrears of maintenance due from a defaulting maintenance payer will be gazetted tomorrow (Friday).

The Marriage and Children (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 1997 which contains amendments to the Guardianship of Minors Ordinance (GMO), the Separation and Maintenance Orders Ordinance (SMOO), the Matrimonial Causes Ordinance (MCO) and the Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Ordinance (MPPO), is aimed at facilitating better enforcement of maintenance orders.

A Government spokesman said the Bill would also empower the court to order the sale of matrimonial property, to bring the aforementioned ordinances in line with the Age of Majority (Related Provisions) Ordinance which provides that a person shall attain full age at 18 years old in most cases and to rectify the gender-biased provisions in the SMOO and MPPO.

The spokesman said the proposed amendments were mainly based on the recommendations made by a working group appointed by the Chief Justice to review practices and procedures relating to matrimonial proceedings.

"Taking into account the working group's recommendations contained in a report published last August, the Government has made a number of proposals under the Bill," he said.

One of them is the Attachment of Income Orders (AIO). Under this proposal, the court may issue an order to attach the income of a maintenance payer who has defaulted in payment without reasonable causes.

"For example, the maintenance payer's employer may be required to deduct payments from his wages and pay the amount direct to the payees," the spokesman said.

The Bill also proposes that all maintenance payers should be required to notify the payees concerned or other persons specified by the court of any change of address by registered mail within 14 days of such a change.

Another proposal is to empower the court to make order for the sale of matrimonial property.

"At present, the courts do not have jurisdiction to order the sale of matrimonial property even where such sale is necessary for the property to be divided equitably between the spouses or ex-spouses in matrimonial proceedings," the spokesman added.

As regards provisions relating to the age of majority, the Government proposes that the court may make a maintenance order for a period up to a child's eighteenth birthday or extending beyond the child's eighteenth birthday if the child is, or will be, undergoing education or training or there are special circumstances.

In addition, the Bill will also rectify certain gender-biased provisions in the SMOO and MPPO so that either party to a marriage can apply for maintenance order on the same grounds under the two ordinances.

The Bill will be introduced to the Legislative Council on April 30 this year.

End

$320 million for RPIS projects in 97/98

* * * * *

The Government will spend $320 million on 257 Rural Planning and Improvement Strategy (RPIS) Minor Works projects in 1997/98 to improve the infrastructure and living environment in rural areas, the Director of Home Affairs, Mrs Shelley Lau said today (Thursday).

Speaking at a ceremony marking the completion of the $1.8 million Tan Chuk Hang Vehicular Bridge in Fanling, Mrs Lau said the Home Affairs Department (HAD) had introduced a two-tier administrative structure comprising the RPIS Minor Works Steering Committee and the nine NT District Working Groups to oversee and expedite the programme's implementation.

Describing the Tan Chuk Hang vehicular bridge project as an example of the successful implementation of the RPIS Minor Works project, Mrs Lau believed the project would benefit some 2,000 villagers living nearby by alleviating the risk of flooding.

Undertaken by the North District Office, the project included the construction of the bridge and a gabion retaining wall to reinforce the existing river banks.

"It is very encouraging that so far, 33 RPIS Minor Works projects worth a total of $31 million have already been completed in the district. Of these, projects worth $20 million have been undertaken by the Works Section of the North District Office," she added.

Also attending the ceremony, Deputy Secretary for Works, Mr Keith Kwok stressed that the key to the successful implementation of RPIS Minor Works projects is local participation and co-operation as well as HAD's close working relationship with other government departments.

Mrs Lau also took the opportunity to pay tribute to the North District Board, North Rural Committees and concerned government departments for their support.

End

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for Dec - Mar

* * * * *

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period December 1996 - February 1997 was 2.4%, and the underemployment rate was 1.2%, according to the latest labour force statistics released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

For the period January - March 1997, the provisional seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 2.5%, and the provisional underemployment rate was 1.1%.

Commenting on these figures, a Government spokesman said that, having tightened somewhat since the latter part of last year, overall labour market conditions were generally stable in the most recent months. For the latest period January - March 1997, the slight increase in the unemployment rate was observed mainly in the construction and transport sectors, while the situation in the other major sectors was generally stable. As to the underemployment rate, decreases occurred mainly in the construction and restaurants and hotels sectors, while the situation in the other major sectors was stable.

Total employment continued to grow at a pace distinctly faster than that of the labour force. In the three months ending February 1997, total employment registered an increase of 3.8% over a year earlier. Over the same period, total labour force grew by 3.0%.

During the period December 1996 - February 1997, the number of unemployed persons was estimated at 68 400, and the number of underemployed persons at 36 600.

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were obtained from a continuous General Household Survey. The survey for December 1996 - February 1997 covered a quarterly sample of some 23 200 households or 77 700 persons, selected scientifically to represent the land-based civilian non-institutional population in Hong Kong. Data were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the households sampled.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organisation.

Being 'seasonally adjusted' refers to the fact that unemployment rate has been adjusted for seasonal variations in the proportion of first-time job-seekers in the labour force.

Detailed analysis of labour force characteristics is given in the report on the General Household Survey which is published four times a year.

The next report covering the quarter ending March 1997 will be on sale at the Government Publications Centre at ground floor, Low Block, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, by the end of June 1997.

End

Index of industrial production for 1996

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The index of industrial production for the whole year of 1996 decreased by 3.5% over 1995, according to the results of a survey released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

Analysed by industry group, output of the basic metals and fabricated metal products industry recorded a decrease of 8.9%.

Output of the textiles (including knitting) industry and the wearing apparel (except footwear) industry decreased by 6.3% and 4.3% respectively.

A decrease of 5.1% was registered in the output of the industry group of electrical and electronic products, machinery, professional equipment and optical goods. Within this group, the output of machinery, equipment, apparatus, parts and components increased marginally, by 0.1%, whereas the output of consumer electrical and electronic products decreased by 11.0%.

Decreases in output were also recorded in the paper products and printing industry (-1.9%) and the food, beverages and tobacco industry (-1.0%).

On the other hand, output of the chemical, rubber, plastic and non-metallic mineral products industry increased slightly, by 0.1%. Within this group, output of plastic products decreased by 3.9%.

The index of industrial production for the fourth quarter of 1996 decreased by 3.0% over the same quarter of 1995, and by 0.9% over the third quarter of 1996.

The index of industrial production reflects changes of local manufacturing output in real terms. In other words, it measures the volume of local production after discounting the effect of price changes.

More detailed information can be obtained from the "Quarterly Index of Industrial Production, 4th Quarter 1996" report, which is on sale at $11 a copy at the Government Publications Sales Centre, Low Block, G/F., Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, or at the Census and Statistics Department Publications Unit, 19/F., Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai. Regular subscription may also be arranged.

Enquiries about the survey result may be directed to the General Economic Surveys Section of the Census and Statistics Department at telephone 2805 6643.

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Indices of industrial production by industry group and selected component industry
(1986 = 100)

Industry group / Selected component industry	Index for 4th Qtr. 1996	% change over 4th Qtr. 1995	% change over 3rd Qtr. 1996	Percentage change in the index for 1996 as a whole
1. Food, beverages and tobacco	163	-5.3	-7.6	-1.0
2. Wearing apparel (except footwear)	126	-2.4	+8.6	-4.3
3. Textiles (including knitting)	111	-1.5	-8.6	-6.3
4. Paper products and printing	257	-1.4	-13.9	-1.9
5. Chemical, rubber, plastic and non-metallic mineral products	67	+3.7	+4.2	+0.1
within which : Plastic products	(39)	(+3.2)	(-1.4)	(-3.9)
6. Basic metals and fabricated metal products	88	-6.8	-3.8	-8.9
within which : Fabricated metal products (except machinery and equipment)	(83)	(-8.7)	(-5.8)	(-10.0)
7. Electrical and electronic products, machinery, professional equipment and optical goods	185	-7.0	+5.3	-5.1
within which : Consumer electrical and electronic products	(97)	(-10.1)	(-11.0)	(-11.0)
: Machinery, equipment, apparatus, parts and components	(311)	(-3.2)	(+10.9)	(+0.1)
8. Miscellaneous manufacturing industries	89	+5.5	+4.5	+2.4
ALL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES	130	-3.0	-0.9	-3.5

Notes : 1. Four selected component industries, which carry relatively large weights and are major components of their relevant industry groups, are also included in the above table. For easy reading, the figures of these selected component industries are shown in brackets.

2. As from the first quarter of 1992, the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification (HSIC) is used to form the industry groups and selected component industries presented in the above table. For the exact coverage of the industry groups and component industries in terms of HSIC codes, please refer to the publication 'Quarterly Index of Industrial Production, 4th Quarter 1996'.

End

ExCo approves amendments to Hutchvision's Licence

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The Executive Council has approved a number of amendments to the Satellite Television Uplink and Downlink Licence held by Hutchvision Hong Kong Limited.

The amendments are to give effect to the recommendations made by the Broadcasting Authority, which conducted a Mid-term Review of Hutchvision's Licence in 1996.

A spokesman for the Broadcasting, Culture and Sport Branch said today (Thursday): "Conditions have been incorporated in Hutchvision's Licence to ensure that Satellite Master Antenna Television (SMATV) operators will still be allowed to retransmit STAR TV's free-to-air programmes to local viewers even after the Copyright Bill becomes law.

"This is necessary because, among other things, the Bill seeks to remove the existing exemption given to SMATV operators for retransmitting free-to-air satellite broadcasts without being considered to have infringed their copyright."

Another major amendment endorsed is that Hutchvision will from now on be required to pay an annual full cost-recovery licence fee of $4.3 million, phased in over five years, instead of an annual licence fee of $46,000 previously.

At the same time, the service origination charge paid by Hutchvision (currently $5.18 million) will be waived.

The amended licence will remain valid until 2002.

End

Mainland-HK Engineering/Construction Standards Seminar '97

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The two-day seminar on Engineering and Construction Standards held in Beijing this week co-organised by China and Hong Kong has provided an excellent forum for people occupying prominent positions in the related trades and professions to meet and exchange ideas, the Secretary for Works, Mr Kwong Hon-sang said today (Thursday).

The seminar has enabled both sides to establish and strengthen contacts and provided a foundation for further and more specific exchange in future, said Mr Kwong who had led the Hong Kong party of 73 delegates to Beijing on Monday and Tuesday.

Various counterparts from both sides develop a better understanding of the different practices and standards that exist, acknowledging the different background, particularly in the light of the policy of "one country, two systems" to which they pay regard.

"Many Hong Kong professionals have been anxious about the future direction of standardisation in the Mainland."

"From the seminar and the various occasions on which the issue was discussed, it has been made clear that control and standardisation would be strengthened in order to improve quality of works," he said.

"The building development will be among one of their first areas where more comprehensive standards and specifications will be drawn up under policies being formulated."

Mr Kwong said that during a visit to the Ministry of Construction which co-organised the Seminar, the Vice Minister of Construction, Mr Tan Qinglian told the Hong Kong delegates that control would be strengthened on developers and enterprises in order to improve quality; and to bring about advancement in respect of standards, quantity surveying, marketing and site control.

Mr Tan also expressed an interest in further co-operation, and to find out more about Hong Kong's practices in the areas of construction safety, management and quality control during the visit attended also by representatives from the Hong Kong organisers including the Hong Kong Construction Association, Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors and the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers.

The seminar, opened by the Vice Minister of Construction, Mr Zhao Baojiang, and the Secretary for Works was attended by over 140 delegates from the Mainland and Hong Kong including senior government officials, professionals and academics who also participated in a number of presentations and discussion sessions.

The Mainland delegates were headed by the President of the China Association for Engineering Construction Standardisation, Mr Yang Sizhong and Director, Department of Standards and Norms of the Ministry of Construction, Mr Xu Yiping.

Besides officials from Beijing, some delegates came from as far as Shanghai, Sichuan, Hangzhou and Harbin to attend the Seminar.

End

79 convicted pollution cases recorded in March

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A total of 79 convictions were recorded in the courts in March for breaching anti-pollution legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Among them, 17 were convictions made under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO), 39 under the Noise Control Ordinance (NCO), 11 under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance(APCO), one under the Ozone Layer Protection Ordinance (OLPO) and 11 under the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO).

The fines ranged from $1,500 to $180,000.

Chun Wo Building Construction Limited was fined for $180,000 for permitting the use of powered mechanical equipment without a valid permit.

End

Re-launch of the posting box coin bank

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The Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman, announced today (Thursday) that to meet the popular demand for the Posting Box Coin Banks at the Hong Kong '97 Stamp Exhibition, the Hong Kong Post Office would re-launch sale of the Coin Bank to the public as a one-off exercise from April 21 to 26, 1997.

He said: "For customer convenience, sale of the Coin Bank will be done through a subscription system. No queuing up at the post offices is necessary."

Subscription forms will be available at all post offices between April 21 and 26, 1997. Completed subscription forms can be handed in at any counter office, or sent in by post. Payment can be made by cash or cheque, or by EPS, credit cards, Mondex where such acceptance facilities are available at the counter offices. For applications by post, payment can only be made by cheque. Subscription after the April 26 deadline will not be entertained. Subscription by mail should be postmarked no later than April 26.

The price of the Coin Bank is HK$80 each. There is no limit on the subscription quantity. For any single purchase of 300 Coin Banks or more, a 10% discount off the price will be offered. However, priority of delivery will be given to orders for less than 300.

The acceptance of the subscription for purchase of the Coin Bank and the relative priority for delivery of the items is subject to the availability of the stock.

Subscribers can collect the Coin Bank at eight designated collection centres set up for this purpose. These centres will be located in Hong Kong East, Hong Kong West, Kowloon East, Kowloon West, Tsuen Wan/Kwai Chung, Tuen Mun, Shatin, and New Territories (North).

Alternatively, applicants can have their orders delivered to a local address (except remote areas) for which a nominal delivery fee will be levied: HK$5 for each Coin Bank, with a maximum flat rate of HK$200 for 40 or more Coin Banks.

Mr Footman stated, "The re-launch of the Coin Bank under this subscription system and with a door delivery option is an initiative of the Hong Kong Post Office to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction, as part of its mission."

"There has been a lot of interest in these coin boxes. As for stamps, we are advising our customers to consider their needs carefully before making any orders," he added.

End

21-Gun Salute

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The Royal Navy's saluting guns will fire at 1200 hrs on Monday, April 21 to mark the anniversary of HM The Queen's Birthday.

The 21-Gun Salute will be fired in Victoria Harbour from HMS Starling, one of the Peacock-class patrol craft of the Hong Kong Squadron.

Other 21-Gun Salutes to be fired in 1997 are:

Monday, June 2 - Anniversary of HM The Queen's Coronation
Tuesday, June 10 - Anniversary of The Duke of Edinburgh's Birthday

All salutes take place at 1200 hrs. Details of other Gun Salutes during 1997 will be announced in due course.

End