



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Monday, December 31, 1973

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Daily guide to wholesale prices and supply of basic food
commodities

Release time: 7 p.m.

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HILL FIRES REACH RECORD HIGH

Public Urged To Prevent Destruction Of Countryside By Fire

An urgent appeal to the public to help prevent hill fires was made today as Hong Kong headed for one of its worst fire seasons on record.

Since the start of the dry weather in October, a record number of over 800 reports of hill fires have been received, many of them resulting in the devastation of the countryside. In financial terms, the damage wrought in government plantations is estimated at more than \$15 million.

According to a spokesman for the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, 64 of the fires occurred in established government plantations, affecting nearly two and a half square miles of hillside and destroying 1.5 million trees.

"This is the highest record both in terms of the total number of fires and trees destroyed in the last 10 years," he said.

Calling for greater public co-operation in preventing hill fires, the spokesman noted that several disastrous fires had swept plantations in reservoir areas during the past two weeks.

These resulted in the destruction of more than 1,300 acres of pine and hardwood plantations of 10 to 20 years old which were established for soil stabilisation, water conservation and amenity uses.

The spokesman emphasised that it was exceptionally difficult to control forest fires due to the difficult terrain and other factors, and it was therefore important to exercise the greatest possible care with naked flames whether they be matches, cigarettes, stoves or picnic and camp fires.

/"Persons

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"Persons going into the countryside for picnics or camping should not light fires while these very dry and windy weather conditions persist. Farmers and gardeners too must not attempt to burn rubbish where sparks can spread to nearby vegetation," he stressed.

"These precautions may cause inconvenience, but as the fire reports show, the results of years of painstaking work in improving the environment are being destroyed in a few hours, and the community is losing millions of dollars worth of its amenities."

The spokesman pointed out that persons found guilty of damaging the vegetation by lighting fires in or near government plantations were liable to heavy penalties.

Penalties under various ordinances at present range from fines of up to \$2,000 and imprisonment of 10 years.

The spokesman stressed that fire prevention was the responsibility of everyone and he gave the following simple guidelines to reduce the risk of fires.

PREVENTING HILL FIRES

- * Be careful with matches and cigarette ends
- * If going out for picnic, bring pre-cooked food instead of barbecuing
- * Report any outbreak of fire to forest fire control centre of the Agriculture and Fisheries department (during office hours: K-688523, after office hours: K-781211) or Fire Services Department (dial 999)
- * Help to put out fire wherever possible.

/FIGHTING

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FIGHTING GRASS FIRES

- * If a grass fire starts, don't panic, but ACT QUICKLY.
- * STAMP ON THE FLAMES while they are still small.
- * BEAT THE FLAMES with a LEAFY BRANCH from a tree or shrub. Work at the side of the fire, not with it blowing into your face. Work in the same direction as the wind.
- * Ask other parties of visitors to help.
- * Go to nearest Forestry Post or fire lookout cabin, or telephone the Conservation & Forests Division, (during office hours: K-688523, after office hours: K-781211).

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Note to Editors: Copies of a sketch map showing the Government plantation areas affected by major hill fires during the current fire season are boxed for collection.

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NEARLY 300 FAMILIES OF CHRISTMAS DAY FIRE GET PUBLIC HOUSING

The Housing Department has offered public housing to a total of 295 families comprising 1,273 people who lost their homes in the Christmas Day fire at the Kowloon Tsai Squatter Area.

Another 37 families comprising 119 people have been offered licensed area accommodation.

The offers were made following the site identification exercise last Saturday and the further processing and screening during the weekend.

At present, staff of the department are sorting out some 90 doubtful cases involving about 350 people. These people have either over-claimed or could not produce sufficient evidence for their claims. These cases are being settled as quickly as possible.

In the further processing exercise carried out during the weekend, 58 families comprising 197 people have been found to be impostors.

"In addition, 98 families comprising 369 people who registered themselves as victims failed to turn up at the site identification exercise," said Mr. Leslie Pogue, Assistant Director, Operations.

"This explains why it is essential to carry out all these steps though this means extra work for the Housing Department staff and some delay in re-housing the genuine victims."

Cash allowances from the Emergency Relief Fund will be paid out to the Kowloon Tsai fire victims on Thursday at the Squatter Control Office at Li Cheng Uk Estate.

/Those allocated

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Those allocated licensed area sites will be given re-accommodation grants at the new rate of \$1,250 per family. An extra \$200 will be given to each additional head of a family comprising more than five people.

Each member of the family will also get \$100 re-equipment grant. The grant has just been raised by 20 per cent at the request of the Housing Department.

Those offered public housing will be paid the re-equipment grant to help them meet the basic decoration cost.

Referring to the two fires which broke out today in Clear Water Bay Village and at the squatter area behind Block 19 of Lam Tin Estate, Mr. Pogue said that the victims will be re-housed as soon as normal processing on their claims was completed.

All victims of surveyed structures will be given public housing in accordance with the current policy and victims of unsurveyed structures will be offered licensed area sites.

A total of 27 families comprising 132 people have been registered as victims of the fire at Clear Water Bay Village, where some 40 structures were destroyed.

About 25 domestic squatter huts and some six sties were burned in the blaze at the squatter area near Lam Tin Estate. A site identification exercise was immediately carried out at the fire scene.

As a result, only 15 families (comprising 58 people) out of 27 families (132 people) registered were found to be genuine fire victims.

Of the other 12 families, seven (comprising 34 people) were found to be impostors and five (comprising 25 people) were found to be tenants of Lam Tin or Ngau Tau Kok Estates.

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ANOTHER SALT WATER PUMPHOUSE FOR KAI TAK

A second salt water pumphouse will be built at Kai Tak Airport in March next year to provide cooling water for the air-conditioning system serving the New Kai Tak Terminal Building.

The pumphouse will house three pumps, each having a delivery rate of 2,500 gallons of water per minute.

Construction work, designed and supervised by the Port Works Division of the Public Works Department, will be completed by November 1974.

The installation of the equipment will be finished by March 1975, well before the completion of the New Terminal Building at the end of 1975.

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NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST

Note to Editors: A special issue of the Daily Information Bulletin will be published tomorrow (Tuesday) which will contain the Queen's New Year Honours List.

Copies will be available from the Press Room, 6th floor, Beaconsfield House, from 5 p.m., together with the military list.

Publication of the list is permitted in Hong Kong newspapers on Wednesday (January 2) -- but NO news agency or overseas radio may carry the information without the embargo qualification.

The news may be broadcast from 7 a.m. onwards on Wednesday (January 2) over the local radio and television stations.

On NO account should any of the recipients of honours be contacted for interviews or approached in any way in connection with their awards before these have been publicly announced.

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NEW FORMAT FOR GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

The Hong Kong Government Gazette is changing its format with effect from the next issue on Friday (January 4).

The main change will be in the size of the gazette and its supplements. They will now be printed in standard metric size (A5) which is slightly smaller than the present size.

A government spokesman said today that the reduction would result in a saving of paper as well as furthering the government's policy of adopting the metric system.

In the past it had been necessary for the Government Printer to stock a supply of non-standard size paper which was not economic and, in view of the present world shortage of paper, undesirable.

Another change will be the separation of the public notices from the main body of the gazette. From Friday's edition, these notices will be published as Supplement No. 6. The main gazette will, in future, be confined to government notices.

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HEALTH REPORT FOR NOVEMBER

There were 129 notifications of measles during November, and one death, according to the monthly health returns issued by the Medical and Health Department today.

This compared unfavourably with the 112 cases notified in October, bringing the total notifications for the first 11 months of the year to 843, compared with 733 in 1972.

Fatalities for the same period totalled 13. Last year, between January and November, there were only nine deaths caused by measles.

Commenting on these figures, a spokesman for the Medical and Health Department urged parents of susceptible children between nine months and five years to have them immunised.

"Free vaccine is available throughout the year at all maternal and child health centres," he stressed.

Of the other 95 deaths recorded during November, 94 were caused by tuberculosis, and one by typhoid.

There were 29 notifications of bacillary dysentery, one of cerebrospinal meningitis, 23 of chickenpox, 26 of typhoid, and two of paratyphoid.

Again there were no reports of either diphtheria or poliomyelitis. The incidence of other communicable diseases showed no appreciable variation.

During the month, Hong Kong remained free from cholera and other quarantinable diseases.

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TAI HANG CLEARANCE DEFERRED

The Housing Department has decided to postpone the clearance of some 210 structures at the Tai Hang Sai Cottage Area so that residents will be able to remain there until after the Lunar New Year if they wish.

A notice was sent out this (Monday) afternoon to the residents informing them that the clearance would now be carried out on February 26 and 27, 1974.

A spokesman for the Housing Department said the decision to postpone the clearance was made at the request of many of the residents.

"They had on many occasions come to us to see whether it was possible for them to remain there until after the Lunar New Year," he said.

"The decision taken now will enable them to make their removal plan well after the Lunar New Year."

The Tai Hang Sai Cottage Clearance will affect some 300 families comprising about 1,700 people.

They have been offered public housing units at Upper Pak Tin Estate.

More than 250 families have already taken up their tenancy and some of them have already moved to their new homes.

The site will be used for the first stage of the Tai Hang Tung Estate redevelopment scheme.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY SERVICE

Daily Guide To Wholesale Market Prices And Supplies

The following prices were realised today (Monday) 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	1.64
-- new crop		1.72
S.C.Jion - old crop	-	-
Po Ngai	Good	1.42
Chu Cho	Good	1.22
<u>Thai Rice</u>		
100% Whole	Good	1.52
10-15% Broken	Good	1.50
A1 Super Extra	Good	1.45
A1 Super	Good	1.37
Whole Glutinous	Limited	1.52
<u>U.S. Rice</u>	Good	1.62
<u>Australian Rice</u>	-	-
<u>Pakistan Rice</u>	Good	1.42
<u>Taiwan Rice</u>	Good	1.42

/Supplies and

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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	4.8	3.5	4.0
Big-Eyes	Good	2.7	0.6	1.7
Squid	Limited	6.7	3.2	5.5
Hair-Tails	Normal	1.5	0.8	1.2
Lizard Fishes	Limited	3.2	1.1	2.2
Croakers	Good	2.0	0.5	1.4
Conger-Pike-Eels	Limited	3.3	2.6	3.0
Melon Coat	Normal	2.8	1.5	2.5
Breams	Limited	4.5	3.8	4.0
Yellow Belly	Good	1.5	0.7	0.9
Mackerels	Normal	4.2	3.3	3.7
Red Goat Fish	Good	0.7	0.55	0.65
Fork-Tail	Normal	1.8	0.9	1.5
Horse-Head	Normal	5.0	2.8	4.2
Melon Seed	Limited	3.7	2.0	3.2
Pomfrets	Scarce	7.5	6.5	7.0
Garoupas	Normal	7.5	5.5	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	Limited	3.0	1.4	2.2
White cabbage	Limited	1.6	0.6	1.2
Chinese Lettuce	Normal	1.4	0.4	1.0
Chinese Kale	Normal	1.5	0.6	1.0
Spring onion	Normal	1.2	0.5	1.0
Spinach	Normal	1.8	0.8	1.4
Water cross	Normal	1.5	0.6	1.0
Leaf mustard cabbage	Scarce	1.5	0.5	1.0
Tomato	Scarce	1.5	1.0	1.4

Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Pork (Live weight)

	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price</u>
		<u>(\$/ picul)</u>
		(Average)
Pork	Normal	285

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