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Response to Mr Lu Ping's speech

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Commenting on the speech by the Director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, Mr Lu Ping, today (Thursday), a Government spokesman said: "We welcome the very general reassurances contained in Director Lu's speech and the fact that he has identified four of the issues of considerable concern to Hong Kong people - the Court of Final Appeal, nationality issues, the future of the civil service and land leases. Hong Kong people would now like to see the discussion move from the general to the specific.

"With just 775 days to go until the handover, the community would be reassured to know China's detailed position on the issues raised by Director Lu. For example:

- (a) On the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Lu did not address the clear call from businessmen, LegCo Members and others for the Bill to be tabled and the Court to be set up in good time before 1997. This is a pressing issue which is already affecting business confidence. The Chinese side has had the draft Bill since May 1994. The community would like to know, in layman's terms, what difficulties they have with it and in what ways they consider it diverges from the 1991 agreement. It would be particularly reassuring if Director Lu were able to say by when the Chinese side expected to agree that the Bill should be introduced into LegCo. Hong Kong people will be disappointed that he has not addressed two matters of real concern to them. They would like to know China's formal position on the scope of the Court's jurisdiction and whether they still agree that it will have genuine final adjudication.
- (b) We welcome the attention that Mr Lu gave in his speech to the vital issues of the rights to live in Hong Kong and to travel freely. Director Lu gave a particular assurance that China intends to treat the issue of returning Hong Kong emigrants with flexibility. Hong Kong people would like to know at an early date the precise arrangements for enabling them to secure or retain these rights.

- (c) We also welcome Mr Lu's statement that the less change in the civil service, the better. But it is important to be clear about the appointment of the 20 or so principal officials. Mr Lu said that the role of the Central People's Government in this would be substantial and not symbolic. It is of course the constitutional position that whilst the formal appointment of these principal officials would be made by Peking, the choice would be made by the Chief Executive in Hong Kong. This is the clear meaning of the Joint Declaration and it was explicitly agreed between the two sides in the negotiation of that document. The community would be reassured to have a re-confirmation of this position from Director Lu during his visit this week.

"One point which Director Lu Ping did not mention in his speech was the question of the financial support agreements for the airport. He has, however, commented separately to the press that the British side has raised side issues and additional demands. This is not so. The position has not changed since last month when the Director said that he expected the question of the financial support agreements to be resolved 'within days'. The delay in signing these agreements has become a matter of considerable concern to the community, particularly the business sector. Hong Kong people would like to know the specific issue which is holding up Chinese agreement and when they expect the issue to be resolved. The agreements need to be concluded very soon, so that the MTRC and the Provisional Airport Authority can raise funds in the financial market to enable the Airport Core Programme to maintain its momentum. A green light on this issue from Director Lu would be a very welcome signal to the community."

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Transcript of Governor's media session after KELY visit

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The following is a transcript of media session by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, after visiting the KELY Support Group this (Thursday) afternoon:

Governor: At the drug summit a few weeks ago, there were a lot of ideas put forward and a number of groups who made a contribution. One of the groups that contributed to our discussion was the KELY Support Group. I wanted to visit them today to learn more at first hand about their work with young people, counselling young people, encouraging young people to help other young people. It's of course work which goes well beyond dealing with drug abuse but they are working to prevent some of the problems that lead to drug abuse. So they are doing very positive job and I wanted to visit them today to thank them for what they are doing and to learn a little more about their operations. We are, as I think you know, reviewing all the recommendations that were made at our summit. We're pooling those ideas together and during the course of the summer we'll be making some more announcements about how we intend to build on the action programme that I announced at that summit so as to give our work as comprehensive a scope as possible. I shall continue to be making visits associated with our campaign against drug abuse. So I dare say I'll see some of you at those visits over the next weeks and months.

Question: Lu Ping has accused you of over-simplifying the Court of Final Appeal and again warned against rushing to any early agreements. What is your comment?

Governor: I don't think that it's right of me to comment on Director Lu's speech until I have a chance of reading it. I'm sure he wouldn't comment on anything I said before he had a chance of reading it. If he's got problems about our approach to the Court of Final Appeal, and if he's in any way surprised or confused with what we have to say, the sensible thing for him to do would be to meet me or to meet Anson Chan and talk them through rather than make comments without having done so. I'm surprised that anybody, whether Director Lu or anybody else should say that we're rushing all this. The agreement was made in 1991. Chinese officials, including presumably Director Lu, have had the Bill since last May. In most people's calendars, three years, four years, or one year, don't seem like rushing it. But I'll study Director Lu's speech and then when I am out and about in the next few days I'll have the opportunity of commenting on it in a more informed way about it.

Question: But then how clear are both China and Britain on each other's definition of who should be sitting on the court?

Governor: I don't think there's any doubt at all about the composition of the court. If there is any doubt, I'd like Director Lu to say what it is. It may be that Chinese officials are having some difficulty trying to work out how to reconcile the Common Law whose continuance in Hong Kong has been pledged in the Joint Declaration with the Basic Law. But that frankly is their problem not mine.

Question: How are you going to help them to solve it?

Governor: How more helpful can we be? We sent them a Bill last May. They've sent us since then, I think it is 28 questions, all of which we've answered comprehensively. We've given every help possible.

Question: Director Lu said that the British side is not sincere enough in the talks...

Governor: I don't want to comment on propaganda.

Question: There is a saying that the events of Mr Li Ka-shing and Mr Tsang Hin-chi was someone deliberately released the news to affect the credibility of the PWC and this visit of Director Lu Ping. Do you have any comment on it?

Governor: If anybody said that they would be making a ludicrous fabricated claim. I think the facts speak for themselves and they owe a great deal I would have thought to the diligence of a free press.

Question: Director Lu also said that the Government should release the records of the British nationality of the civil service...

Governor: I think it is more sensible for me to read Director Lu's speech before I comment on it. I'm sure at least I hope I'm sure that he would behave in the same courteous way if it was me.

Question: Do you see any signs of social instability in Hong Kong affecting financial stability?

Governor: I don't see any signs of social instability in Hong Kong. There are apparently worries about social stability in other parts of the region. But there is no worry about social stability in Hong Kong. Look at Hong Kong. Hong Kong seems to be doing rather well.

Question: On unemployment, do you think there is any room for the Government to review the importation of labour policy and when would be a good time to abandon it?

Governor: Well, I said this morning that we were bringing forward our review of the labour importation scheme. We'll now complete that review by October. I also pointed out that there will be no new quota, no new quota at all, under the labour importation scheme until we've completed that review.

Question: You've just said that there is a problem in reconciling the common law system in the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, would it be a problem that there would be a judicial jurisdiction, a problem of jurisdiction of CFA?

Governor: That's a problem for Chinese officials. It's not one that we have any difficulties with. As far as we are concerned, the Joint Declaration is absolutely clear and the pledges that have been made to the people of Hong Kong are absolutely clear. One of them is that the Common Law should continue to apply in Hong Kong. We want the rule of law in Hong Kong. We think that is an essential element in Hong Kong's prosperity and stability and we hope that point is widely appreciated. And now I'll go and study Director Lu's speech so that if any of you ask me questions tomorrow, and I'm sure you'll have opportunities of asking Director Lu questions as well, and if you ask me questions tomorrow, I'll be able to answer them, having read his speech. I hope his visit continues to be agreeable and I think as a poll shows this morning, people in Hong Kong find it a pity that Director Lu isn't going to see me and isn't going to see the Chief Secretary but let's hope he will next time.

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Transcript of the Governor's media session

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The following is a transcript of the media session by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, after meeting employee representatives at Government House today (Thursday):

Governor: The Secretary, the Commissioner and I have had an interesting and useful meeting with employees' representatives about the unemployment situation in Hong Kong and about action we intend to take. I want to repeat that while we don't think there are any reasons for alarm about the recent unwelcome but sharp increase in unemployment, we do think that there are some issues which should concern all of us and we're determined to do everything we can about them while we've got a chance of ensuring that we have as good a labour market in Hong Kong as possible.

We've made a number of proposals. First of all, we've said that we intend to extend our job placement scheme right across the community, to all nine of our Local Employment Services so as to make it, we hope, easier for people who lose a job to find a new one. Secondly, we're exceptionally concerned about improving our retraining as well as our training facilities in Hong Kong. And we are looking at ways in which we can tailor our retraining more effectively so that it matches those who are acquiring a new skill, who've been unemployed with the new jobs that may be available for them. Thirdly, we are proposing to bring forward the conclusion of our review of the labour importation scheme. We previously said that we would review the scheme by the end of the year. We're proposing to bring forward the review to October and we have made a categorical pledge to the employees' representatives that there will be no new quota under the labour importation scheme until the review is completed. We're also open minded about monitoring of any scheme in the future and we're entirely prepared to consider associating employers and employees with the monitoring of any labour importation in Hong Kong. But I repeat that we are bringing forward that review and there will be no new quota until the review is complete.

We had an interesting discussion. We haven't seen eye to eye on everything but I think it was constructive and helpful. I intend next week to talk to the employers' representatives about their views on the present situation and following that meeting, I intend to invite both the employers' and the employees' representatives to a joint summit in early June so that we can start to establish a dialogue between both sides, and I hope resolve some of the problems in some of the issues that are outstanding. I think what their community wants to see is the Government working with employers and the employees. I don't think anybody wants to see this issue polarised and I hope we can have as constructive a dialogue with both sides as possible. I wonder if you want to add anything, Michael? Now I'm sure you would like to talk to the employees.

Question: Governor Patten because you have agreed to review the importation of labour scheme, do you agree that it is a source of rising unemployment?

Governor: No, I don't. One of the interesting figures which is worth looking at is that while the number of people in Hong Kong since last autumn under the importation scheme has fallen, the number of unemployed has risen. So even though there are perfectly legitimate questions to ask about the importation scheme, you can't make a match between the importation scheme and the rise in unemployment. I think the rise in unemployment has more to do with two things - one of which is short term, the other of which is longer term. The short term is the slowdown in consumer spending that we've seen in the last few months which has had an impact on retailing and an impact as well on the restaurant business. Secondly a longer term issue has been the movement of jobs out of manufacturing in Hong Kong into manufacturing in Mainland China or elsewhere in the region. It is a longer term issue and one which we have to address with better training of workers.

There is one other issue that I should mention. There is obviously concern about illegal immigration into Hong Kong and the impact of that on the jobs market. And what we intend to do is to double the task force in the Immigration Department dealing with illegal immigration and we are also going to increase the penalties. But there will be more opportunities for you asking questions about this next week when I talk to the employers and when I speak to both employers and employees. And the Secretary will be having a full briefing on the background to some of the things I've announced later on this afternoon.

Question: Just a follow-up on that though. With almost 30,000 people under the importation of labour scheme, you have to admit that if those people were filled with local Hong Kong people, then the unemployment number would significantly change. Although the numbers are different, I agree with that. But if those ...

Governor: But there has been no new quota under the importation scheme since last August and yet the number of unemployed has been rising. You've also got to look, given your analogy, at the number of published vacancies which is almost as high as the number of unemployed. So the situation is far more complicated than I think that comparison you made would suggest. But we have to do is to look at the issue with an open mind, determined to stick to our long term objective of measures that will create jobs in Hong Kong rather than create jobs elsewhere. What we want in Hong Kong is a competitive, high wage, high employment economy. And if we take measures that make Hong Kong less competitive, then we'll fetch up with a high unemployment, low wage economy. Thanks very much indeed.

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Government to make major efforts to address employment situation

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The Government will not allocate any new quota under the Labour Importation General Scheme until the Administration has mapped out the way forward based on the results of the current review which will be announced in October.

This was stated by a Government spokesman today (Thursday) following the Governor's meeting with representatives of labour groups.

"We have decided to advance the completion of the current review on the operation of the Scheme by three months and will announce the results by October this year.

"The review is to ensure that the Scheme serves its objectives of relieving temporary bottlenecks in Hong Kong's labour market and at the same time not eroding the job opportunities of local workers," the spokesman said.

He pointed out that the review would examine the application and vetting procedures, and the quota allocation criteria to ensure that they were geared to the specific requirements in industries and trades where there were demonstrated labour shortage problems.

"The review is also looking into the monitoring procedures to plug any possible loopholes and we intend to involve employers and employees to a larger extent in the monitoring process," he said.

He noted that the Governor would invite employers' representatives for a meeting next week and had undertaken to call a summit meeting in early June to bring both employers and employees together to work out practical solutions to the labour situation.

Meanwhile, the Government is taking active steps to help the displaced workers through job placement assistance and retraining. Major initiatives in this direction are as follows:

- * A Pilot Job Matching Programme has been in operation at five local employment services offices of the Labour Department since April 1. It matches persons over 30 years of age with job vacancies. So far out of 488 persons registered in the programme, 133 placements have been made. The Government is planning to extend the programme to all nine local employment services offices by this Autumn.
- * The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) has been providing suitable retraining courses for people over 30 years of age to help them re-enter the workforce. About 60% - 70% of those retrainees who are active job-seekers are able to find employment after completing the courses. A total of 64,500 retrainees have gone through this programme. The ERB will give top priority to developing services for retrenched employees and the unemployed.
- * Discussions are now at an advanced stage with a number of big employers to offer to retrainees on-the-job training programmes for skilled jobs with a serious labour shortage. After successful completion of six months training, all jobs will offer a starting pay of \$7,000 a month, as against the average of \$5,000 for unskilled jobs.

- * An outplacement service is being offered to employers so that they can offer ERB's retraining service to employees before retrenchment. ERB is preparing a major promotional campaign for this new service.
- * pro-active job search on a district basis through the fax line system is being tried out by the ERB. If the pilot scheme is successful, this will be conducted at fortnightly intervals.
- * Discussions are going on with the Computer Department of the City University with a view to developing an on-line computerised employment network in Hong Kong to facilitate the free flow of information on jobs and job seekers.

On the enforcement side, the spokesman said the task force in the Immigration Department would be doubled in strength this year to 92.

The task force will step up large scale investigations and will conduct raids on work places suspected of employing illegal workers. Illegal workers refer to those overseas contract workers, domestic helpers who have taken up unapproved employment; or visitors and overstayers from overseas countries or China who have taken up employment without permission.

The task force, since its establishment last summer, has carried out 42 major operations and arrested 1,055 suspected illegal workers.

"We are proposing to increase substantially the penalty for illegal employment to achieve the desired deterrent effect," the spokesman said.

He also said the Government was studying the problem of age discrimination in the employment field and will formulate measures to tackle the problem if necessary.

The spokesman reiterated that the Government was concerned that the unemployment rate, although low by international standard, had been increasing in recent months.

"We understand that the continuation of the rapid restructuring of Hong Kong's economy has resulted in the displacement of workers. The recent moderation in the servicing sector has resulted in a reduced uptake of displaced workers and hence the rise in unemployment rate.

"According to our survey, the duration of unemployment is not long for the majority of the unemployed. Also, the economic forecast is good and we are optimistic that the employment situation will remain healthy," the spokesman said.

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HK official made chairman of WTO dispute settlement panel

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Former Hong Kong representative to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Mr Joseph W P Wong, has been appointed chairman of a dispute settlement panel to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Mr Wong, now Director of Home Affairs, has been appointed to chair a three-member panel established on April 10, 1995 by the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO to hear a complaint brought by Venezuela against the United States over differential standards set for reformulated gasoline.

This is the first dispute settlement panel established under the WTO after its entry into force on January 1 this year.

The US Gasoline Rule is said to provide a higher pollutant tolerance level for domestically reformulated gasoline than Venezuelan products, which it is alleged violates GATT principles of fair trade and certain provisions of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.

A Trade Department spokesman said today (Thursday) WTO was a successor body to the GATT and provided a dispute settlement mechanism for members if they felt that their rights under the multilateral trading agreement had been impaired or nullified.

"The dispute settlement mechanism is the cornerstone of the multilateral trading system. The process under the WTO is automatic and provides a strict time frame for the conduct of panel proceedings and decisions," he said.

"The strengthened rules and disciplines avert the previous practice permissible under the GATT, in which a contracting party could frustrate the adoption of panel's recommendations and their implementation by blocking a consensus."

Mr Wong's appointment is on an ad personam basis. He served a three-year term (1991-1994) as Hong Kong's Permanent Representative to the GATT and assumed a number of important GATT appointments during the period.

These appointments include Chairman of the Working Party on the Customs Union between the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic (1993), Chairman of the Working Party on Fourth ACP-EEC Convention of Lome (1993-1994), and Chairman of the dispute settlement panel tasked to examine the United States' tobacco programme in 1994.

He is well qualified for the task given his expertise in international trade policy formulation and first-hand experience of GATT/WTO matters.

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Domestic export statistics

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In the first quarter of 1995, the four major industries of wearing apparel; textiles; machinery, equipment, apparatus, parts and components; and consumer electrical and electronic products together accounted for 68% of Hong Kong's total domestic exports of manufactured goods, according to statistics released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

In the first quarter of 1995, domestic exports of machinery, equipment, apparatus, parts and components increased significantly by 21% over a year earlier to \$8.4 billion, and of consumer electrical and electronic products, by 20% to \$8.3 billion. Domestic exports of wearing apparel and textiles both increased by 8% to \$8.8 billion and \$8.6 billion respectively.

As for other industries, significant absolute increases in the value of domestic exports were also recorded for professional and optical equipment (+\$606 million or +19%); chemicals and chemical products (+\$419 million or +27%); and basic metals and fabricated metal products (+\$277 million or +14%).

On the other hand, more notable absolute decreases in the value of domestic exports were recorded for non-metallic mineral products (-\$67 million or -32%); and transport equipment (-\$66 million or -96%). For the footwear industry, although the change in absolute value was not as large, a marked percentage decline of 63% was recorded.

The above statistics of domestic exports classified by industrial origin are derived by re-grouping the merchandise export items originally grouped under the external trade classification system according to the industries in which these merchandise items are normally produced. Transactions in gold and specie are excluded.

The industrial classification used is the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification (HSIC). The HSIC is to be distinguished from the United Nations Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) used in the regular trade statistics reports. In comparison, the HSIC is more related to production processes whereas the SITC is more geared to end uses of products.

Caution should be taken when referring to these domestic export statistics classified by industrial origin. There may be several intermediate processing stages in the production of certain merchandise export items. In compiling the above statistics, the total value of such an item has however been wholly related to the industry in which the item is finally produced. The above domestic export statistics of a particular industry may include products which are secondary products by establishments of other industries.

Further details of merchandise domestic export statistics classified by industrial origin may be found in the attached table which is obtainable from the General Economic Surveys Section of the Census and Statistics Department (Tel 2805 6642). A table showing more detailed breakdowns of similar statistics for major manufacturing industries is also included in the report "Hong Kong External Trade, March 1995".

**Domestic exports of manufactured goods classified by industrial origin
for the first quarter of 1995**

(Value in HK\$ Million)

Industrial origin of the commodities exported	Merchandise domestic exports			
	1995 1st qtr.	1994 1st qtr.	Value change	% change
Food	650.2	570.3	+79.9	+14.0
Beverages	201.8	133.5	+68.4	+51.2
Tobacco manufactures	582.4	554.9	+27.4	+4.9
Textiles (including knitting)	8,550.5	7,887.5	+663.0	+8.4
Wearing apparel, except footwear	8,788.3	8,166.0	+622.2	+7.6
Leather and leather products, except footwear and wearing apparel	365.0	334.9	+30.1	+9.0
Footwear, except rubber, plastic and wooden footwear	19.2	52.2	-33.0	-63.2
Wood and cork products, furniture and fixtures	89.6	94.1	-4.5	-4.8
Paper and paper products, printing and publishing	1,781.0	1,613.1	+167.9	+10.4
Chemicals and chemical products	1,985.3	1,566.3	+419.0	+26.8
Products of petroleum and coal	4.7	2.1	+2.6	+120.1
Rubber products	18.5	29.6	-11.1	-37.6
Plastic products	1,167.8	1,128.7	+39.1	+3.5
Non-metallic mineral products, except products of petroleum and coal	141.8	208.6	-66.9	-32.0
Basic metals and fabricated metal products	2,266.1	1,989.1	+277.0	+13.9
Machinery, equipment, apparatus, parts and components	8,354.5	6,907.4	+1,447.1	+20.9
Consumer electrical and electronic products	8,335.9	6,939.8	+1,396.1	+20.1
Transport equipment	3.1	69.5	-66.4	-95.5
Professional and optical equipment	3,817.9	3,211.9	+606.1	+18.9
Other manufacturing industries	2,951.0	3,034.6	-83.7	-2.8
Total	50,074.5	44,494.3	+5,580.2	+12.5

Notes : 1. Individual entries of a column may not add up exactly to the corresponding total due to rounding. All percentage changes are calculated from unrounded figures.

2. The statistics presented in the above table are derived by re-grouping the merchandise export items (except gold and specie) under the external trade classification system according to the industries in which these items are normally produced. As from 1992, the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3 (SITC R3) has been adopted in place of the Revision 2 (SITC R2) for the classification of trade statistics. The above statistics may not be strictly comparable with those published for earlier years due to the change in trade classification.

General Economic Surveys Section,
Census & Statistics Department,
Hong Kong.

Tel. : 2805 6642

May 1995

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Bears off to new life

Two Asiatic Black Bears seized by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD) in 1993 were today (Thursday) sent to a breeding centre in Thailand in preparation for a new life.

The two bears were seized on two separate occasions in June that year, one from a private premises in Sham Shui Po and the other found abandoned in the countryside in Yuen Long a few days later. They have since been kept by AFD and are in good health.

In Thailand, the bears will undergo a rehabilitation programme in a government breeding centre with a view to being released back to the wild. Thailand is one of the Asian countries where wild Asiatic Black Bear can be found.

Conservation Officer of AFD, Dr So Ping-man, took the opportunity to remind the public that all bears are endangered species protected in Hong Kong under the Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance.

"The import, export and possession of bear in Hong Kong require a licence from the Agriculture and Fisheries Department in advance," he said.

"This covers live or dead animals, stuffed specimens, parts or derivatives. In the case of bears, the control include bear gall bladder, bile and bile powder."

Asiatic Black Bear is a highly endangered species. Under normal circumstances, no licence will be issued for its import, export or possession.

Any person who contravenes the licensing control is liable to a maximum fine of \$5 million and imprisonment for two years.

Dr So was glad that arrangements can be made for rehabilitating the two bears for subsequent return to the wild saying that it was in the interest of the bears and conservation.

He also thanked Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd for contributing to this worthy cause by providing free transportation for the bears to Thailand.

Cathay Pacific's General Manager Airline Services Mr John Seale said the airline was most pleased to play a part in this bear rehabilitation operation by offering free transportation.

"This is one way to help protecting the endangered species, and at the same time, to translate Cathay Pacific's corporate commitment to the environment into action," Mr Seale said.

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Work in confined spaces must be safe

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Employers and workers must comply with the safety requirements to ensure work safety in confined spaces, the Deputy Chief Factory Inspector of the Labour Department, Mr Tse Ming-sing, said today.

Referring to an incident in which two workers fell unconscious while working in a drainage manhole at the junction of Tai Hing Tai Road and Kin San Lane in Cheung Chau yesterday (Wednesday) afternoon, Mr Tse said the department's factory inspectors are still investigating the case.

"Prosecution will be taken if we have sufficient evidence to suggest that someone should be held responsible," he added.

Mr Tse stressed that most industrial accidents could have been avoided if employers and workers had strictly observed safety regulations.

"Under the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance and its subsidiary regulations, employers have the statutory obligation to provide a safe system of work, information on potential hazards, as well as supervision and training to ensure workers' safety.

"The Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Confined Spaces) Regulation states very clearly that employers and employees must take appropriate precautions against dangers resulting from the presence of noxious fumes, toxic gas, oxygen deficiency or excessive heat in confined spaces," Mr Tse added.

Noting that confined spaces include sewers, caissons, manholes, tanks, wells and tunnels, Mr Tse said working in confined spaces required careful planning beforehand and every step must be taken to ensure the safety of workers when work was in progress.

He reiterated that the following measures are essential to safeguard workers:

- * the confined space must be cleaned and purged to remove dangerous fumes;
- * a confined space must be adequately ventilated and tested for dangerous fumes and must have a supply of air suitable for breathing;
- * adequate steps must be taken to ensure that there is no ingress of dangerous fumes, harmful gases, or oxygen deficiency in the confined space while the worker stays there;
- * no worker should enter into confined spaces unless so authorised by the proprietor;
- * any worker in a confined space must wear approved, suitable breathing apparatus unless the space has been certified to be safe for entry;
- * the worker should wear a safety belt attached to a suitable lifeline which will enable a fellow worker standing by to pull him out of the confined space in case of emergency;
- * the proprietor must provide sufficient, approved breathing apparatus, suitable reviving equipment, safety belts and ropes; and
- * the proprietor must ensure a sufficient number of persons in his employ who are competent in the use of the approved breathing apparatus, reviving apparatus and other safety equipment.

"Employers who fail to comply with the safety provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and 12 months' imprisonment while the maximum penalty for an offending employee is a fine of \$50,000," Mr Tse said.

He said the Labour Department had published two booklets, Safety Guide to Working in Confined Spaces and A Guide to the Factory and Industrial Undertakings (Confined Spaces) Regulations for free distribution to employers and workers.

Mr Tse pointed out that despite all these efforts to improve industrial safety at confined spaces, the most important thing is for all employers to take care of the safety of their workers by taking safety measures as stipulated in the laws.

"Officers of Factory Inspectorate Division (FID) are always ready to offer advice on work safety in confined spaces.

"Enquiries may be made to FID branch offices or the Industrial Safety Training Centre at 13th floor, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong," he added.

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Guidelines for access to telecommunications networks

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The Telecommunications Authority, Mr Alexander Arena, today (Thursday) issued guidelines to property developers, owners and managers on the provision of facilities to enable occupiers in property developments to access public telecommunications and broadcasting services.

Such access facilities include telecommunications cabling within a building.

The purpose of the guidelines is to explain to the property developers, owners and managers the relevant legislation and regulatory policies related to the provision of access facilities within property developments in the new multi-network telecommunications environment in Hong Kong.

"The exclusive concession under the Telephone Ordinance will expire on June 30, 1995. From July 1, 1995, competition will be introduced in the operation of local fixed networks in Hong Kong," Mr Arena said.

"Effective and fair competition among the network operators will bring about benefits to the consumers," Mr Arena continued.

"To achieve this effective and fair competition, the consumers in Hong Kong should have unimpeded access to the public telecommunications and broadcasting services of their choice.

"Network operators should also have access to their customers within properties on a non-discriminatory basis.

"There is scope for property developers, owners and managers to play a larger role in the provision of access facilities in future," he added.

"In particular it would be sensible for property developers to design new buildings with advanced competitive telecommunications services in mind and to incorporate, at the time buildings are constructed, suitable cabling etc. to allow consumers to exercise choice in service provider".

Copies of the guidelines and the accompanying Telecommunications Authority's Statement may be obtained from the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) (telephone no: 2961 6632, fax no.: 2803 5113) or by dialling into the electronic bulletin board service of OFTA (telephone no.: 2834 0119).

End/Thursday, May 18, 1995

Speedpost service to be extended

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The Postmaster General, Mr M Pagliari, announced today (Thursday) that reciprocal Speedpost service will be extended to Cambodia, Lesotho, Mexico and Vanuatu as from May 22. This will bring the total number of overseas destinations served by Speedpost to 74.

The service will be available to Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia and most parts of Lesotho, Mexico and Vanuatu. The postage rates and delivery standards are as below:

	<u>Cambodia</u>	<u>Lesotho</u>	<u>Mexico</u>	<u>Vanuatu</u>
<u>Postage</u>				
- first 250 g	\$110	\$165	\$155	\$85
- first 500 g	\$120	\$205	\$173	\$90
- each additional 500 g (up to total weight of 8 kg)	\$30	\$65	\$45	\$45
- each additional 500 g in excess of 8 kg	\$30	\$65	\$35	\$45

Delivery Standards

Delivered generally on the next day after posting	Delivered generally on the second day after posting	Delivered generally on the second day after posting	Delivered generally on the second day after posting
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Speedpost is a fast and reliable service for sending documents, samples and merchandise. Speedpost items are accepted at 37 strategically located post offices. Customers who regularly send Speedpost items may apply for the pick-up service.

"Hong Kong ranks the third amongst postal administrations world-wide in terms of the quantity of Speedpost items handled, just after USA and Japan," said Mr. Pagliari

"Customers have found Speedpost convenient and reliable. Customs procedures are simple for Speedpost items and pick-up service for account customers has been extended to cover all of Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories. Furthermore, charges and delivery standards of Speedpost compare very favourably with the private couriers. Hence the Speedpost service has continued to expand in spite of strong competition."

Enquiries about the Speedpost service should be made to the postal services representatives on 2921 2277.

End/Thursday, May 18, 1995

Teacher Recruitment Information Office reactivated

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The Education Department is inviting prospective teachers to register with the department's Teacher Recruitment Information Office (TRIO) which is set up to assist schools in recruiting suitable teachers.

The TRIO has successfully attracted over 2,100 applications since it reactivated this March.

A spokesman for the Education Department said the TRIO aimed at assisting primary and secondary schools with regular or temporary vacancies for over three months in employing suitable teachers to fill the vacant teaching posts arising from creation of new posts or natural wastage.

Members of the public who wish to join the teaching profession on full-time or part-time basis in primary or secondary schools can have their particulars registered with the TRIO. Their particulars will be entered into a computer data bank which will then form a source of potential teaching force to schools.

Among the applications received so far, 1,180 are degree holders, 628 are graduates of the Hong Kong Institute of Education and 217 have obtained diplomas from the approved post-secondary colleges.

"Meanwhile, schools intending to recruit teachers for certain subjects can also obtain potential teachers' information through the TRIO data bank by filling a form, one for each post, and returning it to TRIO by fax or by post.

"When the TRIO receives the request form from the schools, it will provide a computer printout of a list of teachers with suitable qualifications and subject relevance to schools for selection.

"School will then arrange interviews with suitable candidates on the list. Whether the applicants will be offered appointments will be solely at the discretion of the school," the spokesman said.

Registration forms are now available from the district offices of the Home Affairs Department and the Labour Department, and the department's district education offices.

Applicants from tertiary institutes including the Hong Kong Institute of Education may obtain the forms at their own campus.

Enquiries may be directed to the TRIO on 2782 7021, 2782 7526 or on fax 2781 0206.

End/Thursday, May 18, 1995

SWD to provide better hotline service

The Social Welfare Department's hotline 2343 2255 has been installed with an interactive voice processing system (IVPS) to provide better service to members of the public.

Speaking at a press conference on the inauguration of the new system today (Thursday), the Director of Social Welfare, Mr Ian Strachan, said in line with the Government's Performance Pledges on Serving the Community, his department is concerned to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its delivery of services.

"When the IVPS was first introduced to the department, we were very interested in this new technology. We decided to explore how this technology could be adopted to improve our existing hotline service," he said.

Mr Strachan said the installation of IVPS could help to process the high percentage of general telephone enquiries currently handled by the hotline and help to refocus manpower to handle calls which needed counselling or urgent assistance.

"With an average of 2,000 to 3,000 calls handled each month, information, advice and counselling are provided to callers.

"Calls which require follow-up action are immediately referred to the appropriate units. The close co-operation between hotline and other service units has won appreciation from the public on many occasions," Mr Strachan said.

He said with the introduction of IVPS, more comprehensive information on welfare services provided by the SWD could be brought 'nearer' to its customers.

"They can have more flexibility to use the services at the place and time of their convenience and focus more directly on their interests and needs.

"With the option to immediately and automatically forward customers' calls to departmental units during office hours, customers can be facilitated in approaching our services to make further enquiries, saving much of their time in waiting or in travelling.

Mr Strachan said in planning and preparation for the installation of the IVPS, consideration had been given to make the system as user-friendly as possible.

"With the IVPS now in use, an opinion survey will be conducted through so as to gather customers' feedback to further improve and refine the IVPS to meet customers' expectations.

The hotline service, operated on a 24-hour basis, provides callers with comprehensive information on welfare services including social security, elderly, rehabilitation, family and child welfare, youth and community services, medical social services, services for the offenders as well as other aspects of SWD's work such as processing of social work training funds and fund raising activities.

End/Thursday, May 18, 1995

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	<u>\$ million</u>	<u>Time (hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative change (\$million)</u>
Opening balance in the account	2,101	0930	+401
Closing balance in the account	1,307	1000	+401
Change attributable to :		1100	+394
Money market activity	+349	1200	+394
LAF today	-1,188	1500	+394
		1600	+394

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 119.3 *+0.2* 18.5.95

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills

EF notes/Hong Kong Government bonds

Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.69	18 months	2611	6.90	101.15	6.17
1 month	5.69	24 months	2705	7.40	100.26	6.36
3 months	5.76	29 months	3710	7.25	101.80	6.54
6 months	5.83	35 months	3804	6.90	100.73	6.73
12 months	6.00	58 months	5003	7.75	102.63	7.22

Total turnover of bills and bonds - \$ 17,332 million

Closed May 18, 1995

End/Thursday, May 18, 1995