



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Tuesday, November 28, 1972

## POSTING OF NOTICES OF VALUATION TO RATEPAYERS

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Notices of Valuation (Form 4A) are now being posted to ratepayers advising them of their new rateable values for the financial year of 1973/74. The despatch of the notices is being phased over the next few weeks.

Announcing this today, the Commissioner of Rating and Valuation, Mr. R.A. Fry, said that it was the first revision to be carried out for four years.

He explained that the new rateable values, which will come into effect on April 1, 1973, are based on annual letting values.

"Because of the general increase in rental values over the past four years, there is a general increase in rateable values of around 40 per cent", he said.

Mr. Fry pointed out that the effect of the increase in rateable values in the urban area of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and New Kowloon will be cushioned to some extent, by the proposed reduction in the rates charge from the current 17 per cent to 15 per cent per annum.

There will be no change in the present rates charge of 11 per cent for the rated portion of the New Territories.

/Mr. Fry .....

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Mr. Fry said that rents of tenancies protected under the Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Ordinance cannot be increased as a result of the revised rating position but, if the tenant has already agreed to be responsible for rates, he will be required to pay the increased charges.

Where premises are let on an inclusive rates basis, which is the normal letting basis for the smaller domestic flats, the landlord is responsible for rates payments.

"The Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Ordinance does not apply to those tenancies entered in the valuation list declared on March 5, 1970 at a rateable value of \$15,000 or more and the position will not change with the new valuation list", Mr. Fry said.

"The \$15,000 limit will continue to refer to the rateable values contained in the old valuation list declared on March 5, 1970", he added.

Mr. Fry pointed out that rates payable by tenants of resettlement domestic flats are not affected by the present review of rateable values, as the amount of rates payable in respect of such flats is specified in Resettlement Regulations.

A careful review of domestic premises owned by the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society as well as domestic premises in Government low-cost housing estates and other low-cost housing estates, has resulted in substantial increases in rateable values, bringing them into line with unsubsidized private accommodation.

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As domestic premises in low-cost housing estates have block assessments, individual tenants will not receive Notices of Valuation and the authorities managing the estates will advise them in due course of any proposed rates increases.

Mr. Fry said: "Any ratepayer who feels dissatisfied with a new rateable value is asked to see the Valuer for his area, whose name and telephone number will appear on the Notice of Valuation."

Ratepayers who have not received a Notice of Valuation by December 23 should enquire at the office of the Rating and Valuation Department at No. 1, Garden Road, Central District (Telephone No. 5-249021).

The new Valuation List will be on display for public inspection for 21 days in March, 1973 and any ratepayer who may be aggrieved will have the opportunity of making a formal appeal to the District Court, Mr. Fry concluded.

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BUILDING CONTRACTORS URGED TO ADOPT SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

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The Labour Department today strongly urged building contractors to adopt precautions in regard to excavation of caisson shafts.

A department spokesman said that during August and September this year, two accidents occurred on construction sites where excavation of caisson shafts for foundation work had been carried on.

In the first accident, he said, four workers died after being overcome by a high concentration of an asphyxiating gas in a shaft. Investigation revealed that there was no provision for emergency rescue on the site.

In the second accident, a worker received extensive burns on his body when he attempted to drop a lighted piece of newspaper into a caisson shaft to ascertain the presence of life supporting atmosphere. A flash fire rushed up the shaft from underneath and inflicted the burns.

Investigation in this case revealed that some petrol was present on the water at the bottom of the shaft and the petrol vapours gave rise to the flash, he said.

The spokesman suggested that the following precautions be adopted:-

- \* before entry is made, a shaft should be sufficiently purged with forced draught to remove foul air or the possible presence of unknown gases;
- \* the person entering a shaft should wear a safety harness which will enable him to be lifted out vertically in case of emergency;

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- \* the safety harness should be attached to a life-line, the free end of which should be held by an attendant on the surface at the head of the shaft;
- \* the person in the shaft should have easy means of raising alarm;
- \* whilst a person remains inside a shaft, adequate lighting and ventilation should be maintained in the shaft;
- \* if presence of unknown gases is suspected, entry should not be attempted until the gases have been identified and appropriate measures taken.

He said that safe and efficient equipment for identifying the nature and concentration of a large number of gases were available and that flames should never be used for this purpose.

"Advice on these gas detecting equipment can be obtained from officers of the Industrial Health Division", he added.

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C.A.S. TO HOLD ANNUAL FIELD DAY

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Note to Editors: The Civil Aid Services will hold its Annual Field Day and parade of more than 3,000 officers, members and cadets at the Government Stadium on Sunday, December 3, to be reviewed by His Excellency the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose.

A press conference will be held in the Demonstration Theatre, 6th floor C.A.S. Headquarters, Caroline Hill Road, Hong Kong, on Thursday, November 30, at 4 p.m. when details of the day's programme will be announced.

The Hon. P.C. Woo, Commissioner of the C.A.S., and the Hon. R.H. Lobo, Deputy Commissioner, will be present at the conference.

You are cordially invited to send a reporter and/or photographer to attend. Light refreshments will be served after the conference.

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PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES TO BE BANNED FROM ICE HOUSE STREET

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The Transport Department announced today that with effect from 10 a.m. on November 30 (Thursday), public light buses will be prohibited from using Ice House Street between Des Voeux Road, Central, and Chater Road.

Appropriate traffic signs will be erected to guide public light bus drivers.

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GROWTH OF WOMAN MEMBERSHIP IN TRADE UNIONS

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Membership of woman unionists in Hong Kong has been on the upward trend during the past 10 years, and the last three years have seen a particularly sharp increase.

The 1971-72 annual report of the Registrar of Trade Unions shows there were a total of 31,679 in employees' unions and 1,249 in employers' unions.

This figure, compared with the previous year's total of 27,399 including 25,891 in employees' unions, represents an increase of 4,280.

In 1969, there were 22,853 woman members including 21,483 in employees' unions, while in 1962, there were only 17,782 woman members in employees' unions.

According to the 1971-72 annual report, there were altogether 336 unions with 233,113 members on the register at the end of 1971, compared with 334 unions with 208,274 members in the previous year.

Of these, 276 were employees' unions with 221,619 members; 48 were employers' associations with 5,441 members; and 12 were mixed unions of employees and employers with 6,053 members.

During the period under review, five new unions were registered and three voluntarily applied for cancellation of registration because of recession in the trade and decreasing membership.

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VEHICULAR TRAFFIC RESTRICTION ON THREE N.T. ROADS

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The Transport Department today announced vehicular traffic restrictions on three roads in the New Territories in connection with the works of the High Island Water Scheme.

The department also announced that with effect from December 1, Friday, the section of Sham Wat Road between Keung Shan Road and Ngong Ping Road will be closed to all vehicles except those with closed road permits issued by the Commissioner for Transport.

A department spokesman said this is to restrict the number of vehicles using this narrow stretch of road.

In the New Territories, also with effect from December 1, the Access Road to Intake Q.A. (i.e. the road from the Tai Mong Tsai Road to Shek Hang Village); Shatin/Siu Lek Yuen Road; and Tai Wan/Ma On Shan Road will be closed to all vehicular traffic unless authorised in writing by the the Commissioner for Transport.

The spokesman said those wishing to obtain permits for the vehicular use of these three New Territories roads should apply to different offices according to the place where they live.

Those living in the Sai Kung and Tai Po districts should apply to the District Officer, Sai Kung, and the District Officer, Tai Po, respectively, who will forward the applications to the Commissioner for Transport.

/All others .....

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All others should apply direct to the Transport Department Headquarters, Blake Block, Queensway, Hong Kong.

He said the Sai Kung and Tai Po District Officers will be authorised to issue permits valid for one day only to motorists requiring occasional access to premises via the restricted roads.

Applications for one day permits should be addressed to the appropriate District Office, he said.

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PUBLIC SWIMMING POOLS, EXCEPT ONE, TO BE CLOSED

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The all-weather Morrison Hill Swimming Pool will remain open to the public during the coming winter season.

The rest of the government swimming pools will be closed as from Friday (December 1) to February 28 next year.

These are the Victoria Park, Kowloon Tsai, Morse Park, Kwun Tong and Lei Cheng Uk Swimming Pools.

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**ILLEGAL EXTENSIONS TO BUILDINGS CREATE FIRE HAZARDS**

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More than 20 senior members of the Fire Services Department and the Public Works Department spent about two hours this (Tuesday) afternoon examining possible fire hazards in a newly-completed multi-storey building in Quarry Bay.

The party was led by Mr. A.E.H. Wood, Director of Fire Services; Mr. M.K. Lane, Deputy Director; Mr. C.R.J. Donnithorne, Director of Building Development; Mr. P.H. Rowley, Principal Government Building Surveyor; Mr. J.C. Howlett, Chief Building Surveyor; and Mr. G. Barnes of Buildings and Lands Branch.

They inspected hundreds of illegal extensions and balconies at Nos. 1026-1048, King's Road.

They believed these illegal alterations were made with a complete disregard for the safety and health of the occupants of the building.

All these illegal extensions and balconies would make fire fighting and rescuing virtually impossible in the event of a fire, a spokesman for the Fire Services Department said.

He said these illegal structures had come to the notice of his department after a series of small fires had broken out at the building over the past two weeks.

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This led to today's full-scale inspection which revealed that the building was in a "disgusting" and "disgraceful" condition, he added.

A spokesman for the Public Works Department said after the inspection that "the dreadful state of the building showed a total disregard for human safety both by the developers and the tenants".

Officers of the Fire Services and the P.W.D. will decide what action they can take within the law to rectify the situation.

They stressed that it was in the interest of the tenants themselves that they stopped this practice immediately. They also warned that similar inspections would follow in other buildings with illegal extensions.

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Note to Editors: Copies of a photograph showing today's inspection are being distributed separately in the G.I.S. Press Boxes this evening.

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EMPTY ILLEGAL SQUATTER HUTS IN KOWLOON DEMOLISHED

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Resettlement Department staff today demolished some 80 empty illegal squatter huts in Kowloon Bay which had recently been put up by racketeers for sale to members of the public.

These huts, which were built on newly reclaimed land near the airport runway are offered to the public at prices ranging from \$700 to \$1,200.

A Resettlement Department spokesman said today that it must have been a lucrative trade for these racketeers because some 40 huts sprang up during the last weekend.

Shortly after resettlement staff arrived to demolish these illegal structures this morning, a group of about seven put up a resistance by shouting and throwing stones and bottles.

One of the department's labourers was slightly hurt by a flying bottle.

The Police then moved in and arrested five people.

The spokesman said that the department would continue these clearance operations if necessary, in order to safeguard the public against such racketeering and prevent illegal occupation of Crown land.

He warned the public not to believe stories that by purchasing an illegal hut, they may get into resettlement estates.

He said that the purchase of one would not entitle the buyer to resettlement and the only ones who would benefit are the racketeers.

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Release time: 7.00 p.m.