



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Friday, March 16, 1973

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BETTER SUPPLY OF DOMESTIC FLATS SHOULD EASE RENT PRESSURE

1973 Property Review Forecasts Fairly Good Year

The number of domestic units completed in the private sector during 1972 was 20,589, an increase of some 8,300 or 68 per cent over the 1971 figure.

In his 1973 Property Review released today, the Commissioner of Rating and Valuation, Mr. R.A. Fry, said that although the number of completions was higher than that for any of the previous five years, the demand for domestic accommodation was still very strong and did not appear to have eased to any appreciable extent.

The forecast of completions for 1973 is 29,759 units, a very encouraging figure, which should go some way towards easing pressure on rentals.

In the public sector, the number of units completed (13,770) was well below the published programme, but a much better supply (nearly 24,000) is forecast for 1973.

In January 1973, there were 7,012 unoccupied domestic units in the private sector, but nearly 4,100 of these were in buildings certified for occupation during the last three months of the year.

This has tended to exaggerate the position compared with last year's total vacancy figure of 4,203.

The number of new units expected to be completed in the private sector, together with vacancies, should provide an average of just over 3,000 units each month for sale or renting during 1973.

With an improved supply in the public sector, it all adds up to 1973 being a fairly good year for the supply of domestic accommodation.

/The bulk

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The bulk (95 per cent) of new private domestic accommodation continues to be built for sale in the first instance with much of it (63 per cent) eventually being occupied by the new owners.

Sale prices continued to advance during 1972 and this is illustrated by the fact that of the premises built for sale, only 2.26 per cent were priced in the "\$40,000 and below" bracket, compared with 24.4 per cent last year. Nearly 40 per cent of the premises built in 1972 were priced at over \$100,000.

Domestic rentals continued to move upwards and the department's rental index rose by nearly 10 per cent over the year (46.66 per cent since December 1968).

Overall Increase

Where rentals of existing tenancies actually increased during the year the overall average increase was some 27 per cent, but large and medium flats suffered the worst in this respect with average increases of roughly 42 per cent and 39 per cent respectively.

Even these figures do not provide the full rental picture for the rents of many existing tenancies are subject to the restraining influence of the Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Ordinance.

For premises not covered by the Ordinance, tenants seeking accommodation will have to pay at least \$440 per month for a small tenement floor whilst those looking for accommodation in the "luxury" class must expect to pay a monthly rental of over \$3,500 per month.

Some 928,500 square feet of trading accommodation was built during 1972 and this was significantly more (about 20 per cent) than the amount of space actually taken up during the year - some 780,000 square feet.

/Around

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Around 1.65 million square feet is expected to be completed in 1973, with 1.4 million to follow in 1974 which, it is thought, should adequately satisfy the demand for this type of accommodation.

However, it should be noted that much of what is now available, or to become available in 1973 and 1974, is not in the prime trading areas.

The department's rental index for shops showed an average increase over the year of 16.56 per cent and an average rental rate per month per square foot of \$3.22.

The amount of new office accommodation completed during 1972 (nearly 600,000 square feet) was considerably less than that estimated previously due primarily to work having been delayed on several projects which should now be completed this year.

Space

This shortfall in expectations, together with a heavy demand for office accommodation, has reduced the amount of space vacant at the end of 1972 to one half of the vacancy figure of a year ago.

The amount of space estimated to be available in 1973 should average about 130,000 square feet, per month, and the forecast for 1974 is some 3.3 million square feet.

However, much of what is expected to be built will be outside the Central District of Hong Kong Island.

Office rentals continued to rise during the year with an average increase of some 15 per cent; however, it must be noted that this is an overall average figure and that for first class accommodation in central positions the increase was generally rather higher.

/A total

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A total of 7.5 million square feet of flatted factory space was completed during 1972.

In 1973 a further 5/4 million square feet is expected to be completed and this, together with the 3.2 million square feet presently vacant, should satisfy demand for this type of accommodation during the year.

Much of this development and that for the immediate future (4.4 million square feet in 1974) will be in the Tsuen Wan/Kwai Chung area.

The department's rental index for factories rose only by some 3.34 per cent. There are clear indications that the rise in factory rentals has eased off to a very considerable extent.

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LION ROCK CABLE CAR SYSTEM

Tenders For Franchise Invited

Tenders are invited in today's Government Gazette for a franchise for the operation of an aerial ropeway (suspended cable car system) running from Sha Tin Pass Road to a peak to the east of Lion Rock.

The successful tenderer will be granted the lease of a lot comprising an upper station of 64,000 sq.ft. and a lower station of 72,000 sq.ft. with a wayleave for a ropeway between these two station.

Both stations will have restaurants and shops to provide facilities for the public. Parking will be provided at the lower station to cater for cars, buses and taxis.

Enquiries may be made and full tender documents and conditions obtained from the Crown Lands and Survey Office, Murray Building, 19th floor, Garden Road, Hong Kong and from the Crown Lands and Survey Office, Kowloon Government Offices, No. 405 Nathan Road, 10th floor, Kowloon.

A Government spokesman said that this aerial ropeway, the first of its kind in Hong Kong, would provide an added tourist attraction and also further recreational activities for the public in general.

Care has been taken in the choice of the route and the location of the upper station to protect the environment of the hillsides and the famous Lion Rock itself.

/The ropeway

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The ropeway will provide excellent panoramic views of the harbour area of Kowloon and Hong Kong and the Shatin Valley and will open fine hillside walks.

The Government also plans to improve the existing footpaths linking the upper station of the Lion Rock itself and the neighbouring hillsides and the footpaths to Shatin Valley and Shatin Pass Road.

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BUILDINGS IN HOLLYWOOD ROAD DECLARED DANGEROUS

The Building Authority today declared Nos. 243-5 and 247 Hollywood Road to be in a dangerous condition.

In a statement issued this morning, the Principal Government Building Surveyor said that these three-storey pre-war buildings had been under observation for some time, and pronounced fractures were now apparent in the brickwork.

Further, the brickwork at the rear of No. 247 is badly deteriorated and decay is apparent in some of the roof and balcony timbers.

These conditions could precipitate a collapse and accordingly notices of intention to apply for Closure Orders in Victoria District Court at 9.30 a.m. on April 25 were posted today.

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LAND TO BE RECLAIMED FOR SHA TIN RACE COURSE

Carpark And Playgrounds Planned

An area of 230 acres will be reclaimed in Tide Cove off Ho Tung Lau in Sha Tin for the construction of a second race course.

It is proposed that the land will be granted to the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, who will be undertaking the reclamation work.

When completed, the race course will have a seating capacity of 35,000 to 50,000, and the tracks will be built to international standards.

Construction work will include ancillary buildings and a car park, and the centre of the course will provide spacious playgrounds and sports facilities.

The proposed land grant also stipulates that the Jockey Club should reclaim an additional site adjacent to the race course site, and this is to be reserved for Government projects, including a public road and a pump house.

It is estimated that 16 million cubic yards of filling material will be required for the major reclamation.

The material will be taken from borrow areas which will later be developed as part of the Sha Tin New Town development.

In deciding on the locations of borrow areas, precautions will be taken to preserve the landscape so that local scenery will not be disfigured by the "borrowing".

A notification of the proposed reclamations is published in today's Gazette, and will also be posted near the site.

People having any objections or claims of private right should submit them to the Director of Public Works within two months of the notification.

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FEE INCREASE FOR DRIVING LICENCES AND TEST FORMS EXPLAINED

To Clear Backlog And Cut Waiting Time

It appears that the public has misunderstood the purpose of the recent increase in fees for test forms, provisional licences and driving licences, a Transport Department spokesman said today.

"People criticise it as an ineffective measure to relieve road congestion, but that is not its main purpose," he said.

As the Financial Secretary stated in his Budget speech on February 28, the primary object of the increases was to discourage the large numbers of applicants for driving licences who are overloading the machinery for conducting driving tests.

Despite an accelerated driving programme that started late last year with about 900 appointments a day, "there is still a backlog of 75,000 applicants," the spokesman said, "and more are coming forward at a rate of 6,000 a month. The faster they are tested, the more come forward."

Some of the applicants had no immediate need for a driving licence and were applying for one either as a status symbol or because it might be useful in future, he said.

This operates unfairly against applicants who have a genuine and immediate need for a licence. It means that the waiting time for the written and road tests is unnecessarily prolonged.

/At present,

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At present, for a private car driving licence, the waiting time for the written test is 11 months in Hong Kong and 16 months in Kowloon.

The waiting time for a private car road test is about three months, but this is likely to lengthen when the accelerated testing programme finishes at the end of this month.

For applicants for road tests for goods vehicles and public omnibuses, the delay is considerably longer.

The spokesman said it was inappropriate that the total period to get a private car driving licence should be well over one year and for other categories of vehicles much longer.

"The main reason for this delay," he said, "lies in the large numbers of applicants who have no real need for a licence and are simply lengthening the queue.

"It is too early to assess results properly, but the first indications are that the increase in fees from March 1 may have reduced the number of applications by nearly a half."

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CHEUNG SHA WAN OUTLINE ZONING PLAN REVISED
Industrial Complex And Wholesale Market Centre Planned

The revised Cheung Sha Wan Outline Zoning Plan has been approved by the Governor-in-Council.

The object of the plan is to provide statutory land use pattern and major road framework within which development may be legally controlled.

The plan illustrates only the broad principles of development within the area to provide guidance for detailed planning.

Implementation of the plan so far as new public works are concerned will require the provision of funds by the Legislative Council.

The plan covers a total area of 780 acres and largely confirms existing land uses. The north-eastern part of the area is predominantly residential, including several housing estates, and commercial/residential development.

There is a concentration of industrial development at the western end of the planning area. It is intended to reserve space for cooked food stalls to serve the industrial workers. This will be either within the zone or in adjoining zones where space will be reserved in multi-purpose buildings that will include market and car-parking facilities.

A small commercial zone to provide such facilities as banks, offices and restaurants to serve the industrial complex is located on the south side of Cheung Sha Wan Road, west of Tai Nan Street.

/Three

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Three large areas have been zoned for open space between Cheung Sha Wan Road and Lai Chi Kok Road. To some extent these provide a desirable break between the industrial zone in the west and the residential and commercial/residential zones, in which there are other small areas of open space zoning.

Government, institution and community uses are concentrated mainly in the northern parts of the area and also in the central southern part, south of Cheung Sha Wan Road.

In the north, a strip of Government land along Wing Hong Street terminating at the junction with Yu Chau Street has been zoned for this purpose to facilitate the provision of community uses.

This was the subject of a number of objections that were lodged when the draft plan was exhibited for public inspection in 1971.

In the area south of Cheung Sha Wan Road the land is only partly developed and sites have been reserved for facilities which include a sewage treatment plant, a police station, a retail market and civic or community centre.

In addition, there is major reservation for new wholesale markets for imported vegetables, fruit and poultry on the land lying between the existing abattoir and vegetable wholesale market and the waterfront. It is intended that this area will become the main wholesale centre in Kowloon for these commodities.

The south-east corner of the planning area is occupied mainly by the Sham Shui Po army camp and part of this area may later become available for further Government, institution and community uses when the military requirements have been re-assessed.

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SURVEY OF EMPLOYMENT AND VACANCIES IN INDUSTRY

The Labour Department is conducting a survey of employment and vacancies in industrial establishments for the first quarter of 1973.

On March 9, cards were sent to managements of all registered and recorded industrial establishments requesting them to provide information regarding employment and vacancies as at March 15, 1973.

They were requested to return the cards in reply-paid envelopes on or before March 19.

From the information collected, statistics of employment and vacancies in the various main industries can be compiled. These statistics provide an indication of employment trends over the years.

The Commissioner of Labour, Mr. Paul Tsui, said that during the last survey, conducted in December, 1972, a 100 per cent response was obtained from the larger industrial establishments.

But the overall response rate stood at only 63 per cent.

This could be greatly improved if the smaller establishments would respond promptly to the survey.

Mr. Tsui stressed that the information provided from establishments would be kept strictly confidential and would only be used for the preparation of statistical summary tables.

"It is not intended for the enforcement of labour legislation. The cards will be destroyed under supervision when the relevant information has been extracted and summarised," he added.

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EARLY RETIREMENT OF DR. BROWNE

Returning To Ireland After 19 Years In Hong Kong

Dr. E.N.F. Browne, Assistant Director of Medical and Health (Health), is leaving Hong Kong for Ireland on early retirement on Wednesday (March 26) after serving the people of Hong Kong for 19 years.

At a luncheon in his honour this week, Dr. G.H. Choa, Director of Medical and Health Services, thanked Dr. Browne for his many years of devoted service, and presented him with a salver on behalf of friends and colleagues in the department.

In a statement today, Dr. Browne said: "I have been very happy in Hong Kong, and it has given me great pleasure to play my part in the development of medical and health services here.

"I plan to take up some health work on my return to Britain."

Dr. Browne, 45, arrived in Hong Kong from Ireland in April 1954 to take up a post in the Medical and Health Department. In 1959, he was appointed Senior Health Officer in Kowloon. He became a Principal Medical Officer in the headquarters in 1965. Four years later, he was appointed Assistant Director (Health).

During his years in Hong Kong, he was involved in work in connection with the registration of clinics, and in combatting the cholera "scares" of 1961, 1962, 1966, and 1969.

He is married, with a son and a daughter.

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NEW IMPORT AND EXPORT (FEES) REGULATIONS

Certification Fees To Be Raised

Commenting on the new Import and Export (Fees) Regulations published in today's Government Gazette, a spokesman for the Commerce and Industry Department said that the date of commencement of the Regulations had not yet been decided, but the trade would be given plenty of advance notice of their coming into operation.

The main change relates to certification fees and these will be raised from \$10 to \$15 per application.

This increase is necessary in order that the rising costs of providing the certification service may be covered. The fees were last revised in 1960.

The spokesman went on to explain that, with effect from the introduction of the new fees, applicants would also have to start typing their own certificates.

At present the Department did this for them in the case of standard certificates of origin.

However, the costs of this service had increased substantially over the years and it was no longer economically possible to continue to provide it.

Applicants already typed their own Generalised and Commonwealth Preference certificates, and the addition of standard certificates should not cause undue difficulties.

Also, a new certificate of origin form aligned to the master documents drawn up by the Hong Kong Working Party for Simpler Trade Documents would shortly be introduced and this would reduce the typing burden for those firms using the "one-run system" for their export documentation.

The spokesman added that the decision to increase fees had been made with the concurrence of members of the Certification Co-ordination Committee, and the approved non-Government issuing bodies would also be raising their charges for certificate applications.

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WIDER CONTROL OVER "DEAD SHIPS" AND REPAIRS

New Regulations Provide For Heavy Penalty For Offenders

It is now an offence to anchor a dead ship in Hong Kong waters, or to carry out repairs to a vessel of more than 300 net register tons without the permission of the Director of Marine.

This is provided in the Merchant Shipping (Control of Ports) (Amendment) Regulations 1973 published in the Gazette today.

The new regulations, however, do not apply to a dead ship or other vessel which is anchored, moored or secured in, or within the precincts of, a dockyard or a floating dry-dock.

The regulations provide that no repairs should be undertaken on any dead ship without the permission of the Director of Marine.

The Director is empowered to declare a ship to be a dead ship whether its owners approve or not.

A ship, if it is not to be declared a dead ship, should be capable of being effectively propelled and manoeuvred within a period decided by the Director.

A penalty of \$4,000 and six months imprisonment is provided for any contravention of the Regulations.

A right of appeal to the Governor is provided.

The new regulations were made at the recommendation of the Marine Court of Inquiry investigating the fire on board the "Seawise University" and the Commissioners in the inquiry into the "Jumbo" fire.

Both the Court and the Commissioners recommended that the Director of Marine be given overall control of operations relating to the repair, renovation and refitting of shipping in Hong Kong waters.

The amending regulations were made as an interim measure in view of the fact that the enactment of legislation to implement this recommendation and the recruitment and training of the necessary inspectorate staff would require considerable time.

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RATING COMMISSIONER TO ATTEND CONFERENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

Mr. R.A. Fry, Commissioner of Rating and Valuation, will be leaving for Wellington, New Zealand tomorrow (March 17) to attend the second General Assembly of the Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy.

He will be attending the Assembly as the delegate from the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, of which he is the current Vice-Chairman.

Delegates from 30 societies representing 22 countries will be attending the meeting.

In addition, Mr. Fry will attend a seminar on Surveying and Land Economy in the Pacific.

He will also be investigating recruitment prospects in Wellington for Rating and Valuation Surveyors.

The Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy was set up in 1969 to strengthen professional links between Commonwealth countries.

It aims to improve facilities for professional education and training, and to foster reciprocal recognition of professional qualification in surveying and mapping, quantity and building surveying, and land economy.

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Note to Editors: Mr. Fry will be leaving for Sydney by Flight
Q.F 279, E.T.D. 2130 hours tomorrow.

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Release time: 7.30 p.m.