



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Economic impact on HK on revocation of China's MFN status	1
Lady Youde presents awards to 850 students	2
Workshop to promote human rights teaching kit for children	6
School Heritage Festival begins on Monday	7
Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations	8

Sunday, March 10, 1996

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Queen's Commonwealth Day message	9
Governor's "Letter to Hong Kong"	10
Symposium and gala dinner on services sector forthcoming	13
Programme improvements for Chinese immigrant children	14
Blankets distributed to street-sleepers	15
Elderly home operators urged to apply licences early	15
Contact with Education Department encouraged	17
Applications open for recreation grants	18
Late payment of wages incurs fine	19
Fresh water cut in Mong Kok	19

Economic impact on HK on revocation of China's MFN status

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The Government has completed a broad assessment of the potential impact on Hong Kong's economy if China lost its Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trading status in the United States.

Should China's MFN status be revoked, Hong Kong might suffer a reduction by 31 to 45 per cent (or \$66 to \$96 billion) worth of re-exports from China to the US, the Secretary for Trade and Industry, Miss Denise Yue, revealed at a post-Budget press conference held today (Saturday).

Together with other related trade flows, there might be a reduction of six to eight per cent (or \$161 to \$234 billion) worth of Hong Kong's overall trade, a loss of around \$23 to \$34 billion in income and around 61,000 to 89,000 jobs.

Government's estimates also show that Hong Kong's GDP growth rate might be curtailed by 2.1 to three percentage points (or by around two-fifths to three-fifths from its trend rate of five per cent in real terms) in the year when the effect of loss of MFN is fully felt.

"There would be a further loss in income and jobs if China cut back on its imports from the US as a result," Miss Yue said.

"Manufacturing investments and other production arrangements by Hong Kong and foreign companies in China would also be adversely affected."

Miss Yue was also concerned that Hong Kong's role as a gateway to China would be undermined, thereby affecting longer term growth potential and business confidence in Hong Kong.

On the outlook of MFN renewal this year, Miss Yue envisaged that there would be a lively debate in the US Congress.

"The situation is more complex this year with the Presidential and Congressional elections coming up," Miss Yue said.

"The climate is also affected by overall Sino-US relations, but we shall argue strongly that the MFN issue should not be linked with non-trade issues."

In view of the vital importance of MFN renewal to Hong Kong, Miss Yue will leave for Washington DC tomorrow (Sunday) to lobby US officials and Congressmen on renewal.

"MFN renewal is a crucial element in the continued economic development of Hong Kong, particularly at this critical phase of the transition. We will do everything we can to get our message across," said Miss Yue.

This will be Miss Yue's first visit to the United States after taking up her portfolio as Secretary for Trade and Industry last November.

During her visit, Miss Yue will meet US Trade Representative, Mickey Kantor; the Assistant to the President for Economic Policy, Laura Tyson; and call on the Chairmen of several Congressional committees and sub-committees to apprise them of the severe damage to Hong Kong in case of non-renewal of China's MFN status.

Miss Yue will also attend the Hong Kong - US and US - Hong Kong Economic Co-operation Committees Plenary Session to be held in Washington DC on Friday (March 15).

Miss Yue will be back in Hong Kong on March 17.

End

Lady Youde presents awards to 850 students

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A total of 850 students were granted awards and scholarships under the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund.

Presenting the awards to them today (Saturday), Lady Youde said: "Today we are meeting some of the best Hong Kong students who have succeeded in winning the Sir Edward Youde Awards against very strong competition.

"I am sure you will join me in congratulating our scholars, fellows and award winners on their success and thanking their parents, school principals and teachers.

"They have had the responsibility of bringing up these young people to be responsible individuals and of helping them to achieve academic excellence; they have also encouraged them to develop an interest in community affairs and to have a clear vision of their goals and a firm commitment to Hong Kong." she said.

Chairman of the Council, Mr Ronald Arculli, also officiated at the Ceremony held in Sha Tin Town Hall.

In pursuing its objective to encourage and promote education and learning of the young people of Hong Kong, the Fund has disbursed a total of \$11.3 million in the 1995-96 academic year.

Awards made include 14 awards for overseas studies; 3 medals for students who have obtained outstanding results in public examinations; 22 awards for disabled students; 82 scholarships for diploma and undergraduate students; 44 fellowships for post-graduate students and 682 prizes for senior secondary school students.

Exclusive sponsorship in the amount of \$600,000 towards the Young Friends of the Hong Kong Arts Festival Scheme has continued in 1995-96 with the aim to increase secondary school students' exposure to and knowledge of the performing arts.

For the first time, the Fund launched the visiting professorship scheme which aimed to promote cultural exchange between Hong Kong and the other parts of the world.

Competition for the overseas fellowships and scholarships for 1996-97 is extremely keen. 12 brilliant students from among 297 applicants have won the awards.

They will each receive a maximum of \$218,000 and \$200,000 a year for a fellowship award and a scholarship award respectively. These students will have to return to work in Hong Kong for at least three years after completion of their studies.

The four award recipients for the Overseas Fellowships 1996-97 are:

- (1) Miss Bernice Jocelyn Chen, 23, currently an Architectural Assistant and plans to pursue a Master of Architecture at Columbia University, USA.
- (2) Mr Fung Kwok-tung, 22, currently a primary school teacher and plans to pursue a Master of Music in oboe performance at the University of Cincinnati, USA.

- (3) Miss Szeto May, Mirana, 29, a first class honours graduate in Bachelor of Arts and currently a Master of Philosophy student of the University of Hong Kong who intends to pursue a doctorate in Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, USA.
- (4) Miss Wong Wing-han, Esther, 25, currently a research officer of Federation of Hong Kong Industries and intends to pursue a Master degree in International Relations at the University of London, UK.

The eight Overseas Scholarships winners are:

- (1) Mr Cheung Ho, 18, of Wah Yan College, Hong Kong, who scored nine distinctions in the Hong Kong Certificate Education Examination (HKCEE) in 1995. He plans to study Computer Science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA;
- (2) Mr Chiang Mung, 19, of Queen's College, who obtained 10 distinctions in HKCEE in 1995. He plans to study Engineering at Stanford University, USA;
- (3) Mr Choi Yat-lun, 17, of Queen's College, who obtained 10 distinctions in HKCEE in 1995. He plans to study Engineering at MIT, USA;
- (4) Mr Choy Long-yin, 18, of St Paul's Co-educational College, who obtained eight distinctions and one credit in HKCEE 1995. He plans to study Computer Science at MIT, USA;
- (5) Mr Leong Sze-ming, Samuel, 17, of Queen's College, who obtained 10 distinctions in HKCEE in 1995. He plans to study Computer Science at MIT, USA;
- (6) Miss Lau Li-yan, 19, of Maryknoll Convent School, who obtained eight distinctions and one credit in HKCEE 1994. She plans to study Politics and Economics at University of Oxford, UK;
- (7) Miss Tsang Sum-ye, Diana, 19, of Diocesan Girls' School, who obtained nine distinctions in HKCEE in 1994. She plans to study Architecture at Princeton University, USA; and

- (8) Miss Stefanie Tanya Willis, 19 of Headington School, Oxford, who obtained one distinction in General Certificate of Education 'A' in 1994 and 12 distinctions in General Certificate of Secondary Education in 1993 and 1994. She plans to study Law at the University of Oxford, UK.

An overseas award exclusively for disabled students was introduced in 1994. The 1996-97 fellowship recipient is Mr Luk Wai-yip, 29, a visually impaired graduate who plans to study for a Master degree in Music at Berklee College of Music, USA.

Three students who obtained outstanding results in the 1995 public examinations have been awarded the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Medals. They are:

- (1) Mr Tang Yue-tan of Wah Yan College, who scored 10 distinctions in the 1995 HKCEE;
- (2) Miss Li Yuen-yung of St Catherine's School for Girls, who scored five distinctions in the 1995 Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (Science Stream); and
- (3) Miss Ng Siu-wai of St Paul's Co-educational College, who scored six distinctions in the 1995 Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (Arts Stream).

A total of \$492,530 has been expended on the Award Scheme for the Disabled Students, under which 22 students have been provided with financial assistance for the purchase of study aids.

This year also sees 26 postgraduate students having been awarded the local fellowship at \$38,000 each and 82 undergraduate/diploma students awarded the local scholarship at \$22,000 each. In addition, 18 postgraduate students have their local fellowships renewed.

Since its inception, the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund has supported more than 6,340 Hong Kong students under its major awards schemes.

More than 500 scholars and fellows have completed their studies and are now working in Hong Kong in different fields, contributing to the well being and development of the territory.

End

Workshop to promote human rights teaching kit for children

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The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Michael Suen, today (Saturday) praised efforts to impress upon young children the basic concepts of human rights through innovative teaching aids.

Speaking at the opening of a workshop organised by the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE) to promote a new human rights teaching kit for children, Mr Suen said that he was deeply impressed by the content of the teaching aid which stressed the indivisible relationship between everyday life and the application of fundamental human rights concepts, namely the value of life, freedom, mutual respect and equality.

With the help of interesting activity plans and attractive illustrations, Mr Suen believed the teaching kit would arouse children's interest and improve their understanding of basic human rights concepts. It would also become a useful reference for teachers when they prepare extra-curricular activities for their students.

He called on members of the public to support the human rights education campaign. "Promotion of human rights could not be done by the CPCE alone but has to rely on everyone of us," he stressed.

Speaking on the same occasion, the Convenor of Human Rights Education Subcommittee of the CPCE, Mr William Tsui, said human rights concepts were often construed as abstract and not easily understood.

"In fact, there is an indivisible linkage between the fundamental concepts of human rights and the cultivation of a positive attitude to life. However, to instil these basic concepts to children is no easy task. We have thus decided at the outset to adopt a lively and diversified approach and through interesting activities, introduce to children the profound meaning of human rights," Mr. Tsui said.

The new teaching kit, which includes a handbook for teachers on human rights concepts and a handbook on 15 activity plans, has translated abstract notions in human rights into everyday life scenarios so that they can be easily understood by children aged between seven and 14. It has been well received by voluntary agencies and schools.

The production of the kit will be followed by children story books, compact discs and cassette tapes. Parents' handbooks and song books will also be published later.

Besides the human rights teaching kit for children, teaching kits for pre-school children and youngsters are also in the pipeline, Mr Tsui added.

End

School Heritage Festival begins on Monday

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The first School Heritage Festival will kick off on Monday (March 11) at the Antiquities and Monument Office (AMO) with an exhibition on the Lord Wilson Heritage Project Scheme 1995.

Apart from the two-week exhibition, other events to be held during the festival include heritage tours, demonstrations on traditional handicrafts, grass cutting activities for preserved monuments and archaeological workshops.

Funded by the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust, the festival aims at promoting students' interest in cultural heritage and their protection.

It is jointly organised by the AMO of the Recreation and Culture Branch and the Education Department and will last until March 24.

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust, Mr Alexander Au; the Chairman of the Council of the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust, Mr Edward Ho; the Chairman of the Antiquities Advisory Board, Mr David Lung; the Deputy Secretary for Recreation and Culture, Mr Benjamin Tang; and the Deputy Director of Education, Mr Kwan Ting-fai, will officiate at an opening ceremony to be held on Monday at 11 am at AMO, 136 Nathan Road, Kowloon.

Prizes will also be presented to winners of a drawing competition held earlier on Hong Kong's historical monuments.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	<u>\$ Million</u>	<u>Time (Hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative Change (\$ Million)</u>
Opening Balance in the account	1,922	09:30	+390
Closing Balance in the account	1,572	10:00	+390
Change Attributable to:		11:00	+390
Money Market Activity	+390	11:30	+390
Laf Today	-740		

Laf Rate 4% Bid/6% Offer TWI 123.8 *+0.3* 09.03.96

End

Queen's Commonwealth Day message

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Following is the Commonwealth Day message 1996 from the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth:

The theme for Commonwealth Day this year is "Working in Partnership".

This theme reminds us that we can achieve much more if we work in a team, making use of each other's different skills and experience, than if we are all separately trying to do the same thing. A successful partnership depends on mutual respect and friendship, and what matters is not what people are but what they can contribute to the common purpose. Partnership builds on experience, drawing lessons from the past and cementing shared friendships; and it looks to the future as it tackles the challenges of the present.

The Commonwealth is an excellent example of this kind of partnership. The fifty-three sovereign nations who belong to it have vastly different social and ethnic traditions, but it has been able to fashion unity out of this diversity and to become a working partnership of governments and peoples. One of the most valuable aspects of this partnership is the network of Commonwealth Non-Governmental Organisations which link members of a wide range of professions and activities - architects, engineers, journalists and broadcasters, doctors and vets, magistrates and judges, and so on - and help them to benefit from each other's experience and to work together for the common good. There are thriving partnerships between the Universities, the parliamentarians and the Trade Unions of the Commonwealth countries. In the arts, literature and music, there are Commonwealth links which enrich the cultural life of all the members, and there is also a friendly rivalry in a wide range of sporting activities.

The Heads of Government of the Commonwealth set out its fundamental aims and principles in a statement adopted at Harare in 1991, and last November in New Zealand they agreed on an important Action Programme to give that mission statement a real cutting edge, with the emphasis on democracy, development and consensus building. Those aims, like so many others, can best be pursued in partnership both within the Commonwealth and on a wider global scale.

Young people learn early the value of taking part in teams and tackling projects in partnership. I hope that you will carry those lessons into later life and, with the idealism and clear vision which the young can offer, help to build lasting partnerships to make the world a better and safer place.

End

Governor's "Letter to Hong Kong"

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Following is the full text of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten's broadcast on RTHK's "Letter to Hong Kong" this (Sunday) morning:

Well, it hasn't been a boring week. So much has happened here that has a direct bearing on our futures in Hong Kong.

We had the visit by Britain's Prime Minister, John Major, who was clearly moved by the warmth of his reception. We've had our Budget - the first Budget ever delivered by a local Hong Kong public servant, Donald Tsang. And there's been the National People's Congress in Peking, and much else besides.

I'd like to start with the announcement made by the Prime Minister about visa free entry to Britain. Why did that matter so much? Why should we be so pleased that Britain is offering something, when it is no longer the sovereign power, which those who will be affected don't actually enjoy today?

The answer is simple. Our future success - like our past - will depend as much as anything on Hong Kong remaining an open, international city. Sovereignty changes, but that should remain the same. An open city - open to ideas, open to trade, open to people, businessmen, tourists, relatives, first-time visitors, would-be investors, people from every land and every continent. Start closing some of the doors, start interrupting the flow, and Hong Kong rapidly ceases to be the New York of Asia.

So Britain's lead on visa free access was important. It was a gesture of confidence in our continuing success as an open society and a crucial way of helping to maintain that success.

What now stems from that?

First, we've got to persuade others to follow Britain's example. That's what the British Government will be helping us to try to do in the coming weeks.

I hope that the European Union countries will lead the way. After all, European Presidents and Premiers have just been in Bangkok with their Asian opposite numbers pledging their determination to work hand-in-glove with the emerging Asian nations. What better way of underlining all that rhetoric, what better way - to use some English slang - of Europe putting its money where its mouth is, than to put visa free access where Europe's mouth is. I'll be pressing for that in speeches, and perhaps one or two visits if necessary, during this year.

The second thing which follows - or should follow - as night follows day from the visa decision is a prompt, sensible and generous decision by China on right of abode in Hong Kong. The promises have been made, most recently by Mr Qian Qichen. Hong Kong is promised that everyone with permanent resident status before 1997 will have it afterwards. Now this really is an issue on which the Preparatory Committee should speak up for Hong Kong. An issue where it should get its skates on. Better for the Preparatory Committee to give this matter priority and drop the threats to Hong Kong's civil liberties and human rights.

This matters so much to so many families. It matters to Hong Kong's substantial diàspora overseas. It matters to present and future confidence. Perhaps one or two business leaders could call for this, too. Hong Kong expects, has a right to expect, simple and practical arrangements to be brought forward as soon as possible.

Third, as I've said already, one reason why visa free travel is so important to Hong Kong is because of the international nature of our community. As one of the largest trading centres in the world, one of the predominant financial and business centres, how could it not be a truly international place. Presumably Chinese leaders recognise that as well - and that's one reason why they've rightly pressed for the decision that Britain has now made.

The Prime Minister gave another very important reassurance in his speech last Monday - that Britain will be watching carefully over the implementation of the Joint Declaration after 1997; and will ensure that others are watching too. Obviously, he - like the rest of us - hopes that China will abide rigorously by the Joint Declaration, and I can quite understand Chinese antipathy to the assumption, made perhaps unfairly in some quarters, that China won't in fact keep its word. Assume the best, sounds fair to me. But in life you also have to prepare yourself in case things don't go right. And the Prime Minister made clear that Britain has in and out of the Joint Declaration, a legal, moral and economic commitment to the well-being of Hong Kong. So, he said, we will stand by Hong Kong, and if anything goes wrong, Britain will pursue matters through every appropriate channel with as much international support as we can muster.

To those who raise an eyebrow at such a suggestion, let me say this : when the Joint Declaration, an international treaty between Britain and China, was lodged at the United Nations, what on earth do you suppose was intended by that symbolic act? What do you suppose are the practical implications of the fact that our rights are guaranteed in international U.N. covenants applied directly to Hong Kong?

Sovereignty over Hong Kong after 1997 will be China's. No one disputes that. But the whole world will be interested in how that sovereignty is exercised. That's the reality. Hong Kong is an international city, with friends and partners, as the Prime Minister put it, in both hemispheres and five continents. They will be watching to see that the letter and spirit of the Joint Declaration are honoured, now and for fifty years beyond 1997.

The interest will be sharpest at the moment of transition. It's reckoned that next June and July there will be up to 6,000 foreign journalists encamped in Hong Kong. 100 international broadcasters will be carrying live pictures of the transition. Why will they be here? Because the whole world is interested in Hong Kong. Interested in how two members of the U.N.'s Security Council have managed to tackle a truly difficult enterprise. Interested in how "one country two systems" can work in practice. And that interest will not just fade away. As John Major said, in the strong voice of a good friend, Hong Kong will never walk alone.

What I hope and believe the world will see is Hong Kong continuing to thrive and prosper as a fair and open society. China has the biggest stake in that continuing success. We'll certainly be able to count on that in the economic sphere if we stick to the principles which underpinned Donald Tsang's Budget.

It was a self-confident Budget for a self-confident community. It was prudent. It was compassionate. And it was far-sighted. 1997 is a fact of political life. But we must look to the distant horizon as the Financial Secretary did in his vision of the future development of Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister talked about the values and ideas, and not just the products in the marketplace, that bear the stamp "Made in Hong Kong". But that stamp, "Made in Hong Kong", is found on our community leaders, too. People like the Financial Secretary. This city has all the talent - the "Made in Hong Kong" talent - that's required, if all those pledges on autonomy and freedom and the rule of law are kept, all the talent that's needed to take the future by storm.

And when you do that, no one will be more delighted than your part-time radio correspondent this morning.

End

Symposium and gala dinner on services sector forthcoming

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A symposium jointly organised by the Government and the business community will be held on March 12 to provide an opportunity for public discussion and exchange of views on the development of Hong Kong's services sector and the facilitating role of the Government.

Entitled "Hong Kong into the 21st Century : The Servicing Economy", the symposium will be opened by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten.

The Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, will deliver a keynote speech.

The symposium, to be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, will be attended by over 600 participants from the Government, business community and the academia.

It will start off with a plenary session to be chaired by the Chairman of Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Dr Victor Fung.

Panel speakers include the Director of Hong Kong Centre for Economic Research, the University of Hong Kong, Prof Richard Wong; the Executive Director of Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd, Mr Vincent Cheng; the Chairman of Federation of Hong Kong Industries, Mr Henry Tang, and the Chairman of Hong Kong Coalition of Service Industries, Mr Brian Stevenson.

Five breakaway sessions will follow, covering issues on financial services such as capital market, insurance and retirement funds, as well as issues facing a number of services sector, such as trading sectors, information technology, and quality in service delivery.

Speakers in these breakaway sessions will be leaders from trade and industrial organisations, as well as local and overseas experts and practitioners in the services sector.

Discussions on the future direction of Hong Kong's services economy will culminate in a gala dinner in the evening to be attended by the Financial Secretary and the business community.

Former US Secretary of State and currently Distinguished Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Mr George Shultz, has been invited to speak at the dinner gathering.

End

Programme improvements for Chinese immigrant children

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The Education Department is seeking service enhancement for Chinese immigrant children by reducing class sizes in induction courses, producing a self-learning package on English and reviewing longer term requirements to assess how induction programmes can be further improved.

The Assistant Director of Education (Services), Mr David Pun, said the department had reduced the class size from 15 to 20 to 10 to 15 per class in respect of induction programmes for children who had newly arrived from China.

"Wherever applicable, we are also implementing split class teaching for age groups 6 to 10 and 11 to 14," he said.

"This will considerably reduce the instances in which teachers have to tackle significant differences in standards of pupils in the same class."

In addition, Mr Pun said the department would produce a self-learning package on English for self-study by these children at home.

"This package will be distributed through non-profit-making voluntary agencies and schools," he said.

Mr Pun emphasised that the induction and extended programmes for Chinese immigrant children were meant to complement rather than to replace formal schooling.

He said: "There is a wide range of support services in schools available to Chinese immigrant children, among which is remedial teaching in the subjects of English, Chinese and Mathematics.

"However, having operated the induction programmes for a year, we will conduct a review of the longer term requirements starting this month to assess how they can be further improved."

At present, a total of 19 non-profit-making voluntary agencies provide induction and extended programmes for newly arrived Chinese immigrant children in 46 centres all over Hong Kong. The courses are free of charge.

The 60-hour induction programme covers both social adjustment and education aspects which include remedial teaching in Chinese and English, as well as homework guidance.

The extended programme, which is also 60 hours in duration, centres on remedial English to help improve the standard of English of immigrant children.

End

Blankets distributed to street-sleepers

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The Social Welfare Department distributed a total of 491 blankets in a territory-wide operation last (Saturday) night.

Among the blankets distributed, 144 were given to street-sleepers on Hong Kong Island, 46 in Kowloon East, 201 in Kowloon West, 44 in New Territories East and 56 in New Territories West.

"It is a normal practice for the department to distribute blankets to street sleepers when the temperature drops to or near 10 degrees Celsius," a department spokesman said, noting that the exercise conducted last night was the sixth during the current winter season.

End

Elderly home operators urged to apply licences early

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Operators of residential care homes for the elderly who have not yet submitted applications to the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for a licence or a certificate of exemption are urged to apply as early as possible because time is required to process their applications.

Making the appeal, a spokesman for the department said today (Sunday) that the Government Gazette had announced that Section 6 of the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance should come into operation on June 1, 1996.

"Section 6 of the Ordinance stipulates that any person, who on any occasion operates, keeps, manages or otherwise has control of a residential care home in respect of which neither a licence nor a certificate of exemption has been issued, commits an offence and is liable to a fine of \$100,000 and to imprisonment for two years," the spokesman said.

He reiterated the department's policy that all residential care homes which came into existence and which intended to commence operation on or after April 1, 1995 should be subject to regulation by the issue of a licence rather than the issue of a certificate of exemption.

"Unless there is something exceptional in the circumstances which warrant a departure from this policy, it is unlikely that a certificate of exemption will be issued for any residential care home which commences operation on or after April 1, 1995.

"Licences may be issued to residential care homes which are able to comply with the requirements in accordance with the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance.

"Certificates of exemption are to be granted to residential care homes already in operation before April 1, 1995 but which are unable to comply fully with the legislative requirements so as to allow these homes to continue operation in the interests of the residents as well as the operators in business terms," he said.

However, the spokesman said if there was danger to the residents or their well-being might be adversely affected, the certificate of exemption would be revoked.

Since the implementation of the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance, 548 residential care homes for the elderly out of a total of 586 have applied to the SWD for licences or certificates of exemption.

Application forms and relevant materials can be obtained from SWD's Licensing Office of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly at Room 2354 on the 23rd floor of Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai.

Elderly home operators who have enquiries about licensing requirements as well as application procedures may call 2961 7211 or 2834 7414.

End

Contact with Education Department encouraged

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The Education Department has produced a full-colour comprehensive telephone guide to assist members of the public to obtain general information on education services provided by the department.

Entitled 'Get in Touch with the Education Department', the new telephone guide carries illustrations on how to use the 24-hour Automatic Telephone Enquiry System and provides a list of useful telephone numbers of various sections of the department as well as the 19 district education offices.

A total of 550,000 copies of the guide have been produced in Chinese and English and are now available from all district education offices, district offices, and family services centres of the Social Welfare Department.

The Senior Education Officer (Serving the Community Unit), Mrs Kitty Cheung, said that the department had just added a Putonghua option to its 24-hour Automatic Telephone Enquiry System.

"Starting this month, by dialling 2891 0088, members of the public can listen to pre-recorded messages in Cantonese, English or Putonghua concerning a wide range of education services," she said.

"The topics range from Primary One admission, junior secondary education assessment and student guidance to teacher registration, application for supply teacher posts and information on teacher welfare such as procedure for provident fund withdrawal and mortgage interest subsidy scheme.

"In times of typhoon or rainstorms, the department will also make emergency announcements such as school closure through the system."

End

Applications open for recreation grants

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The Sir David Trench Fund Committee is inviting applications for grants from the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation and the Jockey Club Grant for Permanent Recreational Facilities for Youth.

The Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation is aimed at providing recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities facilities to promote personal development, purposeful use of leisure and community involvement, particularly of young people.

The Jockey Club Grant is mainly for the construction of recreational facilities to meet the needs of young people.

A single application form is available for the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation Capital Works Projects and the Jockey Club Grant for Permanent Recreational Facilities for Youth.

Application forms are obtainable at all district offices of the Home Affairs Department, and at the Education, Social Welfare, Health, Urban Services and Regional Services Departments as well as the Hong Kong Council of Social Service.

They are also available at the Recreation and Sports Division of the Recreation and Culture Branch and the Secretariat of the Sir David Trench Fund Committee, which is responsible for administering both the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation for capital and non-capital works projects and advising on the disbursement of the Jockey Club Grant.

Completed forms should be returned to the Secretariat of the Sir David Trench Fund Committee at Room 4015, 40th Floor, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

Applications for capital works projects will close on May 20 while that for non-capital works projects is open throughout the year.

Enquiries about the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation capital works projects and the Jockey Club Grant for Permanent Recreational Facilities for Youth can be made on 2594 5659 while those about non-capital works projects on 2594 5660.

End

Late payment of wages incurs fine

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The Labour Department today (Sunday) reminded employers that wages had to be paid at the end of a wage period and in any case not later than seven days thereafter.

Li Muk Shu Restaurant Limited in Kwai Chung and Nancy Electronics Industrial Company Limited in Sha Tin were recently fined in Tsuen Wan and Sha Tin Magistracies respectively for not paying wages to their employees within the statutory period.

Six summonses were served on the restaurant for failing to pay wages to two imported workers within seven days after the completion of several wage periods. Fines totalling \$90,000 were imposed.

In the other case, the electronics company was fined \$45,000 for failing to pay wages to an employee within the statutory period.

Labour Officer (Prosecutions), Mrs Tonia Leung, said late payment of wages at the end of a wage period or on termination of an employment contract were both offences under the Employment Ordinance.

The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for one year.

"Employees whose wages are not paid within the statutory period should approach the Labour Relations Service for advice and assistance as soon as possible," she said.

End

Fresh water cut in Mong Kok

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Fresh water supply to some premises in Mong Kok will be temporarily suspended from 11 pm on Wednesday (March 13) to 6 am the following day to facilitate testing of watermains.

All premises in the area bounded by Lai Chi Kok Road, Shanghai Street, Mong Kok Road, Nathan Road, and Prince Edward Road West, including Concourse Hotel, will be affected.

End