

horns and tiger bones are not allowed to be used to make medicines. Those finished medicines containing elements of rhinoceros horns and tiger bones should be sealed up for safekeeping."

The circular also said research in finding substitutes for rhino horns and tiger bones will be encouraged. Anyone wanting to use the horns and bones under special circumstances will first need the approval of the Ministry of Public Health.

(Rhino horns are used mainly for "detoxification" and tiger bones for "expelling" heat from the body and for treating aching bones.)

Early this month the People's Court in Guangzhou sentenced two farmers to death for trading in panda skins. Others involved in the racket were given life imprisonment.

Message spreading: The message appears to be spreading. Premier Li Peng is reported to have donated RMB1,000 (HK\$746) to the Foundation for Protecting the China Environment. The donation came on the eve of the World Environment Day.

The Chinese authorities have also pledged that the number of nature reserves will be increased from the present 708 to 1,000 in the year 2,000. China began setting up reserves in 1956 but by 1979 only 57 had been established. However, the tempo picked up with the opening of the country's doors and the introduction of reforms so that by the end of last year the country had more than 700 nature reserves covering 56 million hectares or 5.5 per cent of the country.

A national park, the Hualong Wild Life Zone, will also be set up. Officials say it will be a "paradise for animals to reproduce naturally." They say its goal will be to restore threatened species to their natural environment.

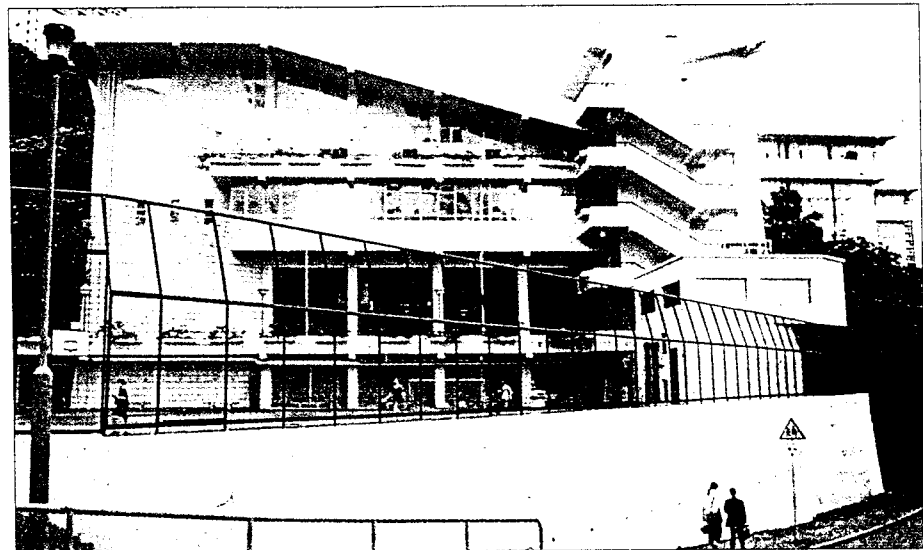
Even zoos are to be given a facelift. The new zoo that is being constructed in Shenzhen has impressed animal activists. "It is not like a zoo at all. It is more like a safari park with natural surroundings. We are all very impressed," said Robinson.

The fact that China has admitted that its 200 zoos across the country are not up to international standards is in itself a positive step, she added. It has also appealed to overseas organisations and large corporations for help in its conservation efforts.

"This proves that they are actually starting to address something which we thought was a long way down the line. We want to try and work with them and any help we could give we would," said Robinson. **W**

EDUCATION

A class apart: Row over EFS funds



Island School: Long line of applicants for ESF teachers' jobs.

Teachers enjoy a range of perks, while 90 per cent of revenue is spent on meeting staff costs

By BETSY MAY VELOO

THOUSANDS of Hongkong school-teachers leave their classrooms for good every year, fed up with working conditions. Yet one local institution gets thousands of job applications for its few vacancies.

Most who leave teach in ordinary government-aided schools. There, education is free until Form 4, when parents pay \$2,550 a year and the government provides \$14,000 per student. In the English Schools Foundation (ESF), which teacher hopefuls flock to, a Form 4 place costs parents \$46,700 and the government kicks in \$18,000.

With some 90 per cent of those revenues going towards staff costs, expatriate ESF teachers enjoy a range of perquisites

— and there is no lack of UK applicants even for ESF jobs on local terms.

The question some ESF parents are asking is why fee increases always outpace inflation (see table). Foundation officials confirmed fees would rise again in September after a 14.75 per cent rise this year. Others wonder if their fees were used to pay off the former ESF secretary Maurice Millard, fired in July 1992 with a \$4.35 million settlement.

The question some legislators want answered is why the government subsidises ESF schools so generously.

"Daylight robbery is what it is," said one parent. "The ESF should understand that there are many parents out here who are not wealthy, and whose children's fees are not subsidised by the companies they work for," said another.

The ESF was set up in 1967 "to operate within the colony schools offering without regard to race or religion, a modern liberal education through the medium of the English language to boys and girls who are able to benefit from such an education." Two schools were opened that year, two more in 1975 and another in 1977.

The ESF was independent, but in the late 1970s the government let it absorb six government English schools in a cost-cutting bid. The agreement brought gov-

ernment grants to the ESF covering about one-third of its expenditure, and interest-free loans.

Currently there are 15 ESF primary and secondary schools, attracting children of expatriates and local English-educated families.

Compared with other international schools, ESF fees are among the lowest (see table). However, the others receive no public funds.

The ESF has a far bigger percentage of teachers employed on expatriate terms than the others.

Some 200 have lifelong contracts giving leave passage for the family, medical care, free ESF education and heavily subsidised housing requiring rental contribution of only seven per cent of salary.

Besides the annual government-standard pay rise, teachers are awarded scale increases between four and five per cent. All except those on temporary contracts receive a 25 per cent gratuity at the end of each two-year contract. This accounts for increases well in excess of inflation.

A new teacher gets a basic salary of about \$18,300 while principals are paid from about \$46,000 to more than \$65,000.

Official line: The official line has always been that fee increases cover rising maintenance costs and that an attractive remuneration package is needed to get and keep highly-qualified teachers.

"But the fact that the package may already be over-generous, as evidenced by the very low turnover (six per cent in 1992) and the over 2,000 applications for this year's 33 vacancies, is conveniently ignored," complained a parent. "I don't begrudge them their pay but you must admit that this is a very expensive arrangement."

The soaring costs of ESF fees

School Year	Primary HK\$	Increase (%)	Secondary HK\$	Increase (%)
1984/85	9400	20.5%	16000	27.5%
1985/86	10700	13.8%	18200	13.8%
1986/87	11300	5.6%	19500	7.1%
1987/88	13000	15.0%	22500	15.4%
1988/89	14700	13.1%	24500	8.9%
1989/90	18100	23.1%	30100	22.9%
1990/91	21800	20.4%	36100	19.9%
1991/92	24600	12.8%	40700	12.7%
1992/93	28200	14.6%	46700	14.7%

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everything is perfect. But I cannot see any pressing need to review the Ordinance unless there are particular problems."

A well-placed source said any changes that threatened teachers' or the staff's ricebowl would never get a hearing. "The foundation membership, which is the organisation's supreme governing body, is controlled by the teachers. No doubt there is some parent representation via the Parent Teacher Associations but some of the parents who are members are teachers in other ESF schools."

The ugly side of lifelong contracts erupted during the Maurice Millard dispute which shook the normally staid and prestigious ESF to its roots. It cost \$4.35 million to fire Millard who, as secretary, had a salary and housing package worth about \$2.2 million a year.

His costly removal in the face of an inquiry which found no grounds for dismissal prompted legislators Marvin Cheung and Cheung Man-kwong to call for the government to look into ESF funding.

Asked about the payout source, ESF Chairman Ken Woodhouse replied: "It comes from our own money." The only two verifiable sources of ESF funds are government grants and school fees. Two members of the ESF executive resigned over the issue.

In the wake of the Millard affair, the ESF reviewed employees' contracts but is close-mouthed about details. A newsletter in March stated: "We have now approved new conditions of service for staff commencing in September or thereafter. We shall be considering the transitional arrangements for the existing staff." *Window* learned that current staff are seeking legal advice on how to protect their present position.

A few years back new staff were put on two-year contracts, automatically renewable twice. Beginning in September, new staff will only be given a two-year contract, renewable "at the discretion of the Executive Committee." A replacement for Millard, Jennifer Wisker, has just been appointed.

Critics have called for a review of the Ordinance and Regulations governing the ESF. Woodhouse replied: "A prudent person would never say that

Woodhouse, in his very brief interview with *Window* before the reporter was ejected, disputed that view. "The foundation is a blend of parents, community members and teachers and staff. And those three are very roughly divided into equal proportions."

But a breakdown shows that of the 135 foundation members, 41 per cent are ESF staff. Only 26 per cent are from PTAs and 17 per cent from the government, the community and business.

Staff representation: The source added that although the members' composition was probably designed to be balanced at the outset, staff representation has since grown disproportionately.

"As the number of schools increases, the amount of school-based representation has also increased. But the community, business and public interests have not," he said.

"Parents' interests have never been permitted to be represented separately from the Parent Teacher Associations. There is no independent parent voice.

"We should not have an organisation providing a public service which spends between 80 and 90 per cent of its funds on its staff salaries and benefits, being controlled by those same people. This is unhealthy, unprofessional and bound to lead to abuse."

Asked if the government was happy with the ESF structure, the government representative on the ESF Executive Committee, David Pun, said: "It is not a matter of whether the government is happy or not. The ESF system has been in practice for some years now and is very professionally run."

It may be a question of whether legislators are happy. Their questions over funding disparities between the ESF and aided sector schools resulted in the establishment of a working committee. Its report on the issue is expected before September and may well bring changes in the ESF management style. ■

The comparative costs of international schooling

School	System	Grades	Fees HK\$ (Annual)
German Swiss	German	Primary	36,600
		Secondary	45,200
French Intl	French	Primary	41,805
		Secondary	50,202
Chinese Intl	Chinese / English	Primary	45,000
		Secondary	54,000
HK Intl	US	Kindergarten	
		to Grade 5	86,100
		Grade 6 to 8	90,400
		Secondary	99,000 - 99,550
ESF	English	Primary	28,200
		Secondary	46,700

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