10 April 1997

DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
GARDEN ROAD, 5th–8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,
HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

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Following the upgrading of services, the DIB will no longer be printed in hard copies and distributed by post to subscribers with effect from May 1, 1997.

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It is the policy of this department that we should aim at running a paperless office in the long run, but if you have difficulties in the new arrangements, please contact the undersigned at 2842 8738.

Robert Yip
(Robert YIP)
for Director of Information Services

Return Slip

To : GIS, 8th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong
(Attn : Robert Yip)

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from May 1, 1997.

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Thursday, April 10, 1997

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Transcript of the Governor
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Following is the transcript of the question and answer session by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, at the lunch hosted by the British Chamber of Commerce in Central this (Thursday) afternoon:

Question: Governor, when you think of Hong Kong today and when you think of the job that you have done over the past five years, and when you think of Hong Kong in the future, what keeps you awake at night?

Governor: Brandy, usually. I'm quite a good sleeper but it's - and I'm not a great worrier, but it's an extremely important question. Of all the issues which we debate back and forth, and nobody's absolutely right and nobody's absolutely wrong, the one I suppose that most concerns me is autonomy. I know that Britain has been the sovereign power in Hong Kong. But you know very well that by and large for 99 things out of a 100, Hong Kong has been run in Hong Kong, and for the last few years, I've run with the exception of the Attorney-General, I've run an entirely Chinese government. The success for our policies in area after area belong to local Hong Kong Chinese professional public servants. I hope that Hong Kong continues to run its own affairs in the same way after 1997 because I think one of the reasons for Hong Kong's success is that there's a Hong Kong chop on what we've been doing. While the rest of the world entertained a rather fanciful and not very successful notions on economic policy, while Britain flirted with those sort of policies, Hong Kong went its own way. Governments were elected in Britain committed to all sorts of economic insanity. But Hong Kong went on running its economy in a way which has produced today's success. So I suppose that if I were to wake up at night, the thing that would most worry me was I would want to be assured that that degree of autonomy would continue into the future. One post-script: Every year I go to a dinner-dance given by the Administrative Services Association, given by the corp of our civil service and before the dinner I meet a cross-section of the new graduate entrants into our civil service. One of the important things about public service in Hong Kong is that it's properly esteemed in the community, it's properly rewarded and as a result we get outstanding recruits year after year. There's no reason to suppose that the people making policy, the Hong Kongers running Hong Kong in the future will be every bit as talented, won't be more talented than they've been in the past. So I just hope that Hong Kong will be trusted to get on with its own affairs, not just rhetorically, not just polemically but day to day, hour by hour, and if that happens, Hong Kong will take its place as one of the very greatest cities of this and the next century.

Question: Governor, could I ask you, of all those wonderful things you have to say about Hong Kong and in your years here, what would be the most single important factor that you feel would have the highest value in being able to transport it from Hong Kong back to the Britain of today?

Governor: Enthusiasm. I think that what Hong Kong happily lacks is that sort of world weary cynicism which has had such an effect, I think, on European and British and to some extent on American politics. You can make a living in Europe or America proving that nothing can be done. You can make an even better living, commenting on proving that nothing can be done. One of the exciting things, well, for me, the most exciting thing about Hong Kong is to see people in every walk of life who really do believe that they can make things better for themselves through their own efforts. That's partly the reason why envy is so absent from the political debate by and large in Hong Kong. In most OECD countries, in most Western societies, envy has become in a way a description of fiscal policy. That's absent in Hong Kong, and the result of that is that people do make things better for themselves year by year. We all know that the impossible happens, that we do get the Convention Centre built on time, that we do build those spectacular bridges where five years ago when I was standing on that site, there were only bits of white tape on the ground. We do know that despite all the problems just up the road, Hong Kong has created this stable and prosperous society, this decent society in the last few years. I guess those are qualities that our Victorian forbearers would have recognised very well, and I hope that they are qualities that aren't lost as Hong Kong becomes more accustomed to its prosperity. If Hong Kong can hang on to that enthusiasm, can hang on to that commitment to progress, belief in itself, belief in the possibilities of individual men and women doing better, if it can hang on to that, there's nothing that can stop it.

Question: It's not really a question this. I'm asking for a comment. This is a Chamber of Commerce lunch so I'm not going to talk about the controversy of political situation over the last five years. But nevertheless, I'd like to at least register that in the time of British rule of 150 years, regardless of what people say, there are at least a number of things which I think makes Hong Kong strive the way it does today, because of the business rule. Now, Chris, you'll understand somebody said to me recently, cricket is a colonial game and therefore it really is not to be encouraged in the future. My answer was, is soccer? So you'll understand that. So going back on beyond the time or before the time that you took office, I think there are a number of things which I think should be registered right here that the English language and the way of life is part and parcel of Hong Kong and if that's lost, right, in the future, Hong Kong doesn't stand a chance in the international world. The second thing that I would say is that regardless whether it was intimated, deliberate or by accident, the system of operation within the government in Hong Kong, as I say, things very, very dear to our lives in my group, is that we are in Hong Kong the envy of every other country in Asia or even the world, why you are able - the government is able to keep the tax down to what it is at 15% and that is the secret of our success, because 85% of everybody's earnings stays in their pocket. The reason of course is because of the franchise system which is devised over the last 150 years how and what, I don't know, but we're involved in that, it means that every time we build something of infrastructural importance such as something that you omitted to mention despite all the statistics is that the Western Harbour Crossing, of which I am the Managing Director, is opening four months ahead of time, at $7.5 billion, that is equated to 120,000 schools in terms of spending. What the government saves by franchising out to the private sector is the secret of success of Hong Kong. I think this is the most important thing that people should recognise here because no other place in Asia or anywhere else does that and I think that it's a British legacy. Thank you very much, sir. If you'd like to comment on that, I'd be very grateful.

Governor: I've got a couple of comments. First of all, whether or not cricket is a colonial game. I suppose that in the last few years many of us have thought the real problem was that we did actually teach cricket to the colonies. But you're quite right that all these games are international. You are right in what you say about the English language and of course you are right about the importance of low tax in Hong Kong's success and that one reason for low taxes in Hong Kong is that we have had no difficulty about the concept that private investment should be used to achieve public good. There isn't, and it's again another of the encouraging features of life in Hong Kong, there is none of that rigid demarcation between the private and public sectors which has bedevilled sensible macroeconomics management, I think, in so many European countries so I wholly endorse what you've said.

End

Government's commentary available at District Offices

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A Government spokesman said today (Thursday) that the Government has completed its commentary on the consultation document on "Civil Liberties and Social Order" released by Mr Tung Chee Hwa's office yesterday.

"We have sent our views to Mr Tung's office. Members of the public can obtain copies of our commentary from Public Enquiry Service Centres at the 18 District Offices, starting 7 pm today.

"These centres will be open until 8.30 pm today," the spokesman said.

"The document will also be available on the Hong Kong Government Home Page on the Internet at http:\\www.info.gov.hk," he added.

End

Bill to strengthen control on weapons of mass destruction

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The Weapons of Mass Destruction (Control of Provision of Services) Bill, which aims to enhance the effectiveness of Hong Kong's strategic trade control system, will be gazetted tomorrow (Friday).

A Government spokesman said: "The Bill seeks to prohibit provision of services which assists the development, production, acquisition or stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction i.e. biological weapons, chemical weapons, nuclear weapons and the means of delivery of such weapons.

"At present, Hong Kong imposes controls on the import and export of strategic commodities which range from weapons to dual use high technology goods, for example, high performance computers and sophisticated telecommunications equipment."

The spokesman said: "In view of the risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a number of international regimes have been established to prevent their proliferation.

"In addition to control over the import and export of these weapons, some key members of theses regimes have introduced enhanced measures - in particular, legislation on the provision of services which assists the development, production, etc. of these weapons."

He noted: "Hong Kong is not a conduit for the proliferation of strategic commodities."

"However, as a responsible player in the global economy, and in order to ensure Hong Kong's continued access to high technology, Hong Kong is committed to following closely the highest standard of control on transfer of strategic commodities," he added.

The Bill was approved by the Governor in Council on March 25 and will be introduced into the Legislative Council on April 23.

End

Transfer of VMs from HIDC main camp today

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A group of 57 Vietnamese migrants in High Island Detention Centre, including 15 from the North Camp and 42 from the South Camp, will be transferred to the Centre's Security Unit today (Thursday) in preparation for their return to Vietnam under the Orderly Repatriation Programme.

They will go through pre-flight documentation and medical checks prior to their repatriation on April 15.

The transfer will be observed by independent monitors.

End

Monitors' report submitted to CS

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The monitors appointed to observe the transfer of Vietnamese migrants selected for the Orderly Repatriation Programme from the High Island Detention Centre's main camps to its Security Unit this (Thursday) morning have submitted their report to the Chief Secretary.

The four monitors comprised two non-official Justices of the Peace, Professor Chen Char-nie and Mr Yiu Chung-lap; and representatives from two non-government organisations, Professor Stewart MacPherson from Save the Children Fund and Mr Kelvin Szeto from Oxfam.

End

Report on compulsory education review published

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An eight-week public consultation exercise started today (Thursday) on the Report on Review of Nine-year Compulsory Education as the report was released after a two-year study.

The report was the work of the Board of Education's Sub-committee on Review of School Education, which completed the review last month.

Schools have been asked to collect copies of the report from the relevant district education offices. Copies have also been sent to relevant educational bodies.

The public will also be able to read the report via the Internet at the Education Department Home Page from next week. The URL is http://www.info.gov.hk/ed.

Views and comments are invited and should be sent to the Secretary, Board of Education Sub-committee on Review of School Education, at Room 1156, 11th floor, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, or by fax to 2834 7350, not later than June 4, 1997.

End

Response to media reports on case of crippled beggar

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In response to media reports on the case of a crippled beggar who received a six-month custodial term on review of sentence, and was said to have crawled into the dock because his crutches were confiscated by the Magistrate, a spokesman for the Legal Department today (Thursday) pointed out that it is the duty of the department to seek review of a sentence if it is considered manifestly inadequate and or if it is wrong in principle. Sentencing is a matter for the courts.

The charges, to which the defendant in this case admitted, were unlawful stay in Hong Kong, and assault on the Police and arson which are serious offences. The normal sentence for an illegal immigrant who committed another offence at the same time is 15 months imprisonment. The Magistrate in this case obviously agreed with the view of the department and revised his original suspended sentence. The defendant was all along legally represented.

Hong Kong has seen a problem of beggars, many of them crippled, entering and staying illegally to work on the streets. The sentence should be adequate enough to prevent a deterioration of this problem, the spokesman said.

End

Car park management contracts awarded

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The Transport Department today (Thursday) awarded new management contracts for its multi-storey car parks to Wilson Parking (Holdings) Limited and Adams Parking (International) Limited.

Commencing on May 1, 1997, these contracts will be valid for four years.

Wilson Parking (Holdings) Limited will be responsible for managing seven car parks at Star Ferry, City Hall, Murray Road, Aberdeen, Middle Road, Kwai Fong and Tsuen Wan Transport Complex; as well as operating two Abandoned Vehicle Surrender Centres at To Kwa Wan and Sha Tin.

Adams Parking (International) Limited will manage the other seven car parks at Garden Road, Rumsey Street, Shau Kei Wan, Tin Hau, Yau Ma Tei, Sheung Fung Street and Tsuen Wan MTR Station.

The company will also be responsible for the design, production and distribution of toll tickets for Government tunnels and Tsing Ma Control Area.

A spokesman for the Transport Department said the management of Government car parks was first contracted out in 1984 and the new contracts were openly tendered in December last year.

"While the Government retains control over the operation of Government carparks and setting parking fee levels, we shall continue to monitor closely the contractors' performance," he added.

End

The weather of March 1997

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March 1997 was sunnier and warmer than normal. The total sunshine duration amounted to 129.3 hours, 32.9 hours more than normal. As a result, the monthly mean temperature of 20.1 degrees, was 1.6 degrees above normal and the seventh highest for March. The mean minimum temperature of 18.3 degrees was also the sixth highest for March.

The total rainfall for the month totalled 34.8 millimetres, only about half of the normal. However, the accumulated rainfall since January 1, which totalled 191.1 millimetres, was 52.8 millimetres above the normal for the same period.

The month started fine and sunny. A cold front from the north crossed the South China coast on March 2 bringing drier air to the territory and temperatures dropped to 14.2 degrees, the lowest in the month, the next day.

Sunny weather prevailed until a maritime airstream brought along mist and fog patches to the harbour on the mornings of March 12 and 13. Temperatures rose to 27.1 degrees, the highest in the month, on March 15.

The generally fine weather in the first half of the month gave way to rain in the second half. Isolated thunderstorms associated with the passage of a cold front affected the territory on March 16. The weather remained cloudy to overcast until March 19. The next couple of days saw outbreaks of rain and occasional thundery showers due to successive passages of troughs of low pressure.

There was widespread mist and periods of rain on March 21. The mist was cleared by a surge of the northeast monsoon which brought along drier air late on March 22. Winds were strong offshore on March 24 and rain gradually eased off the next day.

Another trough of low pressure approached the territory on March 28 and again brought along thundery showers the next day.

It became fine and sunny on March 30. Winds freshened the next day as another surge of the northeast monsoon reached the territory. The weather on the last day of the month was fine but hazy.

No tropical cyclone occurred in the western North Pacific and the South China Sea in the month.

Details of the issuance/hoisting and cancellation/lowering of various warnings/signals in the month are summarized in Table 1.1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal of March are tabulated in Table 1.2.

Table 1.1 Warnings and Signals in March 1997

	Beginning Time		Ending Time	
Type of Warnings/Signals	day/month	hour	day/month	hour
Strong Monsoon Signals	24/3	0230	24/3	0530
	24/3	0900	25/3	0930
	30/3	2330	31/3	0730
Thunderstorm Warnings	16/3	1600	16/3	1800
	19/3	0945	19/3	1145
	20/3	1630	20/3	1930
	21/3	0830	21/3	1030
	29/3	0515	29/3	0815
Fire Danger Warnings				
Yellow	2/3	1800	4/3	0600
Yellow	24/3	0835	24/3	1800
Yellow	31/3	0600	31/3	1650

Table 1.2 Figures and Departures from Normal - March 1997

Meteorological Element	Figure of the month	Departure from normal above normal	Departure from normal below normal
Total Bright Sunshine (hours)	129.3	32.9	---
Mean Daily Global Solar Radiation (MJ/square metre)	11.6	0.36	---
Total Rainfall (mm)	34.8	---	32.1
Mean Cloud Amount (%)	68	---	8
Mean Relative Humidity (%)	82	1	---
Mean Daily Maximum Air Temperature (Degree Celsius)	22.5	1.2	---
Mean Air Temperature (Degree Celsius)	20.1	1.6	---
Mean Daily Minimum Air Temperature (Degree Celsius)	18.3	1.8	---
Mean Dew Point (Degree Celsius)	16.7	1.7	---
Total Evaporation (mm)	75.3	---	16.9

Remarks: All measurements were made at the Royal Observatory except sunshine, solar radiation and evaporation which were recorded at King's Park Meteorological Station.

End