



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Tuesday, November 7, 1972

RAINSTORM COMMISSION OF INQUIRY RELEASES INTERIM REPORT

The Government has accepted the recommendations contained in the interim report of the Commission of Inquiry into the June rainstorm disasters and urgent action by the Public Works Department has been taken to implement them.

The interim report, which deals almost entirely with the landslip disaster at Sau Mau Ping in which 71 people were killed and 60 others injured, concludes that "the landslip was due primarily to softening of the fill material caused by infiltration of rainwater mainly through the sloping face, as a result of an exceptionally long and intense rainstorm."

Members of the Commission feel at this stage, that they are not in a position to make firm recommendations as to how similar landslips can be avoided in the future without prejudging issues relative to other landslips.

They do, however, recommend certain immediate precautions which should be taken with respect to other embankments similar to that at Sau Mau Ping.

These precautions include:

- (1) All such embankment slopes should be checked and particular attention paid to underground water conditions, effectiveness of drainage and checks made for visible cracks. Inspections should preferably be carried out shortly after heavy rain.

/(2) Should

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(2) Should undue water seepage or soil dampness be discovered immediate steps should be taken to lower the groundwater level by the following means:

- (i) sealing the surface.
- (ii) installation of horizontal drains into the slope.
- (iii) installation of cut-off drains above the slope.

"The method to be adopted," the Commission says, "depends on the nature and location of the particular trouble spots as well as the characteristics of the embankment itself and its surrounding terrain."

The interim report, which is to be published in both English and Chinese shortly, sets out the history of the Sau Mau Ping licensed area, and describes in detail the circumstances in which the landslide occurred and the course of the rescue work.

It also examines the engineering and technical considerations involved in establishing the cause of the disaster.

Commenting on the interim report, a Government spokesman said today that the Public Works Department each year carries out various measures to minimise the risk of danger from landslips.

Steps taken before the beginning of each wet season include:

- (a) Thorough inspection of all drainage systems.
- (b) Checking of all government works in progress for possible damage in the event of rainstorms.
- (c) Checking of private formation works and warning authorised architects and developers to take necessary precautions against washouts, landslides, blockage of drains and collapse of scaffoldings and hoardings, etc.

/(d) The maintenance

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(d) The maintenance contractor's arrangements for dealing with emergencies are carefully examined and his responsibilities explained to him by a chief engineer.

(e) All outdoor staff are briefed on their duties in the event of typhoons or other emergencies.

During each wet season these measures are repeated, as necessary, after periods of heavy rain. Special attention is also paid to areas known to be subject to slips, and road inspections are carried out at regular intervals throughout the year.

The spokesman said these measures were carried out this year as usual.

Moreover, since the rainstorms, special attention has been paid to slopes, embankments and drainage conditions in the vicinity of certain licensed and squatter areas.

A report was made to the Resettlement Department advising where it was considered that a definite danger of landslide or flood existed.

The spokesman said that most of these areas have been or are being evacuated.

Some 22,000 people affected by the June rainstorms have been given public housing in Kowloon and are now moving into their new homes.

The spokesman said there were some sites where, although a visual inspection indicated no immediate danger, there remains some degree of risk, the magnitude of which can only be determined from a detailed site investigation of ground conditions and consulting engineers have been appointed for this work.

/The spokesman

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The spokesman emphasised however that in the areas to be investigated there is no immediate danger.

"In addition," he said, "investigations of a general nature of all locations where it is felt there may be a danger to life or property are in hand and will continue until all these areas have been examined."

He said that the aim was to complete all these investigations as soon as possible with a view to carrying out any measures found to be necessary in time for the next wet season.

Note to Editors: Stencilled copies of the interim report in English and Chinese are distributed separately in the GIS press boxes this evening.

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MR. ROBSON VISITS CHINA

The Director of Public Works, Mr. J.J. Robson, left for China early this afternoon at the invitation of the Chief of the Hydro-Electric Bureau of Kwangtung Province.

While in China, he will visit the East River-Shum Chun Water Scheme.

Mr. Robson is accompanied by five senior officers of the Public Works Department. They are Mr. Wilfred Knight, Director of Water Supplies, Mr. T.H. Tomlinson, Principal Government Water Engineer, Mr. Li Chuen, Senior Mechanical Engineer, Mr. Ng Lin-hing, Chief Engineer (Supply), and Mr. Wong Mang-ki, Chief Engineer.

They are expected to return to Hong Kong on November 14.

A Government spokesman, commenting on the visit, said that the matter of water supply from China to Hong Kong may come up during the visit "and, if so, it will obviously be discussed".

He pointed out that there was no question of "demanding" water from China as was reported in a morning newspaper today, and Mr. Robson would not bring up for discussion general communication problems such as roads, railways and airlinks as suggested in the newspaper report.

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EMERGENCY POWER SUPPLIES FOR ROYAL OBSERVATORY

More than half a million dollars is to be spent on the installation of three emergency generators at the Royal Observatory headquarters and at two of its other weather stations -- King's Park and Tate's Cairn.

The observatory's headquarters in Tsim Sha Tsui houses a great variety of electronic equipment for measuring time, earthquakes, wind speeds and receiving and despatching weather data.

"If we are to have an accurate picture of the weather conditions at all times, it is essential that all the instruments should operate without any interruption," a spokesman for the Royal Observatory said.

He recalled that during the blackout of the Kowloon peninsula during Typhoon Rose in 1971, officers of the department had to work under inadequate lighting, while the air conditioning, which helps to maintain a constant temperature for certain instruments, had to be turned off because of a need to conserve electricity.

"This was due mainly to the limited power capacity of the existing emergency generator, which was installed some 13 years ago," he said.

"The installation of a 150 KW stand-by generator at the headquarters means that disruption to our work during power failures will be cut to a minimum."

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At Tate's Cairn, where there is a radar station capable of supplying information on the movement of typhoons and associated rain bands, the installation of a more efficient generator will reduce the risk of a break-down in communications with the Central Forecasting Office.

At present, this information is relayed to the Observatory headquarters by means of micro-wave radio with the help of a small radio transmitter.

"Because of its exposed position, the power lines at Tate's Cairn are particularly vulnerable to damage by lightning and high winds during heavy rainstorms and typhoons, when the information the station supplies is particularly valuable for the preparation of thunderstorm warnings and forecasts," the spokesman added.

At the King's Park Meteorological Station, where no generating facilities exist, the installation of an emergency generator will ensure that data from satellites orbiting the earth can be received under all kinds of weather conditions.

The spokesman pointed out that at present, the King's Park station is the only one operated by the Observatory in Hong Kong which is capable of picking up signals from the satellites and at which upper air soundings are made.

"The installation of these generators will guarantee a continuous flow of weather information from both local and regional sources," the spokesman said.

The generators are expected to be ready for use before the onset of the next typhoon season.

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FIRST TENANTS MOVE TO PAK TIN

The first tenants of the new Pak Tin Estate -- an elderly couple have moved from the Shek Kip Mei Resettlement Estate.

They are among nearly 11,000 people offered rehousing at Pak Tin under the current phase of the Shek Kip Mei Rehousing Scheme.

Another 400 to 500 families will be moving into the estate in the next few weeks.

The elderly couple, Mr. Tsui Ting-yan, 70, and his wife Mrs. Tsui, 64, moved into their new home immediately after the completion of its initial decoration.

The couple's livelihood depends largely on a meagre income of about \$100 earned by Mr. Tsui who operates a small stall in Portland Street and writes letters for other people.

Mrs. Tsui does some needlework at home which adds another \$20 to \$30 to their income. But this is not enough to support a family and so the couple applied to the Social Welfare Department last month for Public Assistance. They are now receiving a grant of \$98 a month from the department.

Mr. and Mrs. Tsui were among the first group of people resettled into the Shek Kip Mei Estate 18 years ago. They did not have any furniture in their home apart from an old wooden table, two or three chairs and a make-shift bed.

/To help

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To help make the couple happy, Mrs. Tsui's five nephews recently saved up and bought a new bunk, a cupboard and a small refrigerator for them.

When the neighbours learnt a few days ago of their intention to move into Pak Tin Estate, they volunteered to help in the removal which was carried out in less than a day.

Mr. and Mrs. Tsui said they were very grateful for the help they received from their neighbours.

They were extremely pleased with their new home and praised the Government for the Shek Kip Mei Rehousing Scheme.

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ANTI-DIPHTHERIA AND TETANUS CAMPAIGN FIGURES

During the week ending on October 28, a total of 15,757 doses of the combined anti-diphtheria and tetanus vaccine was administered, according to statistics released today by the Medical and Health Department.

Of these, 1,245 doses were administered on the Island, 6,527 in Kowloon, and 7,985 in the New Territories.

In the three weeks since the routine campaign began on October 9, a total of 51,003 doses has been administered.

The campaign will continue for the rest of the year. Free vaccine is available at all government maternal and child health centres and clinics.

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GRADUATION OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

Twelve physiotherapy students will receive their certificates at a graduation ceremony in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on Thursday (November 9).

Dr. Harry Fang, Chairman of the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation, will address the gathering, and Mrs. Fang will distribute the certificates.

The ceremony will begin at 3:30 p.m. in the gymnasium of the Physiotherapy Department, Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

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Note to Editors: You are invited to have the ceremony covered.

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TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS IN QUEEN'S ROAD WEST

The section of Water Street between Queen's Road West and Second Street in Sai Ying Pun on Hong Kong Island will be temporarily closed to through-vehicular traffic with effect from Thursday (November 9).

The temporary closure is to enable reconstruction work to be carried out on Queen's Road West at its junction with Water Street.

Single lane traffic will also be imposed on Queen's Road West during the period of reconstruction, which is expected to last for about six weeks.

The bus stop for route numbers 5, 5A, 5B and 101 in front of No. 411 Queen's Road West will be temporarily resited eastward to No. 398.

Appropriate signs will be erected to guide motorists.

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DANGEROUS BUILDINGS IN WESTERN

The Building Authority today declared 79 and 81 Third Street in Western District on Hong Kong Island to be in a dangerous condition and said No. 77, which shares an access staircase with No. 79, was liable to become dangerous.

The Principal Government Building Surveyor said that the three four-storey pre-war buildings were surveyed in the course of routine inspections earlier this year and in August notices were served on the owners to carry out extensive repairs.

These notices have not been complied with and further inspections carried out since then revealed deterioration of the load bearing party wall between Nos. 79 and 81 and of the reinforced concrete beams supporting the front wall and balcony.

There are also signs of failure of the reinforced concrete frame supporting the staircase to No. 81.

As there is a possibility of collapse, notices of intention to apply for closure orders in Victoria District Court at 9.30 a.m. on December 19 were posted today.

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Release time: 7.00 p.m.