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ACP projects forge ahead

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The Airport Core Programme (ACP) has moved ahead rapidly on all fronts in the past 12 months as progress reaches almost the half way mark.

At the beginning of last month (December), the 10 projects in the ACP were 46 per cent complete.

Progress on the seven government-funded ACP Projects, including the massive Tsing Ma Bridge, was even more impressive with work passing the 75 per cent mark.

Said the Director of the New Airport Projects Co-ordination Office, Mr Billy Lam: "The ACP encompasses many superlatives - largest this, longest that - but for Hong Kong the most important thing is that this massive effort is both on schedule and within budget.

"There is little doubt in our mind that the seven government projects and the Western Harbour Crossing will be open for use by mid-1997.

"Our target remains that the first planes will be flying out of Hong Kong's new international airport at Chek Lap Kok in April 1998 and I am confident that the total cost will be within our budget of \$158.2 billion."

Mr Lam added: "Last year has been a year of major milestones in the development of the Airport Core Programme and we are pleased that such remarkable progress has been made."

He said one of the important milestones reached was the Sino-British agreement on June 30, 1995 on the Financial Support Agreements for the airport and airport railway and the franchises for airport cargo services. The other was the establishment on December 1 of the Airport Authority (AA) chaired by Mr Wong Poyan.

The AA succeeded the Provisional Airport Authority (PAA) set up five years ago.

On the same day the Government also signed a Financial Support Agreement (FSA) with the newly established authority.

All major franchisees are now able to finalise their own financial arrangements on the basis of the FSA.

Mr Lam pointed out that the ACP had already entered its peak construction period, with works under way at various sites on both sides of the harbour.

He predicted that 1996 would be an even more busy year as franchisees started their construction programmes on their facilities at the airport site.

Details of the ACP works progress are as follows:

New Airport at Chek Lap Kok

At Chek Lap Kok the new airport is rapidly taking shape and already the terminal building, first runway, transport links and other facilities are visible as work moves into high gear. The airport platform was completed in June and now the airport project is moving into its busiest period of construction. Over \$31 billion worth of contracts are under way at Chek Lap Kok. All over the island activities can be seen on construction of taxiways, maintenance and air cargo aprons, civil works, tunnels, roads and bridges.

At the same time, development of commercial activities has proceeded at a fast pace and agreements have been signed for such major facilities as air cargo handling, fuel supply, catering, a hotel and a headquarters complex for Cathay Pacific Airways. Government facilities have also progressed, with the Civil Aviation Department's Air Traffic Control Tower and its adjacent complex taking shape. The Royal Observatory's Automatic Weather Station is already in operation to collect data in preparation for the opening of the new airport.

Airport Railway

Works for the Airport Railway are progressing steadily with about 25 per cent completed.

Work on all sections of the railway is well under way.

So far, five tunnel tube units for the Airport Railway's harbour crossing have been sunk onto the seabed, while construction of the third batch of tube units is under way at the casting basin at Shek O.

On Hong Kong Island, piling works and construction of the basement of the Hong Kong Station have been progressing since last June.

Meanwhile, deck erection of the Airport Railway Rambler Channel Bridge is under way with already 82 deck segments having been lifted into position.

The bridge is an 1,100-metre viaduct which will carry four rail tracks from the Airport Railway Tsing Yi Station, over the Rambler Channel, into the Kwai Chung Park.

The first tunnel breakthroughs for the Airport Railway were achieved in December with one at the Tsing Yi Tunnel and another at the East Lantau Tunnel. Both were achieved well ahead of schedule.

Western Harbour Crossing

The progress of works for the Western Harbour Crossing is very good, with about 71 per cent complete. Works are continuing on foundations, ventilation buildings and approach tunnels on both sides of the harbour.

The immersed tube tunnel consists of 12 units and eight units have been placed into final position. The remaining four units are being constructed at Shek O Quarry.

North Lantau Expressway

North Lantau and the new airport island at Chek Lap Kok are now linked by the two bridges of the North Lantau Expressway project and the bridge for the Airport Railway.

The bridges span the sea channel between Chek Lap Kok and newly reclaimed land on which phase I of the Tung Chung New Town is being built.

The 12.5-kilometre North Lantau Expressway is the first road being built along Lantau's northern coastline, involving cutting through hillsides and reclaiming land at the shore.

The expressway is being built in three sections - one each at Tai O, Yam O and Tung Chung. The seawall construction, reclamation and earthworks in all three sections have been substantially completed, and road works are in progress.

Overall, the expressway project is over 80 per cent complete.

Meanwhile, good progress has also been made with two other road projects - Route 3 and West Kowloon Expressway.

Route 3

The Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi sections of Route 3 are part of the ACP. They comprise the Cheung Ching Tunnel, the Rambler Channel Bridge and the Kwai Chung Viaduct, and are about 75 per cent complete.

On Tsing Yi Island, tunnelling and carriageway works inside the 1.6-kilometre tunnel have been completed.

The 500-kilometre bridge structure across the Rambler Channel between Tsing Yi Island and Kwai Chung has been completed and linked to the Cheung Ching Tunnel.

Construction of the superstructure for the Kwai Chung Viaduct is continuing with good progress along the busy Kwai Chung Road.

West Kowloon Expressway

The 4.2-kilometre West Kowloon Expressway is about 67 per cent complete.

Work on the expressway's elevated northern section on the West Kowloon Reclamation is substantially complete. For the southern section, works continue to progress on piling for bridges and footbridges, culverts and retaining walls.

Lantau Fixed Crossing

Linking Lantau Island to Tsing Yi and Route 3 will be the Lantau Fixed Crossing, which comprises the 820-metre Kap Shui Mun cable-stayed bridge, the Ma Wan Viaduct and the 2.2-kilometre Tsing Ma suspension bridge. Overall, this project is about 77 per cent complete.

Work on the main decks of the Kap Shui Mun Bridge and the Tsing Ma Bridge is nearing completion.

So far, 29 of 39 deck units have been lifted into place on the Kap Shui Mun Bridge and 42 of 51 on the Tsing Ma Bridge.

Completion of the lifting work early this year will be followed by construction of the railway trackform, electrical and mechanical works, and work on public lighting and road surfacing.

Tung Chung New Town Development

About 49 per cent of the infrastructure works for phase I of Tung Chung New Town have been completed with a bridge linking Tung Chung and Chek Lap Kok taking shape.

Construction of a sewage discharge culvert has been substantially completed, while work on a sewage treatment plant and a pumping station is under way.

Construction work is progressing on rental and home ownership housing blocks, while work has just started on construction of the superstructures of community facilities, including a commercial centre, a neighbourhood community centre, a clinic and schools.

This project is about 57 per cent complete.

West Kowloon Reclamation

Reclamation of 343 hectares of land in west Kowloon is largely complete.

The distributor road lying to the west of Hing Wah Street on the northern reclamation area has been completed and opened to traffic, providing an alternative access to the Kwai Chung Container Port.

The Cherry Street extension together with the access road serving the Public Cargo Working Area on the southern reclamation area have been opened to traffic.

Construction of the temporary Jordan Road Ferry Pier which is scheduled to open in February 1996 is entering its final phase.

Central Reclamation

Works for phase I of the Central Reclamation are progressing well with about 84 per cent complete.

Demolition of existing ferry piers, marine dredging and filling works, drainage culvert construction and utilities works are in progress.

So far, four new permanent piers have been built at the reclamation, and have been opened for ferry services. Construction of two more permanent piers is under way.

In conclusion, Mr Lam pledged to continue working closely with the Airport Authority, the Mass Transit Railway Corporation and the Western Harbour Tunnel Company, as well as the government works agents and all concerned parties to bring the ACP to completion within budget and on time.

"To this end, a lot remains to be done in the years to come. For our part, we in the New Airport Projects Co-ordination Office will continue to work to the best of our ability in close co-operation with all the parties concerned. We will also continue to provide progress reports to members of Legco and the Airport Consultative Committee and take into account the valuable advice they give us from time to time," he noted.

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Public invited to join Fire Services monitoring body

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The Fire Services Department is inviting applications from members of the public to join its Public Liaison Group (PLG) to monitor and improve the delivery of fire and ambulance emergency services.

A spokesman for the department said the PLG was formed to foster better understanding between the public and the department with a view to improving the quality of emergency services.

Members of the public aged 18 and above are invited to apply.

Application forms and information sheets will be available at all fire stations, ambulance depots and District Offices from tomorrow (Tuesday).

The deadline for application is 5 pm on February 29, 1996.

The spokesman said the PLG would have 30 members, comprising 10 residents from each of the territory's three regions - Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories.

"If the number of applications for each region exceeds 10, a random draw will be held," he said.

"Applicants will be informed of the results before the end of March," he added.

Selected members will serve for one year and the group will hold at least two meetings annually.

Further enquiries can be made on 2733 7772.

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Employers reminded to pay wages on time

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Wages should be paid at the end of a wage period and in any case not later than seven days thereafter.

A Labour Department spokesman today (Monday) reminded employers that late payment of wages was an offence under the Employment Ordinance (EO) and the offender was liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for one year.

He urged employees whose wages were not paid within the statutory grace period to approach the Labour Relations Service for advice and assistance as soon as possible.

"Employees of a sub-contractor in the building and construction industry should note that if their employer owes them wages, the principal contractor is vicariously liable for their first two months' unpaid wages.

"It is therefore for their own benefit to approach the Labour Relations Service if their wages are not paid in good time. To claim wages under vicarious liability, employees must serve a written notice on the principal contractor within 60 days after the wages become due," the spokesman said.

Under the EO, no employer may enter into, renew or continue a contract of employment without reasonable belief that he can pay wages as they become due.

As soon as an employer realises that he is unable to pay wages due, he has to terminate the contract of employment in accordance with its terms. Failure to do so is an offence liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000.

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