



## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Governor's statement

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The following is a statement by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten:

During the last two days, the Preparatory Committee, sitting behind closed doors in Peking, has been taking crucial decisions about Hong Kong's future. Decisions which go to the heart of what "one country two systems" will really mean. Will Hong Kong people really be able to decide for themselves, as promised, how to run their domestic affairs, or will the decisions which matter be dictated by others? Will tomorrow's Hong Kong, as promised, be exactly as free as today's, or will it be less free? Will the rule of law, on which all freedoms ultimately depend, remain supreme?

Hong Kong people have a right to full and authoritative answers to their questions. Those are still not forthcoming. But today's reports from Peking are very disturbing.

We are told that key provisions of the Bill of Rights Ordinance, the Societies (Amendment) Ordinance and the Public Order (Amendment) Ordinance are indeed to be scrapped. What we are still not told is why it is necessary to restrict Hong Kong's civil liberties; what provisions of the Basic Law are being contravened; how it can possibly be consistent with the Basic Law to replace, as still seems to be intended, legal provisions which are compatible with the International Covenant as guaranteed in the Basic Law itself with provisions which are not compatible with the Covenant. Once again we have the impression of legal arguments hastily thrown together, policies made up as we go along.

The community is not naive. Many will now be concluding that the freedoms protected by the provisions in question are deemed to be "against the Basic Law" because it has been decided for reasons which have nothing to do with the Basic Law that those freedoms should be reduced. If that is not the case, Hong Kong deserves a proper explanation now.

It is also reported that steps are now being taken to make the activities of the so-called Provisional Legislature more "legitimate". This looks like a belated recognition that this body has a legitimacy problem. But no amount of retrospective tinkering can change the reality that this is a questionable body established for questionable motives to do questionable work. Moreover, there is nothing that can possibly be done to make the activities of the PL before 1 July legitimate in constitutional terms. And any attempt to do so would be in defiance of the undertaking given last year by Vice Premier Qian Qichen.

End

CS: Hong Kong matters to the rest of the world

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The Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, said in Houston on Friday (local time) that she is committed to do her utmost to see that the transition goes well, and that Hong Kong continues to grow and to prosper as a free society.

Speaking at a luncheon co-hosted by the Houston Forum and the Asia Society, Mrs Chan said: "I have to say that I am myself an optimist. And I am putting my career where my mouth is by opting to stay on after the handover in my present position as Chief Secretary, and head of the Hong Kong Civil Service.

"My senior colleagues in government, who are also staying on, share that commitment."

In addressing her audience, Mrs Chan introduced by way of background Hong Kong's economic backdrop. She said that in business terms Hong Kong was the pre-eminent international business services city in Asia.

"Hong Kong is where you will find the expertise and connections to develop business in China and in the rest of the East Asian region.

"Our 6.3 million population are responsible for a GDP equivalent to about a quarter of China's GDP. Our per capita GDP is now US\$25,000, about the same as the United States itself and more than Canada, Australia or Britain.

"Over 80 per cent of Hong Kong's GDP now comes from the service sector. This is where Hong Kong's main growth has come from in recent years and it is the key to Hong Kong's future. It is the key to understanding why Hong Kong matters to China and to the rest of the world," Mrs Chan said.

In accounting for Hong Kong's success, Mrs Chan said there were more reasons than tight fiscal policies.

"Open minds are also important, as important as our open markets.

"Hong Kong has long had the rule of law and equality of all persons before the law. It has long had the freedoms that you expect here in America. Freedom of expression. Freedom of assembly. Freedom of worship. Freedom of the press.

"These freedoms are not luxuries. They are an integral part of Hong Kong's success, as a society and as an economy," Mrs Chan said.

Mrs Chan then took the audience through why she was optimistic about the wholly unprecedented handover scheduled for July 1997.

She said the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration had promised that life and business in Hong Kong could go on almost exactly as before. There were also clear assurances about the continuity of laws, rights and freedoms.

Mrs Chan also addressed the imaginary concerns raised in various commentaries on Hong Kong. She stated that there was no such thing as capital flight, nor were there any problems with brain drain and increase in corruption. Moreover, Mrs Chan also corrected another mistaken theme saying that mainland Chinese companies would be able to secure privileged treatment in Hong Kong after the handover.

On the last point, Mrs Chan said, "I can say categorically that we cannot and will not countenance a situation in which Chinese companies have an unfair competitive advantage over local or foreign companies doing business in Hong Kong."

Turning to the real problems facing Hong Kong, Mrs Chan said the Provisional Legislature came at a delicate time in Hong Kong's transition when we needed continuity and certainty.

"We sincerely hope that the Provisional Legislature will not try to legislate in parallel or in competition with the existing, elected legislature of Hong Kong which will remain in being until June 30," she said.

Commenting on the recommendations by the Preparatory Committee Legal Sub-Group proposing amendments to a range of laws affecting civil liberties, Mrs Chan said it was important the Hong Kong laws must remain in compliance with the UN human rights covenants, the application of which was guaranteed in both the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law.

"The Preparatory Committee and China must address these concerns to reassure Hong Kong people and the international community that the 'one country two systems' concept will be strictly adhered to," Mrs Chan stressed.

Mrs Chan is currently on her last leg of US visit in Houston. She will be receiving two awards on February 1. The first is the Annual Award from the Asia Society in recognition of her contribution to promoting international understanding.

The second is the Honorary Citizen/Goodwill Ambassador Award presented by the City of Houston.

Earlier, Mrs Chan had a private meeting with the former US President George Bush and called on Mayor Robert Lanier of Houston. She will be back to Hong Kong in the evening of February 3 (Monday).

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Report on CLP tariff increase incorrect

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In response to press enquiries on a press report that the Government had approved China Light & Power's application for a 6.7% tariff increase, a spokesman of the Economic Services Branch said that the report was incorrect.

He confirmed that the Energy Advisory Committee met yesterday to consider China Light & Power's tariff proposal.

The Government has no comment at this stage except that China Light & Power will need to brief the Economic Services Panel of the Legislative Council if there is to be any tariff increase.

End

Exchange of views on karaoke fire safety

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The Deputy Secretary for Security, Mr Alex Fong, and the Deputy Director of Fire Services, Mr John Tsang, met Legco Member Mr James To and a group of Urban Council Members this (Saturday) morning to hear their views on how to improve fire safety for karaoke establishments.

The two officials also discussed the subject with representatives of the Hong Kong Association for the Rights of Karaoke Entertainment and Catering Business at a separate meeting today.

Mr Fong said that there was a good and frank exchange of views at the meetings.

"The Government will take these views into account when considering measures to improve fire safety for karaoke establishments," he said.

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## Occupational injuries reported in 1996

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The number of occupational injuries reported to the Labour Department under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (ECO) in 1996 was 59,465, very close to the figure of 59,375 in 1995.

Of all the occupational injuries reported in 1996, 59,187 were non-fatal cases and 278 involved fatalities.

The construction industry, with 16,861 reported cases, accounted for the largest share or 28.4 per cent of the cases reported in the year.

Another 27 per cent of the cases were reported in the wholesale/retail and restaurant/hotel trade.

Senior Labour Officer (Compensation) (Administration & Assessment), Mr Yiu Chak-lam, said that the distribution of occupational injuries by economic sector was broadly the same as that of 1995 except that the manufacturing sector, which accounted for 13.9 per cent of the reported cases, recorded a noticeable decrease of 3.2 percentage points compared with 1995.

The Employees' Compensation Division of the Labour Department assists injured employees and dependants of deceased employees in claiming compensation under the ECO. A total of 41,287 or 69.4 per cent of the cases reported in 1996 were settled by the end of the year. The amount of compensation involved was \$290 million.

Irrespective of the year of reporting, the total number of cases settled in 1996 was 59,039 with compensation payable amounting to \$1,004 million.

"Under the ECO, employers are required to take out insurance cover for all their employees so that they can fulfil their legal obligations to pay compensation for work-related injuries. The Labour Department takes a serious view on compliance with this provision and our labour inspectors conduct frequent inspections to establishments to detect offences," Mr Yiu said.

In 1996, 753 summonses were heard and 701 were convicted for failure to take out insurance cover.

Mr Yiu said that a number of amendments were made to the ECO in 1996.

"The main improvements, which came into effect on January 1, 1997, increased the rate of periodical payments for temporary incapacity from two-thirds to four-fifths of an injured employee's normal earnings and eliminated the three-day qualifying period in respect of periodical payments," he added.

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New Eastern District Officer appointed

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Mr Lee Kam-chung will assume the post of Eastern District Officer on Monday (February 3), replacing Mr Lui Hau-tuen.

Mr Lee, aged 53, joined the Executive Officer grade in 1970 and was promoted to Principal Executive Officer in 1995.

He has served in the Civil Service Branch, the former City and New Territories Administration, OMELCO and the Trade and Industry Branch.

His last posting was Registrar of Travel Agents in the Trade and Industry Branch.

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All HK seafarers required to re-register

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The Marine Department today (Sunday) reminded all Hong Kong seafarers that they must re-register under the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) Ordinance if they want to continue serving in the seafaring profession.

Following the implementation of the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) Ordinance on September 2, 1996 which replaced the Merchant Shipping (Recruiting of Seamen) Ordinance, all Hong Kong seafarers previously registered under the Merchant Shipping (Recruiting of Seamen) Ordinance and those unregistered seafarers now being employed on coastal-going ships must be re-registered if they intend to continue serving in the seafaring profession.

Seafarers should apply to the Superintendent, Mercantile Marine Office, Marine Department for registration by September 1 this year. If they are employed on foreign-going ships, they should apply within one month after being discharged from a ship returning to Hong Kong.

Since the re-registration started on September 2, 1996, 1,650 applications have been received by the Marine Department.

A spokesman for the department stressed that the re-registration is a must to keep the seafarers in the profession.

He said: "Employers and families of Hong Kong seafarers are advised to inform Hong Kong seafarers of the changes if they are now serving on board foreign-going ships."

Further details concerning the re-registration of Hong Kong seafarers are available at the Mercantile Marine Office of the Marine Department on 2852 3061 during office hours.

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#### International Conference on Drug Education in Schools

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Schools heads, teachers and interested parties are invited to register for the International Conference on Drug Education in Schools to be held at the Hong Kong Science Museum on February 18 and February 19.

Organised by the Education Department, the conference provides local participants with opportunities to learn from their overseas counterparts.

Nine renowned experts from the Pacific Rim are invited to brief the conference on recent developments in drug education in schools in their countries.

They are Mr Peter Slattery from Australia, Professor Eric Single from Canada, Dr Sun Jiang-ping from China, Professor Shingo Katsuno from Japan, Mr Yoon Sung-tae from Korea, Dr Jit Singh from Malaysia, Dr Ong Teck-hong from Singapore, Mr Prasert Tanskul from Thailand and Professor Patricia Morgan from the USA.

Professor Chen Char-nie from Action Committee Against Narcotics and Mrs Jenny McGlynn from Life Education Activity Programme are also invited to give their views.

Participants will share their experiences with overseas and local speakers during the forum session.

Conducted in English, the two-day conference can accommodate some 300 participants. No fee will be charged.

Registration forms can be obtained from the Advisory Inspectorate of the Education Department, 12th floor, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai.

Please call 2892 6541, 2892 6543 and 2892 6546 for details.

Completed form must be returned to the Advisory Inspectorate, Education Department by post or by fax: 2573 2805 on or before Tuesday, February 11.

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Four reports on basis of by-census results published

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Four reports compiled by the Census and Statistics Department on the basis of the results of the 1996 Population By-census will be published tomorrow (Monday).

They are:

Basic Tables for District Board Districts;

Basic Tables for Tertiary Planning Units: Hong Kong Island";

Basic Tables for Tertiary Planning Units: Kowloon; and

Basic Tables for Tertiary Planning Units: New Territories".

Their prices are \$19, \$28, \$29 and \$43 respectively.

These reports provide statistical data on the socio-economic characteristics of the population in Hong Kong by District Board District and Tertiary Planning Unit respectively.

The statistics are organised into two parts. The part on Summary Statistics provides 28 summary indicators reflecting the socio-economic characteristics of the population. The part on Basic Tables presents 14 tables providing detailed information on the population profile.

If reference to geographical delineations of the statistics provided in these reports is required, readers may refer to the two map packs showing separately the boundaries of Tertiary Planning Units and District Board Districts and Constituency Areas, which were published last December.

These four reports, all in bilingual form, will be on sale from tomorrow. Purchases can be made at the Government Publications Centre, ground floor, Lower Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong. They are also available at the Publications Unit, Census and Statistics Department, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

The four reports follow the report on Summary Results, four reports from the "Table" series and two map packs released in the latter part of 1996, as part of the publication programme of the 1996 Population By-census results.

Four more reports are forthcoming in the early part of this year.

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