



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 1975

<u>CONTENTS</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
MEDICAL OFFICERS EXPLAIN MOVE OF LEPROSY PATIENTS TO MEI FOO SUN CHUEN RESIDENTS	1
SMOKERS, PICKNICKERS REMINDED OF FIRE DANGER IN COUNTRYSIDE	3
THIRTY-NINE NEW BUILDING PLANS APPROVED LAST MONTH	3
WONG CHUK HANG RESIDENTS TO GET REST GARDEN	4

SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 1975

- 1 -

LAI CHI KOK LEPROSY PATIENTS
NOT A HEALTH HAZARD - SAY MEDICAL OFFICERS

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OFFICIALS OF THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT YESTERDAY (FRIDAY) MET REPRESENTATIVES OF MEI FOO SUN CHUEN RESIDENTS TO DISCUSS MATTERS CONCERNING LEPROSY.

THE MEETING, ARRANGED BY THE SHAMSHUIPO CITY DISTRICT OFFICE, LASTED ONE AND A HALF HOURS DURING WHICH OFFICIALS EXPLAINED THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE MOVE OF LEPROSY PATIENTS FROM HEI LING CHAU TO THE LAI CHI KOK HOSPITAL AND REASSURED THEM THAT THE PRESENCE OF THESE PATIENTS WOULD NOT POSE ANY HEALTH HAZARD TO RESIDENTS IN THE SURROUNDING AREAS.

IT WAS POINTED OUT TO THEM THAT THE GENERAL PATTERN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD IS TO INTEGRATE LEPROSY TREATMENT INTO NORMAL MEDICAL SERVICES, AS IT IS NOW THOUGHT THAT ADMISSION INTO A LEPROSARIUM, AS DISTINCT FROM A GENERAL HOSPITAL, MAKES SUBSEQUENT REHABILITATION AND INTEGRATION INTO THE COMMUNITY MORE DIFFICULT.

THE OFFICIALS TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO REFUTE WHAT THEY CONSIDERED +ILL-INFORMED+ CRITICISMS IN SOME QUARTERS THAT THE TRANSFER OF THE LEPROSY PATIENTS HAD BEEN DONE SUDDENLY AND SECRETLY WITHOUT KEEPING THE PUBLIC INFORMED OF IT.

AS FAR BACK AS JULY 1971, THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT IT WAS CONSIDERING CLOSING DOWN HEI LING CHAU LEPROSARIUM FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES RATHER THAN FOR ECONOMIC REASONS. THE PLAN TO PHASE OUT HEI LING CHAU, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE HONG KONG LEPROSY MISSION, WAS GIVEN WIDE PUBLICITY BY THE LOCAL PRESS. LATER IN THE YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT SOUGHT THE VIEWS OF VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS AS TO HOW THE ISLAND SHOULD BE USED AFTER IT WAS CLOSED BY LATE 1974. DURING THE TIME FROM THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT AND THE ACTUAL TRANSFER IN LATE 1974, THERE HAD BEEN NUMEROUS PROGRESS REPORTS IN THE PRESS ABOUT THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF HEI LING CHAU.

IN OCTOBER 1972, DR. STANLEY BROWNE, MEDICAL CONSULTANT AT THE LONDON HEADQUARTERS OF THE LEPROSY MISSION, VISITED HONG KONG FOR CONSULTATION WITH THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT ON THE LEPROSY PROGRAMME. AFTER HIS FIVE-DAY VISIT, DR. BROWNE CALLED A PRESS CONFERENCE DURING WHICH HE SPOKE ABOUT MODERN SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES ABOUT LEPROSY.

THEN ON NOVEMBER 2, 1974, A FINAL THANKSGIVING SERVICE WAS HELD ON HEI LING CHAU TO MARK THE BEGINNING OF THE TRANSFER OF THE LEPROSY PATIENTS TO LAI CHI KOK HOSPITAL. THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, DR. GERALD CHOA, ATTENDED THE CEREMONY AND MADE A SPEECH, WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY REPORTED BY THE MASS MEDIA.

/DURING THE COURSE

SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 1975

- 2 -

DURING THE COURSE OF EVENTS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, NO OBJECTIONS HAVE EVER BEEN RAISED BY ANY ORGANISED GROUP TO THE IMPENDING TRANSFER, NOT UNTIL THE ACTUAL TRANSFER HAD BEEN COMPLETED EARLIER THIS YEAR.

AT YESTERDAY'S MEETING, THE OFFICIALS FURTHER EXPLAINED THAT ACTING ON THE PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRATION RATHER THAN SEGREGATION THE LEPROSY PATIENTS HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE LAI CHI KOK HOSPITAL AS NO OTHER HOSPITAL WAS AVAILABLE TO ACCOMMODATE AND TREAT SUCH PATIENTS.

LAI CHI KOK HOSPITAL, THEY SAID, HAD BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR MANY YEARS AND WAS GEARED TO TREATING ALL TYPES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

THE REPRESENTATIVES OF MEI FOO SUN CHUEN EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN OVER THE MOVEMENT OF LEPROSY PATIENTS AT LAI CHI KOK HOSPITAL, WHICH HAD GIVEN RISE TO WIDESPREAD FEARS THAT THE RESIDENTS MIGHT BE INFECTED.

THEY WERE TOLD BY THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT OF THE LAI CHI KOK HOSPITAL THAT THIS AROSE FROM MISUNDERSTANDING.

THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT SAID THERE WERE 47 PATIENTS AT THE LEPROSY WARD, AND THE MAJORITY OF THESE WERE NON-INFECTIOUS.

+THEY ARE KEPT IN THE WARD BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO HOMES TO GO TO OR BECAUSE THEY REQUIRE ATTENTION FOR RESIDUAL DEFORMITIES. THEY ARE NOT PATIENTS IN THE TRUE SENSE OF THE WORD,+ HE SAID.

THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT GAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT IF THERE WAS THE SLIGHTEST POSSIBILITY THAT A PATIENT WAS NOT YET RENDERED NON-INFECTIOUS, HE WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO GO OUT OF THE HOSPITAL BOUNDS, NOT EVEN OUT OF THE LEPROSY WARD.

HE ADDED THAT AMONG THE STAFF OF THE HOSPITAL THERE WERE NINE WARD AIDES WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY SUFFERED FROM LEPROSY BUT HAD BEEN CURED FOR MANY YEARS.

+BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT PATIENTS BUT ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE, THEIR MOVEMENT CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT BE RESTRICTED. WE WOULD, OF COURSE, ADVISE THEM TO AVOID GOING TO MEI FOO SUN CHUEN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BUT SURELY, THIS BEING A FREE SOCIETY, ONE CANNOT FORCE OTHERS TO DO THINGS AGAINST THEIR OWN WILL.+

DESPITE THE ASSURANCES, THE MEI FOO SUN CHUEN REPRESENTATIVES INSISTED THAT THE LEPROSY PATIENTS SHOULD BE ISOLATED BECAUSE THEY POSED A PSYCHOLOGICAL, IF NOT HEALTH, THREAT TO THE 50,000 RESIDENTS IN THE ESTATE.

THEY SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THEY HAD NO REASON TO DOUBT MEDICAL OPINION ON LEPROSY AS A DISEASE, THEY SHOULD NOT BE MADE TO SUFFER FROM THE +MENTAL AGONY+ FOR THE SAKE OF 47 LEPROSY PATIENTS.

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/3

SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 1975.

- 3 -

HELP KEEP COUNTRYSIDE GREEN, URGES FIRE SERVICES

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A FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN TODAY REMINDED MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, PARTICULARLY THOSE TRAVELLING TO THE COUNTRYSIDE, OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT FIRES.

+THOUSANDS OF TREES ARE DESTROYED AND LARGE TRACTS OF COUNTRYSIDE SPOILT BY FIRE EVERY YEAR BECAUSE OF CARELESSNESS,+ HE SAID.

+FIRE PREVENTION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE IS THE SAME AS ANYWHERE ELSE -- ALL IT REQUIRES IS A LITTLE CARE AND THOUGHT.+

HE BLAMED CARELESS SMOKERS FOR MANY OF THE FIRES AND URGED THEM TO MAKE SURE CIGARETTE ENDS AND MATCHES ARE PROPERLY EXTINGUISHED BEFORE DISPOSING OF THEM.

+GROUPS OF PEOPLE HOLDING BARBECUES ARE ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF FIRES,+ HE ADDED. +THEY EITHER LIGHT THE FIRES IN THE WRONG PLACES, FAIL TO GUARD THEM WHILE THEY ARE BURNING OR NEGLECT TO PUT THEM OUT BEFORE LEAVING.+

HE URGED THOSE INTENDING TO HOLD BARBECUES TO USE ONLY THOSE AREAS SET ASIDE FOR THE PURPOSE BY THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT.

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39 NEW BUILDING PLANS APPROVED

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A TOTAL OF 39 NEW BUILDING PLANS WERE APPROVED BY THE BUILDING AUTHORITY LAST MONTH COMPARED WITH 56 IN MARCH LAST YEAR.

THE PLANS INCLUDED 14 FOR COMBINED APARTMENT/COMMERCIAL BUILDING RANGING FROM FOUR TO TWENTY-FOUR STOREYS IN HEIGHT. FOUR OF THESE NEW BUILDING COMPLEXES, INCLUDING A 20-STOREY BUILDING, ARE AT TAI PO.

OTHERS INCLUDED TWO SCHOOL BUILDINGS IN SAU MAU PING, THREE FACTORY BUILDINGS IN KOWLOON AND A 17-STOREY GODOWN BUILDING IN TSUEN WAN.

FIFTEEN OF THE THIRTY-NINE PLANS WERE FOR BUILDINGS ON HONG KONG ISLAND, NINE WERE FOR KOWLOON AND THE REMAINING FIFTEEN WERE FOR THE NEW TERRITORIES.

DURING THE MONTH, APPROVAL WAS ALSO GIVEN FOR 46 NEW BUILDING PROJECTS TO BEGIN WORK.

THEY INCLUDED THE AIR CARGO TERMINAL BUILDING AT KAI TAI AIRPORT, THE LIBRARY AND CAR PARK OF THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC. AND TWO SCHOOLS IN STUBBS ROAD AND GUILDFORD ROAD/WATFORD ROAD IN THE UPPER-LEVELS.

AT THE SAME TIME, APPROVAL WAS GIVEN FOR THE DEMOLITION OF 17 BUILDINGS - NINE IN HONG KONG, SIX IN KOWLOON AND TWO IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

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SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 1975

- 4 -

COOKED-FOOD BAZAAR AND REST GARDEN
FOR WONG CHUK HANG RESIDENTS
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WORKERS FROM WONG CHUK HANG AND NEIGHBOURING AREAS WILL HAVE MORE FACILITIES FOR CHEAP HOT MEALS NEXT OCTOBER WHEN THE FIRST COOKED-FOOD BAZAAR IN THE DISTRICT IS COMPLETED.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE COOKED-FOOD BAZAAR, TOGETHER WITH A REST GARDEN, WILL BEGIN IN JUNE. THE TWO PROJECTS WILL COVER A TOTAL AREA OF 29,500 SQUARE FEET.

THE BAZAAR WILL OCCUPY AN AREA OF ABOUT 3,500 SQUARE FEET SOUTH OF YIP FAT STREET NEAR THE ABERDEEN SPORTS GROUND. IT WILL ACCOMODATE 12 COOKED-FOOD STALLS UNDER COVER.

EACH STALL WILL HAVE INDIVIDUAL ELECTRICITY AND WATER SUPPLIES. HOWEVER, STALL OWNERS WILL HAVE TO SET UP THEIR OWN STALLS. THE BOUNDARY OF THE BAZAAR AREA WILL BE MARKED OFF BY CHAIN-LINK FENCE.

A REST GARDEN WILL ALSO BE CONSTRUCTED TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH A CONVENIENT SITTING-OUT AREA AND TO SEPARATE THE COOKED-FOOD STALLS FROM THE ADJACENT BUILDINGS.

THE GARDEN MEASURING SOME 26,000 SQUARE FEET, WILL BE DECORATED WITH PLANTS AND FLOWERS AND PROVIDED WITH BENCHES.

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