

**HONG KONG
GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
SERVICES**

**DAILY
INFORMATION
BULLETIN**

Wednesday, August 2, 1972

THE GOVERNOR OPENS CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL

The Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, speaking from the depths of Victoria Harbour this evening officially opened Hong Kong's cross-harbour tunnel.

The ceremony took place at a point mid-way along the tunnel.

In a short address, the Governor said that the construction of the tunnel "shows what can be done in Hong Kong to solve problems when we all really set our minds to it".

He went on: "There are many other problems in Hong Kong just as urgent, just as large, just as exciting, just as apparently insoluble, as this once seemed.

"We should surely take heart from this achievement to believe that if this can be done, so too can many other things", he said.

Sir Murray added: "International and local business and finance, the Government, engineers, technicians and workers of many skills, and the right economic and political climate -- all have worked together and so the insoluble has been solved, and in a remarkably short space of time."

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The Governor mentioned three men who "in their different ways contributed so much to the project". They are Mr. D.A. Hislop, the Project Manager, Trans Harbour Constructors Ltd.; Mr. G.M.J. Williams, a partner of Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick and Partners; and Mr. R.J.F. Brothers, the Commercial Manager of Wheelock Marden and Executive Officer of the Cross-Harbour Tunnel Company.

Sir Murray also paid tribute to the Public Works Department who he said had "laboured mightily to get their massive approach complexes ready in time".

Although the tunnel was officially opened this evening, general traffic will not be allowed to use it until just before midnight tomorrow (August 3) night.

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HONG KONG'S STERLING RESERVES

The Financial Secretary, the Hon. C.P. Haddon-Cave, said today he hoped a further and conclusive round of talks between the Hong Kong and British Government would be held very soon either in Hong Kong or in London regarding the situation created by the floating of sterling.

He was speaking in the Legislative Council in reply to the Hon. P.C. Woo who had asked for a statement from the Government on Hong Kong's Sterling Guarantee Agreement with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Haddon-Cave said that during the four-day discussions here last month, the Government and two British officials from London discussed and exchanged ideas on all aspects of the situation created by the floating of sterling.

"These exchanges could naturally not be expected to lead at that stage to firm conclusions for both sides had to listen and then reflect, but we have kept in touch with London since the British officials departed," he said.

In exchanges with London, he said, the Government had emphasised most strongly that Hong Kong's position as a large holder of sterling balances as well as her traditional links with sterling deserved special consideration.

The Financial Secretary described the future of the Hong Kong dollar and the security of the exchange value of Hong Kong's external reserves as "complicated and delicate questions," but he assured the Council that the Government was very conscious of the fundamental importance of arriving at the right answers to these questions.

He said the floating of sterling and the subsequent establishment of a temporary link between the Hong Kong dollar and the U.S. dollar had created two difficulties for Hong Kong in relation to her Sterling Guarantee Agreement with the United Kingdom.

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The first difficulty is that the Agreement needs to be reinterpreted with regard to its applicability in a situation where sterling is floating rather than being aligned on a new fixed rate in relation to the U.S. dollar, he said.

The second difficulty, he said, arises from the fact that, as part of the package negotiated at the time of the realignment of major world currencies in December 1971, sterling retained its existing gold parity and thus revalued against the U.S. dollar to a rate roughly equal to £1 = US\$2.60.

"At the same time, the guarantees under the Sterling Guarantee Agreements remained in force at the rate of £1 = US\$2.40. In other words, the pound sterling could then fall all the way down from US\$2.60 to US\$2.40 without any adjustment payments having to be made and such payments would only become due if and when sterling fell below a rate of US\$2.40 =£1," he said.

Mr. Haddon-Cave said this is, in effect, what has happened with the floating of sterling and the fixing of the Hong Kong dollar with the U.S. dollar.

"Sterling has now effectively floated down from US\$2.60 to about US\$2.45, involving a loss on Hong Kong's sterling reserves in terms of both foreign currencies and Hong Kong dollars.

"But, for the reasons I have just explained, we are not entitled to any guarantee payment under our existing agreement with the United Kingdom," he said.

The existing Agreement guarantees the U.S. dollar value of about 90 per cent of Hong Kong's officially held sterling reserves at an exchange rate of £1 = US\$2.40.

That is to say, if sterling falls below this rate by more than 1 per cent for a continuous period of 30 days, the British Government will pay to the Hong Kong Government sufficient sterling to restore the U.S. dollar value of the guaranteed proportion of Hong Kong's sterling reserves.

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URGENT CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATION FOR CONTROL OF NURSERIES

The Director of Social Welfare, the Hon. G.T. Rowe, told the Legislative Council today that urgent consideration was being given to the introduction of legislation requiring all residential and day nurseries, and creches, to register with the Social Welfare Department.

They would also be required to comply with certain standards relating to accommodation, health and safety measures, and the qualifications of the staff.

Mr. Rowe, who was replying to a question by the Hon. Mrs. Joyce Symons, stressed that legislation was not a simple matter, and by itself, could achieve nothing. If it were otherwise, it "would have been introduced years ago."

He explained that it was clearly necessary also to make certain of the means for implementing any such legislation by providing in the first place, for "a competent and qualified inspectorate to undertake regular inspection of all such nurseries and creches, and to advise and assist in the maintenance of the necessary standards."

Secondly, it would be necessary to provide for the training of nursery workers on a large scale -- because it would be impossible to insist on standards for nursery workers if no such training facilities were available.

A third point was the involvement of more departments than one in such legislation, in relation to the maintenance of health and safety standards.

Accordingly, he advised the Council that full implementation of control measures might take some time, but they were being pursued "as a matter of urgency."

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URBAN COUNCIL INTERPRETATION FACILITIES READY NEXT MONTH

The Acting Colonial Secretary, the Hon. M.D.A. Clinton, said today facilities for simultaneous interpretation in the Urban Council were being installed and should be ready by the end of next month.

He was speaking in the Legislative Council while moving the second reading of the Urban Council (Amendment) Bill 1972.

He said the main purpose of the bill was to enable members of the Urban Council to address the Council in either English or Chinese.

In May last year, he said, the Government accepted a recommendation in the first report of the Chinese Language Committee that simultaneous interpretation facilities should be made available in the Legislative and Urban Council Chambers.

Speaking in support of the Bill, the Hon. James M.H. Wu said that politics and sentiments aside, there were valid and practical reasons to extend the use and recognition of Chinese in official and other business.

He said the limited use of the language in both government and business in a community overwhelmingly Chinese might be the root of widespread indifference and apathy instead of a strong sense of community and belonging.

"In our industrial society of growing sophistication, Chinese must assume an even more important position in internal communication, and the skill of its use, in both the written and spoken way, must be sufficiently developed to an acceptable level at school-leaving," he said.

Also speaking in support of the Bill, the Hon. H.M.G. Forsgate, said it was hoped that the use of Cantonese in the Urban Council would stimulate a more direct interest in the workings of the Council by the general non-English speaking public.

"It is to the credit of the Chinese Language Committee that it quickly realised the intense pressure building up behind this demand, and to the Government for the speed with which it accepted the recommendations now being put into effect," he said.

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ALLOCATION OF IMMIGRATION POWERS

The Acting Attorney General, the Hon. G.R. Sneath, said today that an elaborate system of allocating powers and responsibilities under the Immigration Ordinance may prevent the Immigration Department from being administered efficiently.

Moving the second reading of the Immigration (Amendment) Bill 1972, in the Legislative Council, Mr. Sneath said that two examples of this had come to light.

The first case concerns the power to vary conditions under which people are permitted to stay in Hong Kong.

At present over 6,000 such applications are made every month simply by people seeking to extend their stay, and to cope with this number, the Director considers that they should be handled over the counter.

However under the present ordinance, the exercise of this power is limited to the Director himself, his deputy and his assistant directors.

The amending bill will allow these "over-the-counter" applications to be handled by immigration officers.

The bill will also allow Immigration Assistants, in addition to Immigration Officers, to exercise powers related to their normal duties in immigration control.

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HOUSING REVIEW NEEDED

The Acting Colonial Secretary, the Hon. M.D.A. Clinton, said today that the present situation regarding the control of housing in Hong Kong clearly needed reviewing "to see how we can best undertake the vast tasks which still lie ahead".

He said that because there was little land available in the urban areas this mainly involved building in the New Territories, especially at Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung and in the new towns of Castle Peak and Sha Tin.

Mr. Clinton was replying in the Legislative Council to a question by the Hon. H.M.G. Forsgate who had asked if the Government would confirm that the Urban Council, when re-organised on April 1, 1973, would continue to play a substantial part in low-cost housing and resettlement.

He said that as proposals were still being worked out he could not be specific at this stage, but "personally I think that Urban Councillors should continue in one way or another to be involved fairly substantially in these matters."

Mr. Clinton pointed out that the White Paper on the future of the Urban Council, while noting its earlier view that all forms of housing should be placed under one department controlled by the Council, commented that the size, complexity and colony-wide nature of the housing problem seem to be arguments in favour of severing the Council's present connection with housing matters rather than extending it".

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DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITY RELIEF TRUST FUND DONATIONS

Of the total \$16.5 million donated to the Community Relief Trust Fund up to July 29, approximately \$7.5 million have been paid out to victims, \$2 million set aside for rehabilitation and orphans funds, and about \$7 million have still to be allocated.

The Hon. G.T. Rowe, Director of Social Welfare and Fund Trustee, told the Legislative Council today that the Fund's Management Committee hoped to meet in the second part of this month "to finalise outstanding proposals on how to use up the remaining money, and generally to bring the affairs of the Fund up to date."

He was replying to the Hon. Q.W. Lee who had asked the Government to state how the funds subscribed by the public following the recent rainstorm disasters had been, or were being, utilised.

Mr. Rowe said the Fund had been applied to assist those in need as a result of loss of members of the family, serious damage or loss of domestic accommodation, and damage to crops and livestock.

He hoped to publish a statement of accounts relating to the money received as soon as it was reasonably possible to do so. Claims were still coming in, and payments were still being made.

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PILE DRIVING NOISE "PARTICULARLY TRYING"

The Acting Director of Public Works, the Hon. A.S. Robertson said today it was felt that proposed new restrictions on piling would not interfere unduly with building operations or result in an unacceptable rise in building costs.

He was speaking in the Legislative Council while moving the second reading of the Summary Offences (Amendment) Bill 1972.

The bill seeks to prohibit piling between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. on working days and ban it completely on Sundays and public holidays. At present the only restriction is on noise between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Mr. Robertson said these proposed amendments recognised that "the noise of pile driving, which was often heard in Hong Kong, could be particularly trying".

"However, it is proposed that these new restrictions on piling should not come into effect until June 1, 1973, to minimise the possibility of contractual problems on current works."

The bill enables the Governor in Council to exempt not only specified areas or districts, but also specific activities within an area from the provisions relating to noise.

It also increases the maximum fine for offences under the provisions relating to noise from \$500 to \$5,000.

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POWERS OF ATTORNEY

The Powers of Attorney Bill 1972, which provides a uniform and recognised system for duly authorising a person to conduct the private or business affairs of his principle, was introduced into the Legislative Council today.

Moving its second reading, the Acting Attorney General, the Hon. G.R. Sneath, told the Council the Bill was based on the English Act of the same name which was passed into law last year.

It gives a statutory basis for some of the old common law rules on this subject, he said.

Under the Bill, a power of attorney must be in writing and signed and sealed by the donor, or by somebody else at his direction. But he must be present when this is done, and so must two other people who then sign as witnesses.

Mr. Sneath said the Schedule to the Bill provides a simple form for giving a general power of attorney.

One provision states that the person to whom such a general power of attorney is given then has the authority to do anything which the donor himself could do through an attorney.

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BILL TO REMOVE RESTRICTIONS UNDER PERJURY ORDINANCE

Experience has shown that sometimes the falsity of a statement in connection with the registration of a birth or death, and hence the commission of the offence, does not come to light until some years afterwards.

This was stated today by the Acting Attorney General, the Hon. G.R. Sneath, in the Legislative Council while moving the second reading of the Perjury (Amendment) Bill 1972.

The bill seeks to abolish the time limit within which a prosecution may be brought against a person giving false evidence or information in matters connected with births and deaths.

Under the existing law, proceedings cannot be instituted after three years have elapsed from the time the offence was committed.

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COMMUNITY CENTRES IN DENSELY POPULATED AREAS

The Hon. G.T. Rowe, Director of Social Welfare, said today the Government was planning to meet the need for community facilities in densely populated areas by setting up centres, halls and estate welfare buildings.

He was replying in the Legislative Council to the Hon. Wilson Wang who had also asked when the last hall had been built, and when the next one would be.

Mr. Rowe said the latest community centre in the Tai Hang Tung Resettlement Estate had been built in 1966, and the next community centre in Chai Wan was expected to be completed in 1974.

But he stressed that the intervening period between these two dates was being filled by the provision of estate welfare buildings, community halls and social service centres serving the same purpose.

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GUARDIANSHIP OF MINORS BILL

The Guardianship of Minors Bill 1972, which received its first and second readings in today's Legislative Council meeting, introduces two underlying principles relating to the guardianship and custody of, and maintenance for, minors.

Moving its second reading, the Acting Attorney General, the Hon. G.R. Sneath, told the Council that one principle was that the mother would have equal rights with the father regarding the right to be a guardian or to appoint one.

Another principle, he said, was that the court shall have regard to the welfare of the minor as the first and paramount consideration in deciding any question regarding matters of guardianship, custody and maintenance.

"To safeguard this principle, the bill provides that the courts are to exercise control in all these matters," he said.

Mr. Sneath said the existing law on this subject was to be found partly in the common law, partly in an English statute of 1660 and partly in the Infants Custody Ordinance which was to be repealed.

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NO CHANGE IN POLICY OF SUBVENTIONS TO CLINICS

Not one of the 428 clinics registered or exempt from registration under the Medical Clinics Ordinance is suffering from hardship, and not one has closed as a result of financial loss in operating costs.

Doctor the Hon. G.H. Choa, Director of Medical and Health Services, gave the Legislative Council this reason today when he explained why he did not consider it necessary that all medical clinics should in future be subvented from public funds.

But if any were experiencing financial or other difficulties, he would welcome details. Each case would then be considered, and appropriate advice and assistance given to sponsors.

He was replying to a question by the Hon. F.W. Li who had asked whether the Government would consider granting subventions to medical clinics run by approved non-profit-making social welfare agencies.

Dr. Choa said since the Medical Clinics Ordinance came into effect in 1964, examination of the accounts of 428 of them had not revealed any case of hardship.

He explained that some of these agencies were in fact receiving subventions from the Government for their activities, and also other help.

An example of the latter was the fact that clinics situated in the welfare blocks of resettlement estates were being charged a nominal rent of only \$1 a month.

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LION ROCK CABLE CAR

Plans for a suspended cable car system leading to Lion Rock advanced a step further today.

The Legislative Council adopted a resolution setting out briefly the basic conditions for a tender franchise for the system.

In moving the resolution, the Financial Secretary, the Hon. C.P. Haddon-Cave, said that the proposal was to grant by tender a franchise to operate the system together with a private treaty grant of the terminal sites.

He said that in addition to the tendered annual premium and the premium on the terminal sites, a royalty of 10 per cent was to be charged on the gross operating receipts and all advertising.

"In due course, it will be necessary to define the respective responsibilities of the operating company and the Government by legislation," he added.

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MORE HELP FOR HONG KONG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The Urban Council is considering plans to assist the further development of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and to increase the frequency of its performances.

The Acting Director of Urban Services, the Hon. A.P. Richardson, said the plans were being considered because of the popularity of the orchestra's concerts and the great improvement in its performance standard over the past two years.

He was replying to a question by the Hon. Wilson Wang at today's Legislative Council meeting.

At present, he said, the Urban Council provides the City Hall Concert Hall and all business management free of charge for concerts presented by the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society in conjunction with the Council.

The orchestra receives the entire box office receipts and a nominal sum of \$1,000 for each concert to help meet any deficits. The orchestra now presents concerts every six or seven weeks, and each performance must be repeated three times to satisfy the demand, Mr. Richardson said.

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BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE TO BE EXPANDED

The Buildings Ordinance Office of the Public Works Department is short of staff but steps are being taken to create more posts and to have the existing vacancies filled.

The Acting Director of Public Works, the Hon. A.S. Robertson, said today that he had already made proposals for substantial increases in staff primarily to deal with the inspection of works in progress.

These proposals, he said, are expected to be submitted to the Establishment Sub-Committee this month and recruitment will be pursued energetically if they are approved.

Mr. Robertson, who was replying to a question by the Hon. Wilfred Wong, said he would also make further proposals in the very near future in respect of certain other aspects of the Buildings Ordinance Office work.

At present, he said, there are six vacancies for building surveyors and another six for structural engineers within the professional establishment of the office, but a number of these vacancies are expected to be filled in the near future.

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LATE BIRTH REGISTRATIONS ADMISSIBLE IN EVIDENCE

Late entries of registration of birth will be admissible in evidence without further proof under an amending bill introduced into the Legislative Council this (Wednesday) afternoon.

Moving the second reading of the Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Bill 1972, the Acting Attorney General, the Hon. G.R. Sneath, said that under the existing law, a registration of birth may be entered in a post-register book -- that is, after 12 months from birth with the consent of the Registrar General.

He said since the beginning of this year, a system had been operating which ensured, as far as was humanly possible, that these late entries were in fact correct.

This system, he added, involved consultation and checking with both the Director of Immigration and the Commissioner for Registration.

"In the light of this new system, it is considered that entries in the post-register book of births should, as with entries in the ordinary register, be admissible in evidence with further proof," he said.

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DETAILS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SOON

Details of further educational facilities for handicapped children are expected to be announced before the start of the new academic year in September.

The Acting Director of Education, the Hon. C.J.G. Lowe, told the Legislative Council today that the draft of the second five-year plan for the further development of special education in Hong Kong should be submitted to the Finance Committee very soon.

He said he hoped details could be released soon after this.

Mr. Lowe was replying to a question from the Hon. H.J.C. Browne, who had asked what plans the Government had for providing more facilities for special education for handicapped children.

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REST GARDEN FOR WESTERN

Residents of the densely populated area of Western district on Hong Kong Island will have another sitting-out area for their leisure time.

Three-thousand square feet of land on the western side of Sung Hing Lane has been earmarked for this purpose. The site was originally an old four-storey building which has been demolished to provide more recreational space.

The sitting-out area will be paved with concrete, and consist of four raised flower beds surrounded by low concrete benches.

Work is expected to begin in early September and will take about two months to complete.

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THREE BUILDINGS DECLARED DANGEROUS

Three buildings -- two on Hong Kong Island and one in Kowloon -- have been declared dangerous by the Building Authority. A fourth building in Kowloon is liable to become dangerous.

The two buildings on the Island are Nos. 2 and 4 Tai Ping Shan Street in Central District.

The Principal Government Building Surveyor said today that these four-storey pre-war buildings, which share a staircase were inspected recently following complaints from occupants of one of the buildings.

Inspectors found that the rear main wall of both buildings was badly fractured and sections of the brickwork were badly eroded. There were serious fractures in the party wall between the two buildings and much of the structural timberwork was extensively decayed.

Shoring has been erected by the government contractor to the front balconies to avoid any sudden collapse.

The Kowloon building declared dangerous is at 118 Apliu Street, Sham Shui Po, and the adjoining building No. 116 is liable to become dangerous.

The Principal Government Building Surveyor said that the whole of the reinforced concrete of the three-storey pre-war building at 118 Apliu Street was in an advanced state of deterioration with extensive splintering of beams and floor slabs revealing badly corroded steel reinforcement.

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He said the condition of the building would make repair work impracticable and further deterioration could result in a collapse.

The demolition of No. 118 could also result in the danger of a collapse of No. 116 as the party wall and walls of the kitchen block show signs of defects as does the front verandah.

Notices of intention to apply for closure orders for the Kowloon building on August 30 and the Hong Kong buildings on September 8 were posted today.

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BILLS PASSED

Two bills passed their committee stage and third readings in Legislative Council this afternoon and became law.

They were the Crimes (Amendment) Bill 1972 and the Public Health and Urban Services (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill 1972.

The Urban Council (Amendment) Bill 1972; the Guardianship of Minors Bill 1972; the Immigration (Amendment) Bill 1972; the Powers of Attorney Bill 1972; the Perjury (Amendment) Bill 1972 and the Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Bill 1972 had their first and second readings.

The Summary Offences (Amendment) Bill 1972 had its first reading, and debate on its second reading was adjourned.

Debate on the second reading of the Crown Land Bill 1972 was resumed.

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NINE SWIMMING POOL PROJECTS IN PROGRAMME

The Acting Director of Urban Services, the Hon. A.P. Richardson, said today that nine swimming pool projects were now included in the Public Works Programme.

He said that although they were likely to be financed from various sources, the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club was already financing three, the Government attached the greatest importance to these projects.

Replying to a question in the Legislative Council, by the Hon. H.M.G. Forsgate, Mr. Richardson added that the Government would certainly provide necessary support in appropriate cases, if the Finance Committee agreed.

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MEDICAL AND HEALTH STATISTICS

Statistics released today by the Medical and Health Department for the week ending on July 15 are as follows:-

* Notifications of infectious cases (previous week's figures in brackets) -- total 194 (150); amoebiasis -- 1 (1); bacillary dysentery -- 9 (4); cerebrospinal meningitis and meningococcal infections -- 1 (nil); chickenpox -- nil (1); tuberculosis -- 163 (131); diphtheria -- nil (nil); enteric fever (typhoid) -- 14 (10); enteric fever (paratyphoid) -- nil (nil); leprosy -- one (2); measles -- 1 (1); ophthalmia neonatorum -- 3 (nil); poliomyelitis -- nil (nil); and scarlet fever -- nil (nil).

* Births -- total registered 1,364; 369 on Hong Kong Island, 829 in Kowloon, and 166 in the New Territories.

* Deaths -- 442 from all causes; 111 on the Island, 317 in Kowloon and 14 in the New Territories.

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Release time: 8.30 p.m.



HONG KONG GOVERNMENT

INFORMATION SERVICES

DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN SUPPLEMENT

Wednesday, August 2, 1972

GOVERNOR OPENS CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL

The following is the full text of the speech of the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, at the opening of the cross-harbour tunnel today (August 2, 1972):

"I am most honoured to perform the act of declaring this tunnel open, on this day that all Hong Kong has so eagerly awaited.

"I do so with some sense of inadequacy because but for the unexpected speed of the work Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra would have performed it with so much more grace and infinitely more charm. I am sure that we are all delighted that she will nevertheless be associated with the tunnel by unveiling a plaque during her visit later this year.

"We are here to celebrate the conclusion of a very great project and the opening of a very great facility; for once a truly historic occasion - the linking of the Island of Victoria to the peninsula of Kowloon. All Hong Kong would like to congratulate those who have contributed to this very happy event.

"The list is long and I will not go over the ground already covered by Mr. Marden, though the great firms he mentioned are very much in all our minds. But I am sure nobody would grudge it if I mentioned the names of three men who have in their different ways contributed so much to this project - Mr. Hislop, Mr. Williams and Mr. Brothers.

/s/ "Might

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"Might I also pay a tribute to the Public Works Department who have laboured mightily to get their massive approach complexes ready in time.

"Mr. Marden has said that this tunnel demonstrates confidence in the future of Hong Kong. I heartily agree. But I should like to add a rather different point. The construction of this tunnel shows what can be done in Hong Kong to solve problems when we all really set our minds to it. International and local business and finance, the Government, engineers, technicians, and workers of many skills, and the right economic and political climate - all have combined to work together and so the insoluble has been solved, and in a remarkably short space of time.

"There are many other problems in Hong Kong just as urgent, just as large, just as exciting, just as apparently insoluble, as this once seemed.

"We should surely take heart from this achievement to believe that if this can be done, so too can many other things.

"It is with this thought, that I have the greatest pleasure in declaring this tunnel open."

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Release time: 7.00 p.m.