



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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UN Human Rights Committee Report received

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The Hong Kong Government has received the report issued yesterday (Friday) by the United Nations Human Rights Committee after its hearing on the economic, social and cultural rights situation in Hong Kong in Geneva between November 23 and 25.

A Government spokesman said today that the Government would study the report in detail as it was an important document through which the Committee made available to us their experience in the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights.

The spokesman said the Government was particularly glad to note the recognition that Hong Kong had prospered economically to a degree that placed considerable material resources at the disposal of the Government to enhance the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in the territory.

"We will make sure that the elements which help realise Hong Kong's economic success, in particular, the rule of law, will continue to operate to the benefit of the community, resulting in further promotion of economic, social and cultural rights," he said.

The spokesman said the Government was also pleased to note that members of the UN Committee were impressed by its efforts to make available to the Hong Kong community the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the report prepared under the Covenant. "We will continue our efforts in this area," he said.

He said the Government took the whole reporting and hearing process under the Covenant very seriously.

"Our officials answered each and every question frankly and fully and we are pleased that our open attitude and serious efforts in this regard are publicly acknowledged by the Committee," the spokesman noted.

The spokesman said: "There is no reluctance on Government's part in maximising the protection of economic, social and cultural rights in Hong Kong, and a lot has been done in the past few years.

"The introduction of the Bill of Rights Ordinance, the adoption of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and the proposed extension of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women are concrete examples."

He said the Hong Kong Government had a good record on human rights protection, but added that there was no room for complacency.

"The Committee's report offers advice and makes recommendations on a number of matters which would be carefully examined by relevant branches and departments," he noted.

Concerning the Committee's remarks on people living in bedspace apartments, the spokesman said the Government was tackling the problem vigorously.

"The Government is committed to ensuring that lodgers will get assistance through various channels including compassionate re-housing; placements in welfare institutions or hostel accommodation. Many, however, have chosen to stay in their old accommodation for personal reasons." He added that Government had introduced legislation to license all bedspace apartments to regulate their building and fire safety and sanitation standards.

"Upon full implementation of the licensing scheme in 1996, bedspace apartment lodgers will live in apartments which meet the safety standards and are less crowded," he said.

Noting that the number of bedspace apartments and lodgers had fallen over the past years, the spokesman said this was indicative of a general improvement in the overall situation.

On the Committee's concern about foreign domestic helpers, the spokesman pointed out that the "two-week rule" was a necessary measure to prevent job-hopping to protect employers and the labour market generally.

"The Director of Immigration applies the rule flexibly when dealing with foreign domestic helpers who appear to have legitimate grounds for change of employment after early termination of their contracts, in particular when their employers do not seem to have fulfilled their contracts, or if the foreign domestic helper has a complaint which may be considered by the Labour Tribunal.

"The rule is not a discriminatory measure against foreign domestic helpers as it is applied on all contract workers, including those who came into Hong Kong under the Importation of Labour Scheme," he said.

As regards reporting obligation under the ICESCR after 1997, the spokesman said the United Kingdom Government had told the Committee clearly its firm view that China had an obligation under the Joint Declaration to ensure that the provisions of the Covenant, as applied to Hong Kong, remained in force after 1997. The obligation included the requirement to report to the UN, he said.

He said the UK Government had also told the Committee that it would continue to work for a satisfactory resolution of the issue with China.

On the Hai Ho-tak case, the spokesman said the Government had every sympathy for the plight of this little boy and his parents. "But to allow him to stay in Hong Kong would be unfair to the hundreds of thousands who are waiting patiently in the queue for the one-way exit permits to leave China, and would also encourage the smuggling of children in Hong Kong in order to qualify for residence."

He noted that Ho-tak's case must be seen in the context of Hong Kong's geographical location, its small size in holding a population of six million people.

"This is not an isolated case. It was estimated that there are 300,000 children in China with a parent in Hong Kong. Our immigration policy seeks to re-unite families in an orderly manner rather than to 'split' families. The fact speaks for itself. There are over 38,000 persons, majority of whom are spouses and children entering Hong Kong from China to join their families every year," the spokesman said.

He stressed that immigrants from China must come in legally and orderly. "Lenient treatment of illegal immigrants will only serve to encourage more to come," he said.

The spokesman said the Government had always welcomed and considered views expressed by non-government organisations (NGOs) on the state of implementation of UN treaties.

Starting with the next reports under the two International Covenants, he said NGOs would be given a formal opportunity to express their views on the implementation of human rights treaties before relevant reports were submitted to the UN for the UN.

"However, it is important to point out a view which was shared by the UN Committee that the reporting obligation was that of the Government, not the NGOs.

"To discharge such obligation, the Government must draft the contribution for incorporation in UK's report," the spokesman said.

Concerning anti-discrimination legislation and a Human Rights Commission, the spokesman said the Government supported the principle of equality for all, but it was important to note that anti-discrimination legislation was a relatively new area of law, with which Hong Kong had little experience.

He said: "We will introduce a series of measures which are specific, effective and durable concentrating on areas such as sex discrimination and disability where there is clear need and public demand for action."

End/Saturday, December 10, 1994

Government committed to nurturing youths

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The Government is committed to giving the best learning opportunities and the best support possible to help young people become mature, responsible and contributing members of society, the Financial Secretary, Sir Hamish Macleod, said today (Saturday).

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Felix Wong Children and Youth Centre in Tseung Kwan O, Sir Hamish said in order to achieve that aim, a healthy environment for young people to grow up was also important.

"Economic prosperity alone does not necessarily create such an environment. Sometimes, it even brings more pressures: materialism, or the breakdown of the family, for example."

"And our young people may not be able to withstand these pressures. It is vital that they be given help as early as possible," he said.

Sir Hamish noted that people said the bedrock of Hong Kong's economic success was the huge investment the government made in human capital.

"This is both true and false."

"It is true in the sense that our success depends on the dynamism and hard work of our people," he said.

And that to sustain this success, Sir Hamish said, Hong Kong must equip its young people with the knowledge and skills to adapt to developments in technology and changes in the market place.

"But it is false if we take the word 'investment' to mean that we only put money into education or social services for our young people in order to produce wealth-generating machines."

Sir Hamish also praised the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups for its efforts in offering the help young people needed.

"Since the Federation's establishment in 1960, the agency has provided a wide range of children and youth services to foster the healthy and balanced growth of our younger generation and to help those who are at risk," he said.

End/Saturday, December 10, 1994

Employer fined for not paying injured employee

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The Labour Department today (Saturday) reminded employers to make periodical payment to employees who sustained injury at work within seven days after the due date for payment.

The Coming Sea Food Hot Pot Restaurant Limited on Tsing Yi was recently fined \$10,000 at Tsuen Wan Magistracy for failing to make periodical payment for five wage periods to an employee who sustained injury at work.

Five summonses were served on the employer.

"Under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, periodical payment must be paid to the injured employee as soon as practicable but in any case not later than seven days after the due day for payment," Assistant Labour Officer Miss Wong Mo-sze explained.

With effect from August this year, any employer who fails to comply with the statutory obligation is liable to a maximum fine of \$25,000.

End/Saturday, December 10, 1994

RCB briefing for District Boards on pornographic publications planned

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The Recreation and Culture Branch (RCB) today (Saturday) received a petition from a delegation of District Board Members who requested discussion of the subject of control of indecent articles at District Board meetings.

The Administration appreciates and shares the concern of the community over the recent proliferation of indecent articles, especially indecent comic books, and is taking position action in tackling the situation, a spokesman for the branch said.

In the past few months, the Administration has devoted a lot of resources into stepping up enforcement actions, publicity and educational efforts, as well as reviewing the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (COIAO) with a view to further tightening legislative controls.

As District Boards are elected representative bodies close to the general community, the Administration certainly welcomes views and inputs from them on how the problem should be tackled.

The spokesman said it was exactly with this in mind that the Secretary for Recreation and Culture had arranged a briefing and discussion on December 28 with members of all District Boards to exchange opinions and ideas on the control of obscene and indecent articles and the proposed legislative amendments to the COIAO.

"Since this is a territory-wide issue, we consider it better and more useful to bring our District Boards together for a cross fertilisation of views and suggestions," the spokesman said.

If District Boards wish to discuss the matter further after the briefing on December 28, the Administration will be happy to receive additional views and comments from them.

Both the Legislative Council and the Executive Council have shown concern on the matter and have impressed upon the Administration to take speedy action in bringing about more stringent legislative controls.

The Administration is working to a tight timetable with a view to bringing proposals involving legislative amendments back to the Legislative Council early next year.

The branch will shortly issue a paper on the subject to District Boards to facilitate discussion at the briefing on December 28.

"We sincerely hope every District Board member with an interest in the subject will turn up at this briefing," the spokesman said.

End/Saturday, December 10, 1994

Social Welfare Director celebrates Christmas with his wards

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Guess who has the largest number of children in Hong Kong?

Not too many people realise that the answer is the Director of Social Welfare, Mr Ian Strachan. He has more than 600.

These children are called Wards of the Director of Social Welfare (DSW Wards) and are all under 21. They have been put under his guardianship by Court orders because their natural parents, owing to various reasons, are unable to exercise their parental right either temporarily or on long-term basis.

The total number of DSW Wards was 644 at the end of October this year.

"I have become their legal guardian since I took over the helm of the department in December 1992. I am pleased to see that through our carers and social workers, our children have been able to be placed in a harmonious home environment to help their growth," Mr Strachan said.

He added that while some of his wards were being looked after by their own relatives, a lot of these underprivileged children were placed in home-like settings such as foster homes or small group homes. Others were being taken care of by hostels, residential creches or nurseries operated by the Social Welfare Department or non-governmental organisations.

"The welfare of each ward is our paramount concern when we arrange temporary placement and formulate their long-term welfare plans," Mr Strachan said.

The Social Welfare Department will normally arrange local or overseas adoption for DSW Wards who are abandoned or relinquished by their parents.

Usually the general adoption procedures for normal children would be quite smooth, but Mr Strachan said the department had experienced some difficulties in finding suitable homes for the physically or mentally handicapped children.

"This also applies to my older wards as most adoptive parents prefer to take young children or even new-born babies," he said.

He appealed to members of the public to consider providing loving homes for his wards.

Mr Strachan and his wife today (Saturday) hosted a Christmas party for 150 wards and their carers at the Holiday Inn Golden Mile as part of the activities to celebrate the International Year of the Family 1994.

"I want my wards to know that they are being loved and cared for in this big family. We want them to enjoy Christmas like many other children do. Through this party, we hope that we are able to arouse public concern on the well-being of these children," Mr Strachan said.

He further thanked the First Pacific Davies (HK) Ltd, the CYS Associates and Mr Tony Chu for their generous donation towards the Christmas party.

End/Saturday, December 10, 1994

November much warmer than usual

With no significant surges of the winter monsoon, November was much warmer than usual, a monthly weather report published by the Royal Observatory said today (Saturday).

The mean minimum temperature of 21.1 degrees and the mean temperature of 22.9 degrees were the highest and the second highest values respectively for November since records began in 1884.

The lack of cold surges was also related to the monthly mean pressure of 1,019.5 hPa, the ninth lowest on record.

The month was also relatively humid with a mean dew point temperature of 17.8 degrees, the fourth highest for November.

Despite the humidity, the weather was generally fine and rain was scarce. The monthly rainfall of 0.2 millimetres was the sixth lowest for November. The total rainfall since January 1 amounted to 2,603 millimetres, 19 per cent above the normal of 2,187 millimetres for the same period.

The fine spell of late October extended to the first half of the month. The lowest temperature in the month of 19.9 degrees was recorded on the early mornings of both November 1 and 2.

On the first 10 days of the month, the weather was fine with long periods of sunshine during the day and clear skies at night.

The amount of cloud increased from November 11 to 13 but the weather stayed generally fine and dry. A hill fire occurred near Tsz Wan Shan on November 12. About one million square metres of grassland was affected. Another hill fire was reported in Sai Kung on November 14.

A continental airstream along the Taiwan Strait arrived over the coastal areas of Guangdong on November 13. Easterly winds strengthened offshore on the early morning of November 14 and strong winds lasted until the next day.

Despite the windy conditions, the month's highest temperature of 27.1 degrees was reached on the sunny afternoon of November 15.

Winds moderated on November 16 and the weather continued fine and warm until November 19. A weak replenishment of the northeast monsoon reached the territory early on November 20. On its arrival, the weather turned cloudy with light rain. Clouds started to disperse the next day as the monsoon moderated.

In the following week, it remained generally fine apart from occasional light rain in the early morning. A moist easterly airflow brought cloudy weather to the territory in the last two days of the month.

There was only one tropical cyclone over the western North Pacific and the South China Sea in November.

Details of the issuance/hoisting and cancellation/lowering of various warnings/signals in the month are summarised in Table 1.1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal of November are tabulated in Table 1.2.

Table 1.1 Warnings and signals in November 1994

Warnings/Signals	Effective date and time
Strong Monsoon Warnings	Nov 7 /9.30 pm - Nov 8/ 9.45 am Nov 14 /7.45 am - Nov 14 /4.15 pm Nov 15 /6.40 am - Nov 15 /9.35 am Nov 15 /9.30 pm - Nov 16 /6.45 am
Fire Danger Warnings	
Red	Nov 4/6 am - Nov 5 /6 am
Yellow	Nov 5/6 am - Nov 5 /11 pm
Red	Nov 8/6.30 am - Nov 8 /4.10 pm
Yellow	Nov 13/6 am - Nov 13/7.45 pm
Yellow	Nov 20/6 am - Nov 20/10.30 pm

Table 1.2 Figures and Departures from Normal - November 1994

Total Bright Sunshine	224.8 hours; 43.3 hours above normal
Mean Daily Global Solar Radiation	14.01 MJ/sq m; 0.62 MJ/sq m above normal
Total Rainfall	0.2 mm; 34.9 mm below normal
Mean Cloud Amount	41%; 12% below normal
Mean Relative Humidity	74%, 5% above normal
Mean Daily Maximum Temperature	25.3 degrees Celsius; 1.1 degrees Celsius above normal
Mean Air Temperature	22.9 degrees Celsius; 1.5 degrees Celsius above normal
Mean Daily Minimum Temperature	21.1 degrees Celsius ; 1.9 degrees Celsius above normal

Mean Dew Point	17.8 degrees Celsius; 2.6 degrees Celsius above normal
Total Evaporation	96.3 mm; 32.8 mm below normal

Remarks: All measurements were made at the Royal Observatory except sunshine, solar radiation and evaporation which were recorded at King's Park.

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Fresh water cuts in Western District and Sham Shui Po

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Fresh water supply to some premises in the Western district will be temporarily suspended from 11 pm on Monday (December 12) to 6 am the following day to facilitate water mains leakage detection.

The affected premises are located at 2-54 and 60 Pok Fu Lam Road, 5-131 and 2-116 First Street, 1-121B and 2-118 Second Street, 1-127B and 2-106 Third Street, 2B-126 and 3-119 High Street, 5-45 and 24-36 Western Street, 27-51 and 46-50 Centre Street, 23A-43 and 36-42 Eastern Street, 18-27 Hing Hon Road, Sai Wa Lane, Yu Po Lane East, Yu Po Lane West, Ng Fuk Lane, Fuk Sau Lane, Sheung Fung Lane, Tak Sing Lane, David Lane, Un Fuk Lane, Ui On Lane, Kwok Hing Lane, Yu Lok Lane, Cheung On Lane, Leung I Fong, Un Shing Lane, West End Terrace and the Western Dental Clinic.

Meanwhile, fresh water supply to some premises in Sham Shui Po will also be cut off from 11 pm on Wednesday (December 14) to 6 am the next day for water mains leakage detection.

The water cut will affect all the premises bounded by Kweilin Street, Fuk Wing Street, Nam Cheong Street and Cheung Sha Wan Road.

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	<u>\$ Million</u>	<u>Time (Hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative Change (\$ Million)</u>
Opening Balance in the account	1,183	0930	+50
Closing Balance in the account	1,173	1000	+50
Change attributable to:		1100	+50
Money market activity	+50	1130	+50
LAF today	-60	1500	

LAF Rate 3.75% Bid/ 5.75% Offer TWI 121.8 *-0.2* 10.12.94.

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