DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Thursday, April 26, 1973

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Issued by Government Information Services, Beaconsfield House, Hong Kong. Tel: 5-233191

Thursday, April 26, 1973

TASK OF NEW HOUSING BODY IS TO BUILD FOR FUTURE

Governor Pledges Support For Housing Drive

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The primary task of the new Housing Authority is "to build, and to build well and to build fast and to build for the future," the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, said today.

He was speaking at the Authority's inaugural meeting today.

He said the inadequacy and scarcity of housing and the harsh situations that result from it was "one of the major and most constant sources of unhappiness and friction between the Government and the population."

This, he said,implied no criticism of the magnificent work already achieved in this field.

He said that it was merely a "frank and dispassionate acknowledgement that the housing problem created by the influx of population still confronts us, is very great, and must be solved."

The Governor noted that members of the Authority were particularly qualified to take up the various challenges.

"I believe money will not be your principal problem," he said, "but rather how to convert it into well-planned and well-managed estates quickly enough."

Referring to the new arrangements for the construction and management of public housing in Hong Kong, Sir Murray said it would be some time before a vast new programme such as this began to show results.

/He said .....

He said that obviously nothing could be done about the current year and probably very little next year. On the other hand, results would be considerable in three years and dramatic in four or five, he said.

The Governor continued: "But I do ask you to look anew at the figures for the financial year '74/75 and see if your joint expertise, ingenuity and enthusiasm cannot do something to improve them.

"I am sure that you are as conscious as I am of the urgency of the need and are as impatient for results."

Sir Murray pledged that the new Authority could count on his "strong interest and support."

The new Housing Authority, which came into being on April 1, has been set up to spearhead the drive for more and better housing in Hong Kong.

Its main task will be to ensure that the ten-year public housing target to house 1,500,000 people is met by 1983.

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Note to Editors: The full text of the Governor's speech is contained in a supplement to today's Daily Information Bulletin.

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ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK URGED TO EXPAND SPECIAL OPERATIONS

To Meet Needs Of Growing Asia

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Hong Kong today called on the Asian Development Bank to expand its special operations to meet "the urgent and growing needs of developing Asia."

The appeal was made at the sixth annual meeting of the Bank's Board of Governors in Manila by Hong Kong's Temporary Alternate Governor, Mr. John C.C. Chan, who was speaking on behalf of the Financial Secretary, Mr. Philip Haddon-Cave.

Mr. Haddon-Cave is a member of the Board of Governors.

Addressing the meeting, Mr. Chan noted with concern that the uncommitted balance from the Bank's special Fund resources had dwindled to little more than US$20 million by the end of 1972.

He welcomed the proposals put forward by the Bank's Board of Directors to restructure and augment the Bank's Special Fund resources through the establishment of an Asian Development Fund.

"In this connection," he said, "I do not wish the Bank to overlook the possibility of receiving nominal contributions from the developing regional members themselves."

On the management of Special Funds, Mr. Chan said careful note had been taken of the criteria adopted in July last year by the Board of Directors for the Bank's policy guidance in extending loans on concessional terms from Special Fund resources.

/"I am .....

"I am in general agreement with these criteria," he said.

He also accepted that "there are varying degrees of need among the region's developing countries" -- that some must take priority over others for borrowing on concessional terms.

However, he hoped that the concept of country priorities "will not be allowed to colour the Bank's policy in respect of its ordinary leading operations."

Essentially, he went on, the Bank's ordinary and Special Fund operations were separate. Non-eligibility for Special Fund loans should not necessarily mean non-eligibility to borrow on commercial terms at normal rates of interest.

Judgment

Mr. Chan expressed the hope that in considering applications for loans from ordinary capital resources, the Bank would not base its judgment wholly on the existence or otherwise of a "resource gap". Instead, he hoped that the Bank would take into account "such normal commercial banking considerations as the applicant's credit worthiness and the worthiness of the project."

It need hardly be pointed out, he added, that "an ability to invest excess liquidity in the short term, and from time to time, does not necessarily mean that there is no need for medium or long-term borrowing."

Commenting on the Bank's policy of aiming at the early achievement of equality in the shares of ordinary and Special Fund loans in its total lending operations, Mr. Chan said the desire to accelerate the economic and social development of the region was "highly laudable."

/"But we .....

"But we must not lose sight of the fact that the institution to which we all belong, the Asian Development Bank, was established primarily as a bank whose operations must stem mainly from its ordinary capital resources," he stressed.

While the Bank was a most suitable multilateral institution through which the flow of economic assistance from the developed world to developing Asia could be efficiently channelled, "this must remain a subsidiary role if the Bank's fundamental nature and character are not to be substantially changed," he added.

"By definition, special operations will necessarily cease to be 'special' if their scope becomes as large as, or even greater than, that of 'ordinary' operations."

Mr. Chan commended the management on its decision last year to adopt a new liquidity policy which aimed at maintaining liquid assets at not less than two-thirds of projected loan disbursements over the next three years.

"This was a sensible move which was more realistically geared to the Bank's liquidity requirements," he remarked.

While he regarded the original policy of maintaining 100 per cent commitment cover not wrong in any way, continued adherence in the circumstances, he said, would have been "unnecessarily cautious."

It would also have resulted in tying up an excessive amount of liquid resources which could otherwise be used to generate higher income from longer-term investments in remunerative projects, he added.

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Note to Editors: Copies of the full text of the speech are distributed separately in the G.I.S. press boxes.

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ABOLITION OF STAMP DUTY ON RECEIPTS

Refunds For Unused 15 Cents Receipt Stamps

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Claims for refunds in respect of unused 15 cents receipt stamps should be made not later than July 31, 1973, the Post Office announced today.

Claims may be made for cash refunds in respect of unmarked stamps of face value not exceeding $300 at any of the following Post Offices:-

G.P.O. Victoria	Kowloon Central
Aberdeen	Cheung Sha Wan
Hennessy Road	Kowloon City
Kennedy Town	Kwun Tong
King's Road	Mong Kok
Sheung Wan	Sham Shui Po
	Shek Wu Hui
	Tai Po
	Tsim Sha Tsui
	Tsuen Wan
	Yuen Long

Refunds exceeding $300 may only be obtained on application to the Accounts Division, Post Office Headquarters, G.P.O., Pedder Street, Hong Kong.

Claims should similarly be addressed to be Accounts Division, Post Office Headquarters in all cases where stamps have been chopped or overprinted by the holder for the purposes of security or identification.

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CROWN LAND SALES

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Three lots of Crown land at Canton Road, Kowloon, will be put up for sale by auction on May 11 (Friday).

The lots are for non-industrial purposes.

They are situated at Nos. 570, 810 and 938 Canton Road respectively. The lots range from 726 to 759 sq. ft. in area.

The auction will take place at 2.30 p.m. on May 11 in the Lecture Room, 8th floor, City Hall.

Full particulars and conditions of sale may be obtained from the Public Enquiry Sub-office, Central Government Offices, West Wing, ground floor, Hong Kong; and the Crown Lands and Survey Office, Kowloon Government Offices, No. 405, Nathan Road, 10th floor.

Sale plans can be inspected at these offices.

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LAP SAP BLACK SPOT TO BE TURNED INTO OPEN SPACE

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A lap sap "black spot" in Kwun Tong will be turned into an open space shortly.

The site occupies an area of about 57,000 square feet at the junction of Kwun Tong Road and Hip Wo Street.

It will be developed on two different levels, following the nature of the terrain. A series of circular shaped platforms will be linked by concrete paved footpaths.

There will be flower beds, trees and benches.

Work is expected to begin in the middle of June and will take four months to complete.

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SENIOR ASSISTANT MASTER RETIRES

After 27 Years Service

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Mr. Shum How-kin, Senior Assistant Master of the Mathematics Section, is retiring after 27 years service in the Education Department.

Since his first appointment in 1946, Mr. Shum has taught in two primary schools and the Grantham College of Education.

In 1962 he took up his present post in the Mathematics Section of the Advisory Inspectorate. For the past eight years, Mr. Shum has also been head of the Kowloon Section of the Evening Institute.

Mr. Shum will receive a retirement gift from his colleagues tomorrow (Friday). The gift will be presented to him by the Assistant Director of Education (Chief Inspector of Schools), Mr. A. Brown.

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Note to Editors: You are invited to have the presentation ceremony in the Education Department's Conference Room at 4 p.m. tomorrow covered.

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HEALTH REPORT FOR MARCH

One Death From Measles Reported

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Fifty-four cases of measles, resulting in one death, were reported during March, according to monthly health statistics released today by the Medical and Health Department.

In the preceding month, there were 56 notifications of measles, also resulting in one death.

"Although the rate of incidence of the disease is considered relatively low -- there were 168 notifications in February and March last year -- the two fatal cases in February and March this year illustrate the need for early immunisation," a spokesman said.

He was referring to the current annual anti-measles campaign which was designed to remind parents of susceptible children between six months and five years to have them immunised. The campaign is now in its fourth week.

The spokesman appealed for their co-operation to prevent the outbreak of a measles epidemic in Hong Kong. The last epidemic was in the years 1966 and 1967 when 1,045 children died.

Notifications of chickenpox showed a slight decline in March, with 46 cases reported as against 99 at the same time last year.

There was no record during the month of cerebrospinal meningitis or diphtheria. One case of poliomyelitis was notified.

Tuberculosis accounted for 949 cases and 109 deaths. There was no significant change in the monthly averages of all other notifiable diseases.

During March, Hong Kong remained free from cholera, smallpox and other quarantinable diseases.

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QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS

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Quarantine restrictions have been imposed against arrivals from Saigon (excluding port and airport) on account of cholera, it was announced today.

Meanwhile, quarantine restrictions imposed against arrivals from Banda-Atjeh (port), Indonesia, because of cholera and arrivals from Saigon (excluding port and airport), on account of plague, have been removed.

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INDUSTRY URGED TO IMPLEMENT SAFETY MEASURES

In A Bid To Reduce Industrial Accidents

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Prevention of accidents is of vital importance to an industrial community such as Hong Kong, Mr. Szeto Wai, Legislative Councillor, said today.

He was speaking at the presentation ceremony marking the conclusion of the first special training course for Industrial Safety Officers.

The six-week full-time course was organised by the Industrial Safety Training Centre of the Labour Department. The course covered, in general, all aspects of accident prevention.

Mr. Szeto told the meeting that industrial accidents were detrimental to both workers and managements.

Accidents often resulted in painful suffering on the part of the injured workmen and their family members. Managements, on the other hand, suffered from great financial losses.

"It is therefore obvious that efforts must be made to reduce this appalling waste of our human and financial resources," he said.

In a bid to reduce the number of industrial accidents, he said, the Factory Inspectors of the Labour Department made regular inspections of all work places to ensure compliance with the legal requirements.

"But their hard work was far from enough to serve as a complete answer to a problem of such magnitude."

"Industry itself must take initiative to implement safety measures within individual factories."

/He said that .....

He said that an accident prevention programme would not be successful unless managements were prepared to take the lead.

He stressed that managements had a legal and moral responsibility to provide a safe workplace for their employees.

As a first step, he said, managements should issue a policy statement specifying that accident prevention was meant for the well being of all concerned.

"Safety Committees comprising representatives of workers and managements would serve a useful platform for the exchange of ideas," he added.

He said that another important facet of accident prevention was the appointment of Industrial Safety Officers on the factory premises.

Their role was to help reduce industrial hazards. They were to inspect the workplaces regularly; to identify and remove unsafe machinery and unhealthy working conditions and to make suggestions to managements as to the measures required to prevent accidents from occurring.

He said that an Industrial Safety Officer was a prominent figure in the field of industrial safety.

"It is indeed a sad reflection on the local industrialist that only four out of 20,000 industrial undertakings considered it desirable to appoint Safety Officers on a full-time basis," he said.

He further pointed out that accident prevention required managements' determined effort.

"Do not let any set-back affect your determination". he said, "Officers of the Industrial Safety Training Centre are always available to help you with your technical problems."

In conclusion, Mr. Szeto praised those managements and government departments which had taken advantage of the training course for Safety Officers. He also congratulated those who had successfully completed the course and presented each of them a diploma.

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HONG KONG MUST PRODUCE MORE SOPHISTICATED GOODS

Economy Is Basically Sound Despite Fluctuations

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The Chairman of the Hong Kong Association in London, Mr. Michael Herries, has emphasized the necessity for Hong Kong to raise its production of more sophisticated goods which are not yet being produced by its trading rivals.

Speaking at the Association's annual general meeting in London yesterday (Wednesday), Mr. Herries noted that the abundant talents of Hong Kong industrialists were already directed towards this objective.

He cited the introduction of a quality mark and the attention being given to packaging as moves in the right direction and expressed the hope that they would be backed by the investment required to achieve their aims.

If Hong Kong were to remain prosperous and earn enough money to pay for the enormous public works and social programmes being undertaken, he said, it was to be hoped that the level of its trade increase would not decline further.

Mr. Herries noted that Hong Kong's total trade had continued to expand but the growth rate had slowed down from the heady 21.9 per cent in 1969 over 1968 to only 10 per cent in 1972 over 1971, although the trend was upward in the second half of the year.

"This is still a good increase," he said. "But in real terms, it was only HK$3,700 million against HK$4,500 million the year before and, when the increased cost of both imports and exports is taken into account, the volume of trade cannot have increased by much."

/The prospects .....

The prospects for Hong Kong deriving any great benefit from the operation of the UNCTAD General Preference Scheme, said Mr. Herries, were not too bright.

The Japanese attitude to it was not very encouraging and there were increasing import restrictions and competition from other Far Eastern countries with lower wages (and before long China would join these in the cheaper manufactured goods market), he pointed out.

Although the growth rate of Hong Kong's manufacturing industry had slowed in recent years, said Mr. Herries, 1972 saw an influx of foreign banking and financing houses all attracted by the stability of Hong Kong's central position and its potential as a leading money market in the Far East.

Commercial Diversification

This new industry provided employment for white collar workers and was a form of commercial diversification which should benefit Hong Kong in the years ahead.

"The performance of the Hong Kong stock market last year and early this year," Mr. Herries continued, "has probably not inspired confidence in overseas investors and I am sure the Government was right to issue warnings to deter speculators and to bring in legislation designed to protect genuine investors.

"Despite these fluctuations, however, the economy itself is basically very sound and Hong Kong took the floating of sterling and another devaluation of the U.S. dollar in its stride."

/Mr. Herries .....

Mr. Herries said that it had been suggested by the Hong Kong branch of the Association that with Britain in the Common Market "we should spread our wings to the Continent".

While it was unlikely that the Association would form branches there, Mr. Herries together with the Secretary, Mr. Ted Bush, planned to visit several countries in Europe shortly to see what liaison, if any, was necessary and could be arranged.

Mr. Herries paid tribute to Mr. Geffrey Hamm and Sir John Keswick who were retiring from the committee of the Hong Kong Association, and to Sir Sik-nin Chau who recently retired as chairman of the Asscciation's Hong Kong branch. He proposed that they should all be made honorary life members of the Hong Kong Association.

Adoption of the Chairman's report was proposed by Mr. Ernest Grimwood, European regional representative of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, who will shortly be taking up a new post as the Trade Development Council representative in New York.

"It says much for the resilience and drive of Hong Kong," said Mr. Grimwood, "that it has achieved so much, despite the artificial restrictions imposed against its access to world markets, and built and developed the standard of living for all.

"But Hong Kong can, and does, take advantage of ill winds. It has traded up and achieved a high quality status that might otherwise have taken much longer to reach. I believe very firmly that but for the interest and activity shown by the Hong Kong Association access to the U.K. market would have been even more onerous."

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Release time: 7.30 p.m.

PR 33 4000035

HKGIS 香港政府新聞處

DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

SUPPLEMENT

Thursday, April 26, 1973

INAUGURAL MEETING OF NEW HOUSING AUTHORITY

Speech By The Governor

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The following is the full text of a speech by the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, at the inaugural meeting of the new Housing Authority:

"I cannot tell you how pleased I am to meet you at this inaugural meeting: a meeting of the first single unified body charged with solving the housing problem of Hong Kong. My first reaction is 'At last'. My second reaction is one of gratitude for your public spirit in agreeing to serve on this Authority. I am very conscious of the amount of work that will be involved for you. The problem is enormous, the difficulties immense, the social and political needs manifest and urgent.

"In foreshadowing the setting up of this Authority I said that the inadequacy and scarcity of housing and all that this implies, and the harsh situations that result from it is one of the major and most constant sources of unhappiness and friction between the Government and the population. I said that it offends alike our humanity, our civic pride and our political good sense. I meant every word of it, and this, as you all know, implies no criticism of the magnificent work already achieved in this field, work which has rightly received international acclaim. It is merely a frank and dispassionate acknowledgement that the housing problem created by the influx of population still confronts us, is very great, and must be solved.

/Indeed .....

Indeed I think one can mention, with some plausibility, that the conditions of housing and the conditions of the infra-structure of everything that should go with housing like shops and playgrounds, schools and police stations, community centres and so on, that the inadequacy of these things - for good historical reasons which we all know about - is at the root of most evil in Hong Kong.

"Well, there the problem is. It presents a great challenge. It is a challenge alike to the planners, the architects, the builders and the sociologists and administrators. Also to the financiers. I believe you to be particularly qualified, on behalf of Hong Kong, to take up these various challenges. On the official side you have a highly competent and expert department under Ian Lightbody with Donald Liao and John Walden. On the unofficial side you have a wealth of different expertise and experience which I believe to be complementary; on the official side you also have the heads of the departments principally concerned. You all have drive and devotion.

"The funds for the programme are available. I believe money will not be your principal problem, but rather how to convert it into well-planned and well-managed estates quickly enough.

"One or two points of advice. You will immediately be confronted with a whole host of long and short term problems. I do ask you never to lose sight of the fact that the short-term problems however urgent and however tragic are all only facets of the overall lack of proper housing. All will be solved when you have made good that lack. In short,

/I believe .....

I believe you shoud never lose sight of the fact that your primary task is to build, and to build well and to build fast, and to build for the future.

"Secondly, you may have guessed that I would not have set up totally new arrangements for the construction and management of public housing in Hong Kong if I had felt that all was well with current programmes. Inevitably it will be some time before a vast new programme such as this begins to show results. Obviously nothing can be done about the current year and probably very little next year. On the other hand, results will be considerable in three years and dramatic in four or five. But I do ask you to look anew at the figures for the financial year '74/75 and see if your joint expertise, ingenuity and enthusiasm cannot do something to improve them. It may be impossible, but I am sure that you are as conscious as I am of the urgency of the need and are as impatient for results.

"Thirdly, I realise the urgency of many of the short term problems that also confront you. Recently both Mrs. Elliott and Mr. Lightbody have drawn attention to the need for re-site areas and of the new squatter problem created by that new refugee, the regugee from the rents.

"I think that what I have already said indicates that you may count on my strong interest and support. I myself and indeed all Hong Kong are conscious of the need for a new surge in the field of public housing, and all that should go with it. I am sure that this new Authority and the new department at its disposal are well able to achieve this and I wish you all success."

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Release Time: 7.30 p.m.