



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1977

CONTENTS

PAGE NO.

HONG KONG'S MAY RAINFALL -- NO CAUSE FOR SONG AND DANCE	1
PRINCESS MARGARET ROAD FLYOVER RESURFACING	4
MID-LEVELS ROAD RE-OPENED	5
HONG KONG REGIMENT FOUNDATION DAY DINNER	5
WATER CUT IN REPULSE BAY AREA	6

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1977

- 1 -

HONG KONG'S MAY RAINFALL -- NO CAUSE FOR SONG AND DANCE
* * * * *

WHEN THOSE VIOLENT THUNDERSTORMS HIT YOUR DISTRICT AND YOU CAN'T SEE A FOOT BEYOND YOUR WINDOW FOR THE TORRENTIAL RAIN AND THE SHEET LIGHTNING IS CRACKLING LIKE TIN FOIL, DON'T GO DANCING IN THE STREETS AND ASSUMING HONG KONG'S WATER SHORTAGE IS OVER.

CHANCES ARE THAT THE STREETS ARE BONE DRY A COUPLE OF MILES AWAY AND THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT'S WATER ENGINEERS ARE PRAYING FOR RAIN AT THE TERRITORY'S MAIN RESERVOIRS.

THAT'S BEEN THE RATHER CRUEL IRONY OF HONG KONG'S RAIN PATTERN OVER THE PAST FOUR OR FIVE WEEKS.

THUNDERSTORMS HAVE DUMPED UP TO 70 MM (2-3/4 INCHES) OF RAIN IN ONE HIT -- STRIKING HONG KONG ISLAND AND URBAN KOWLOON YET COMPLETELY MISSING THE WATER SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT'S VITAL TARGET, THE PLOVER COVE RESERVOIR. AND EVEN ON THE ISLAND ITSELF, RAINSTORMS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO CONTRARILY SOAK ABERDEEN AND WONG NEI CHONG AND ONLY SPATTER POK FU LAM.

BEHIND ALL THE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING THE FACT REMAINS THAT HONG KONG RECEIVED ONLY 211.9 MM (8 INCHES) OF RAIN UP TO MAY 24, COMPARED WITH A MONTHLY AVERAGE OF 279 MM (11 INCHES).

THIS TENDS TO BEAR OUT THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY'S PREDICTION THAT HONG KONG'S RAINFALL THIS YEAR COULD BE AS MUCH AS 10 PER CENT BELOW AVERAGE. AND THAT'S WHY, IN THE MIDST OF APPARENT STORM RELIEF, WATER RESTRICTIONS HAVE HAD TO BE IMPOSED. MOST OF THE RAIN WE'VE HAD SO FAR HAS SIMPLY NOT BEEN FALLING IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

A GOOD CASE IN POINT IS THE HEAVY STORM THAT STRUCK HONG KONG ISLAND ON THE MORNING OF MAY 24. THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY'S RAIN GAUGES RECORDED A HEALTHY 72.6 MM (2.8 INCHES), BUT IN THE CATCHMENT OF HONG KONG'S BIGGEST OPERATIONAL RESERVOIR, PLOVER COVE, THE YIELD WAS ABOUT AS EFFECTIVE AS A DROP IN A BUCKET.

AS THE P.W.D.'S PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT WATER ENGINEER, MR. TOM TOMLINSON, BLUNTLY PUT IT: +IN TERMS OF BENEFIT TO THE CATCHMENT THE YIELD WAS EXTREMELY DISAPPOINTING. THE RAIN GAUGE AT PLOVER COVE RECORDED ONLY 4 MM, WHILE IT WAS RAINING CATS AND DOGS IN THE URBAN AREAS.

+THE TOTAL CONTRIBUTION ON MAY 24 TO THE DEPLETED RESERVES IN ALL CATCHMENT AREAS WAS ONLY 278 MILLION GALLONS -- NOT MUCH MORE THAN AN AVERAGE DAY'S CONSUMPTION.+

THE FOLLOWING RAINS DID NO BETTER. ON MAY 26, THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY RECORDED A MINISCULE 0.5 MM, WHILE 60 MM (2.3 INCHES) WAS RECORDED AT TAI TAM, AND EVEN THEN THE SAME FICKLE DISTRIBUTION WAS APPARENT -- ONLY 23 MM (0.9 INCH) IN THE POK FU LAM AREA AND 12 MM (0.4 INCH) AT ABERDEEN. AND AGAIN, THE CRITICAL PLOVER COVER AREA RECEIVED VIRTUALLY NOTHING AT ALL.

/OVER

OVER THE ENTIRE MONTH OF MAY RAINFALL OVER THREE-QUARTERS OF THE MAJOR CATCHMENT AREAS WAS ONLY HALF THAT RECORDED AT THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY. AMID ISOLATED THUNDERSTORMS AND TORRENTIAL RAIN, LIKE THE MAY 24 DELUGE, THE FACT REMAINED THAT THE RESERVOIRS STILL HELD ONLY ABOUT 46.4 PER CENT OF THEIR TOTAL CAPACITY, COMPARED WITH 63.1 PER CENT AT THE SAME TIME LAST YEAR.

ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTOR OF WATER SUPPLIES, MR. W.D.A. TUCKER, HONG KONG DID GAIN SOMETHING FROM THE MAY RAINS. CATCHMENTS COLLECTED SOME 681 MILLION GALLONS IN ADDED WATER, AND, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT A REDUCTION OF OVERALL CONSUMPTION DURING THE LATTER PART OF THE MONTH, THE TERRITORY WAS ACTUALLY ABOUT 900 MILLION GALLONS BETTER OFF.

+BUT WELCOME AS THIS WAS, IT FELL FAR SHORT OF THE REQUIRED TARGET OF 3,000 MILLION GALLONS,+ MR. TUCKER SAID. +WE SIMPLY DID NOT GET ANYWHERE NEAR AS MUCH AS WE NEEDED TO STAVE OFF RESTRICTIONS.+

ON TOP OF THAT, THERE WAS THE QUESTION OF SOIL MOISTURE DEFICIT. WITH THE TERRITORY HAVING JUST BEEN THROUGH ITS WORST DROUGHT FOR ABOUT 90 YEARS, HONG KONG'S SURFACE WAS LITERALLY BONE DRY. AND LIKE A HUGE RUMPLED SHEET OF BLOTTING PAPER IT NEEDED TO SOAK UP A VAST AMOUNT OF WATER BEFORE A FULL SATURATION LEVEL WOULD ALLOW NATURAL SEEPAGE INTO THE CATCHMENTS. THIS PROCESS ROBBED US OF SOMETHING LIKE 75 MM OF THE INITIAL RAINS.

THROUGHOUT ITS 136-YEAR HISTORY, HONG KONG HAS FACED WATER SUPPLY PROBLEMS RANGING FROM HAVING JUST ENOUGH TO MAKE ENDS MEET TO STRICT EMERGENCIES WHICH, AS IN 1902 FOR EXAMPLE, INVOLVED A SEVERE DROUGHT IN WHICH THE SUPPLY WAS CUT TO ONE HOUR A DAY AND WATER WAS BROUGHT IN FROM MAINLAND CHINA BY BOAT. AGAIN, IN 1929 WATER WAS IMPORTED FROM THE WEST RIVER NEAR MACAU AND FROM SHANGHAI.

AS FAR BACK AS 1938 THERE WAS LEGISLATION TO RESTRICT AND STRICTLY CONTROL THE SUPPLY OF WATER= AND DURING THE 1963 DROUGHT AND THE 1967 CRISIS, CONSUMERS WERE EVENTUALLY RESTRICTED TO A FOUR-HOUR SUPPLY ON EVERY FOURTH DAY.

BUT THE HISTORY OF THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN AN ADEQUATE FRESHWATER SERVICE GOES BACK AS FAR AS 1860, SOME 20 YEARS AFTER THE TERRITORY'S BIRTH AS A BRITISH COLONY. HONG KONG THEN, AS THINGS STAND TODAY, HAD A HEALTHY THOUGH ERRATIC AVERAGE RAINFALL -- THE ACTUAL ANNUAL YIELD DEPENDING ON THE VAGARIES OF THE SUMMER MONSOONS -- BUT NO SIZEABLE LAKE OR RIVER.

UNDER SIR HERCULES ROBINSON, GOVERNOR FROM 1859 TO 1865, THE GOVERNMENT ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVIDING A PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY AND A RESERVOIR WAS BUILT AT POK FU LAM TO PIPE FRESH WATER TO CENTRAL DISTRICT. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF A POPULATION INCREASE, DEMAND FOR WATER OUTSTRIPPED THE SUPPLY BEFORE THE PROJECT WAS EVEN COMPLETED, SO ANOTHER RESERVOIR WAS CONSTRUCTED AT TAI TAM -- AND THAT SAME SYNDROME, CONTINUING POPULATION PRESSURE AND A SCARCITY OF ADEQUATE CATCHMENT AREAS, HAS DOGGED EFFORTS TO BEAT THE WATER PROBLEM EVER SINCE.

NO LESS THAN 18 MAJOR RESERVOIRS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY, AND AS EACH HAS GONE +ON STREAM+ THE BURGEONING POPULATION HAS PUSHED THE DEMAND FOR WATER ONE STEP AHEAD OF CAPACITY. FOR EXAMPLE, IN 1968 THE TERRITORY'S SUPPLY DEPENDED ON 16 LAND-BASED RESERVOIRS HOLDING A TOTAL OF 17,000 MILLION GALLONS OF WATER. THEN +PEOPLE PRESSURE+ PUSHED THE DEMAND FOR WATER UP TO SOMETHING LIKE 80,300 MILLION GALLONS A YEAR.

THE WATER SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT SUBSEQUENTLY BUILT THE PLOVER COVE SCHEME, THE WORLD'S FIRST SEABED RESERVOIR, WHICH, BY 1973, HAD GATHERED A FRESHWATER STORAGE CAPACITY OF 51,000 MILLION GALLONS.

AFTER THAT CAME THE WORLD'S BIGGEST DESALINATION PLANT, THE LOK ON PAI FLASH EVAPORATOR, CAPABLE OF PRODUCING 40 MILLION GALLONS OF FRESH WATER A DAY. AND SINCE THEN, WORK ON A SECOND MAMMOTH SEABED RESERVOIR AT HIGH ISLAND HAS PROMISED ANOTHER VITAL 60,000 MILLION GALLONS OF FRESH WATER -- BUT HIGH ISLAND IS JUST ABOUT TO BEGIN IMPOUNDING, OR STORING WATER, AND WITH THIS YEAR'S RAINFALL THE WAY IT IS

WATER SUPPLIES FROM CHINA'S KWANGTUNG AUTHORITIES, INITIATED IN 1964 AND INCOMING AT RATES INCREASING TO THEIR CURRENT LEVEL OF 24,000 MILLION GALLONS A YEAR, HAVE CERTAINLY HELPED THE SITUATION.

THE LATEST SUPPLY PERIOD RUNS OUT THIS COMING JULY, BUT WATER SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE AGREEMENT WILL CONTINUE, AND THAT SUPPLY WILL BE RESUMED AS USUAL ON OCTOBER 1.

AT A PRESS CONFERENCE THIS MONTH, WATER SUPPLIES DIRECTOR MR. TUCKER INDICATED THAT ASIDE FROM EXISTING RESERVOIR STORAGE, HONG KONG'S FUTURE EXPANSION OF ITS WATER SUPPLY HINGED ON DESALINATION, WITH PROPOSED NEW DESALTERS UNDER STUDY. IN FACT, LAND HAS ALREADY BEEN SET ASIDE AT TUEN MUN NEW TOWN AS A POSSIBLE FUTURE DESALINATION SITE.

MR. TUCKER SAID HIGH ISLAND WAS DEFINITELY HONG KONG'S LAST MAJOR CONVENTIONAL RESERVOIR -- THERE SIMPLY ISN'T A SUITABLE CATCHMENT AREA LEFT FOR ANOTHER PROJECT OF ITS SIZE. THERE WERE SOME MINOR UNDEVELOPED CATCHMENT AREAS STILL AVAILABLE, AND THESE MIGHT BE EXPLOITED, IF ECONOMICALLY VIABLE, BY 1982. AFTER THAT, THE TERRITORY'S WATER STORAGE CAPACITY WILL BE AT THE MERCY OF THE MONSOON RAINS.

AND WHILE HONG KONG'S WATER CONSUMPTION THIS YEAR STANDS AT AN AVERAGE OF ABOUT 265 MILLION GALLONS A DAY, OR 96,725 MILLION GALLONS A YEAR, WATER SUPPLIES EXPERTS PREDICT THAT IT WILL INCREASE BY ABOUT SIX PER CENT PER ANNUM IN THE FUTURE. THAT REPRESENTS AN ADDED INITIAL 15 MILLION GALLONS PER DAY EACH YEAR FROM NOW ON.

BUT THEN, HONG KONG'S WATER SUPPLY ENGINEERS, LIKE THOSE IN MOST OTHER COUNTRIES, WOULD BE INDULGING IN PIPEDREAMS IF THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD SOLVE THE TERRITORY'S WATER PROBLEMS ENTIRELY. THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION JUST CANNOT BE ENVISAGED. BUT THAT'S NOT TO SAY THE TERRITORY IS EVER LIKELY TO RUN DRY.

WATER RESOURCES AND THEIR RELATION TO SUPPLY ARE BASED ON COMPUTED SCENARIOS COVERING SOMETHING LIKE A 500-YEAR SEQUENCE, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT EXISTING AND FUTURE STORAGE CAPACITIES, PAST RAINFALL PATTERNS AND ESTIMATED FUTURE DEMAND. IT'S NOT SO MUCH A CASE OF SAYING +AT THIS RATE WE WON'T HAVE A WATER PROBLEM BY+ BUT FAR MORE REALISTIC TO ESTIMATE THE +LOWEST RISK+ -- THE BEST THAT CAN BE DONE TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE WATER IS ON TAP FOR THE LONGEST PERIOD POSSIBLE DURING PROLONGED DRY SPELLS WITH THE AID OF EMERGENCY PRECAUTIONS.

AND HONG KONG'S NOT THE ONLY AREA FACING CURRENT AND FUTURE WATER PROBLEMS. THERE HAVE BEEN SERIOUS DROUGHTS THIS SPRING FROM SOUTH CHINA TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. IN ASIA ALONE, TAIWAN IS ON RESTRICTED WATER SUPPLY AND SEVERE DROUGHTS ARE AFFECTING VIETNAM, MALAYSIA, INDONESIA, INDIA AND SRI LANKA. AND ON TOP OF THAT, THE UNITED NATIONS HAS JUST THIS YEAR BEGUN TO WARN THE WORLD THAT WATER, OR THE LACK OF IT, WILL HAVE REPLACED ENERGY AT THE TOP OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS TABLE BY THE YEAR 2000.

AT A RECENT WATER SUPPLIES CONFERENCE IN BUENOS AIRES, THE FIRST OF ITS TYPE EVER HELD, DELEGATES WERE TOLD THAT ALREADY TODAY, 1,200 MILLION PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD LACK PROPER DRINKING WATER, AND 25,000 PEOPLE DIE EVERY DAY OF WATER-RELATED ILLNESSES.

ARGENTINA'S UNDER-SECRETARY FOR WATER RESOURCES, LUIS JUAREGUY, SUMMED UP THE GROWING CONCERN WHEN HE SAID: +THE NOTION THAT DRINKING WATER IS A NATURAL AND INEXHAUSTIBLE RESOURCE IS ON THE WAY OUT.+

SO, IF THE CURRENT HONG KONG DROUGHT IS NOT ENOUGH TO AROUSE PUBLIC CONCERN FOR WATER CONSERVATION AND CONSUMER CONSTRAINT, NEXT TIME YOU POUR A DRINK OF WATER AND USE HALF A GALLON OF THE PRECIOUS LIQUID TO WASH THE GLASS OUT, CONSIDER THE YEAR 2000.

- - - - 0 - - - -

PRINCESS MARGARET ROAD FLYOVER RESURFACING

* * * * *

WORK HAS BEGUN ON RESURFACING PART OF PRINCESS MARGARET ROAD FLYOVER TO IMPROVE THE SKID RESISTANCE OF THE ROAD SURFACE.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT SAID TODAY THE WORKS WERE EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN ABOUT A WEEK'S TIME.

BASICALLY, HE SAID, THE WORKS WOULD INVOLVE REMOVING THE TOP LAYER OF THE EXISTING ROAD SURFACE THEN SAND BLASTING IT TO REMOVE GREASE AND OIL BEFORE APPLYING A SPECIAL ANTI-SKID MATERIAL IMPORTED FROM CHINA.

+ALTHOUGH THIS SHOULD GREATLY IMPROVE THE SKID RESISTANCE OF THE ROAD SURFACE, MOTORISTS ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO DRIVE WITH CARE WHEN USING THE FLYOVER.

+SPEEDING IS ALWAYS DANGEROUS, AND NO AMOUNT OF ROAD ENGINEERING WILL TOTALLY ELIMINATE THE RISK OF ACCIDENTS IF MOTORISTS THEMSELVES DO NOT KEEP WITHIN SAFETY LIMITS,+ HE SAID.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT AS AN ADDED MEASURE LARGE SIGNS ADVISING MOTORISTS TO SLOW DOWN HAD BEEN PLACED ON EACH OF THE APPROACHES TO THE BEND ON THE FLYOVER.

- - - - 0 - - - -

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1977

- 5 -

MID-LEVELS ROAD RE-OPENED
* * * * *

AS THE SECTION OF CASTLE ROAD BETWEEN CONDUIT ROAD AND ROBINSON ROAD HAS NOW BEEN RE-OPENED TO TRAFFIC, THE DOWNWARD JOURNEY BY MAXICAB ROUTE NUMBER 3 FROM PO SHAN ROAD TO CENTRAL AFTER 4.45 P.M. WILL NO LONGER BE DIVERTED WEST VIA KOTEWALL ROAD.

FROM MONDAY (MAY 30) THIS PARTICULAR SERVICE WILL OPERATE VIA CONDUIT ROAD, CASTLE ROAD AND ROBINSON ROAD TO ALBANY ROAD.

- - - - 0 - - - -

HONG KONG REGIMENT FOUNDATION DAY DINNER
* * * *

TO MARK THE 123RD ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDATION, THE ROYAL HONG KONG REGIMENT (THE VOLUNTEERS) WILL HOLD A DINNER AT THE OFFICERS' MESS, BEACONSFIELD HOUSE ON MONDAY (MAY 30).

THE GOVERNOR, SIR MURRAY MACLEHOSE WILL BE THE GUEST OF HONOUR.

THE COMMANDER BRITISH FORCES, LT. GEN. SIR JOHN ARCHER, WILL ALSO ATTEND.

.....

NOTE TO EDITORS:

THE GOVERNOR IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE AT BEACONSFIELD HOUSE AT 8.15 P.M. ON MONDAY. PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS ARE WELCOME TO COVER HIS ARRIVAL.

- - - - 0 - - - -

/6

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1977

- 6 -

WATER CUT
* * *

WATER SUPPLY TO A NUMBER OF FLATS IN THE REPULSE BAY AREA WILL BE TURNED OFF FOR EIGHT HOURS FROM 10 P.M. ON MONDAY (MAY 30) TO ENABLE THE WATER SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT TO CONNECT A WATER MAIN IN THE AREA.

PREMISES TO BE AFFECTED WILL BE NOS. 1-45 AND NOS. 2-28 REPULSE BAY ROAD.

- - - - 0 - - - -