



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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GARDEN ROAD, 5th-8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,
HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

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Memorable opening of Lantau Link

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Hong Kong's towering new landmark, the Lantau Link, was officially opened this (Sunday) evening by the former British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon the Baroness Thatcher, who described the Link as "one of the world's most spectacular engineering feats".

About 1,000 guests and 400 media representatives witnessed the evening ceremony which was held on the bridge site. The highlights of the ceremony included the lighting up of the entire 3.5-kilometre Link and a spectacular fireworks and laser display.

In her speech, Baroness Thatcher said the Lantau Link and the other projects in the programme for building the new airport at Chek Lap Kok together represented a powerful expression of confidence in the future.

"Achievement and progress are in the soul of this land and her people. This bridge is an enormous tribute to your vigour and determination. It displays the unceasing imagination of modern Hong Kong," she said, standing before the huge 2.2 kilometre Tsing Ma suspension bridge.

"So let us say to those who venture to question whether Hong Kong will succeed and prosper in the years ahead, 'Come see this bridge, one of the foremost monuments of our time and put your confidence in the people who built it.' "

The Lantau Link would be the artery connecting urban Hong Kong to the new airport and would provide an impressive and inspiring entrance to Hong Kong, she said.

"The qualities of the people of a city are so often revealed by the things they choose to build around them. There could be no better symbol of the boldness, the vision, and the energy of the people of Hong Kong than the Tsing Ma Bridge."

She said the Tsing Ma Bridge, a structure of style and beauty and the world's longest road-rail suspension bridge, had a wider significance: "Standing here, at Hong Kong's gateway to the world, it is a visible sign of what Hong Kong represents, a rare and fruitful combination of diverse talents and cultures.

"The concept for this project came from Hong Kong. But in typical Hong Kong fashion it has been a truly international venture. You have drawn on the best engineering and construction skills the world has to offer. The main deck of the bridge was built in Britain and Japan -- but assembled just across the border in China. Now there's an example of co-operation in the interests of Hong Kong!"

"So let me pay tribute to all those involved in this project -- from the earliest days on the drawing board through to its completion today. Architects, consultants, contractors, financiers, civil servants. You have done a marvellous job."

She also expressed admiration of the completion of the project on time and within budget, observing that, "from my own experience in government, I know that things do not invariably turn out like that -- except in Hong Kong."

Baroness Thatcher said: "With the opening of the bridge today, Hong Kong is establishing new ties with the other great bridge cities of the world, from San Francisco to Sydney. As with those cities, I have no doubt that it is only a matter of time before this bridge imprints itself firmly in people's minds as the image of Hong Kong."

Welcoming Baroness Thatcher, the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, said: "Your commitment to Hong Kong and to the values that the people of Hong Kong hold dear is known and honoured, and we are happy that you can be with us for this celebration."

Mr Patten said the Lantau Link, a plan on paper when he arrived five years ago, stood as a declaration of what Hong Kong was capable of achieving.

He said: "I would like to pay tribute to the men and women who had the vision for this project; to the careful work of the planners who have set its place in the growing structure of the city; to the art and inspiration of the designers and engineers who have given such grace and beauty to these triumphs over mass and space; to the tireless work of all those thousands whose hands and labour have created this marvel.

"As with so much in Hong Kong, many people of many lands have joined the people of this city in this work, so it is a pleasure to welcome everyone who has come from near and far to join us at this time. The Lantau Link will help to keep Hong Kong in touch with the world and will stand as a testament to the benefits that come from seeing through great and complex works together."

The Lantau Link, a strategic part of the road and rail connection between Hong Kong Island and the new airport at Chek Lap Kok, is formed by two spectacular bridges: the Tsing Ma suspension bridge and the Kap Shui Mun cable-stayed bridge.

Both the 1,377 metre main span Tsing Ma Bridge and the 430 metre main span Kap Shui Mun Bridge carry a six-lane highway on their top deck and twin rail tracks plus two road lanes on their sheltered lower deck, making them the largest bridges of their kind in the world.

The opening ceremony also featured a parade by community groups from Hong Kong's 18 districts, a fly-past, a car procession and a flotilla.

The various elements of the opening ceremony symbolised the land, sea and air components -- highways, tunnels, reclamations, bridges and the airport -- of the \$156.4 billion Airport Core Programme.

The ceremony began at 6 pm on the Tsing Yi side of the Lantau Link, with performances by bands from the Royal Hong Kong Police and the Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Police. The parade by the district community groups, with about 1,100 people taking part, then got underway.

Each community group gave a short performance before the assembled guests, the performances ranging from lion, dragon and folk dancing to choir singing, school band music and acrobatic cycling.

During the parade, helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft of the Government Flying Service and helicopters of the Royal Air Force staged a fly-past, flying in three formations, and approaching the Lantau Link from two different directions--west and south.

The flotilla of about 75 boats was positioned in a restricted area just south of the Tsing Ma Bridge. The vessels taking part represented a broad cross section of the marine community -- from ferries, jetfoils, catamarans, tugs, barges, fishing boats and launches to various types of boats from Government departments. Horns and sirens were sounded and fireboats and tugs sprayed fountains of water into the air. Two Royal Navy patrol vessels were stationed nearby as part of the flotilla.

After giving their speeches, Baroness Thatcher and Mr Patten were joined by the Chief Secretary, the Hon Mrs Anson Chan, in pulling a lever to light up the entire Lantau Link -- providing a spectacular line of lighting stretching from Tsing Yi Island to the northeast tip of Lantau Island. At the same time, laser beams added to the effect of the lighting display.

After the lighting up, Baroness Thatcher and Mr Patten boarded the Governor's car, broke through a ribbon stretched across the open upper deck of the Tsing Ma Bridge and drove across the full length of the Lantau Link.

They were followed by a convoy of more than 30 vehicles carrying members of the officiating party and guests including mayoral representatives of several overseas cities that have landmark bridges and contractors representatives. Decorated vehicles provided by international and local groups and donors to the Community Chest joined in the procession.

At about 8 pm, Baroness Thatcher, accompanied by Mr Patten and Mrs Chan, activated the 20-minute fireworks display, which included a "waterfall" cascading from the deck of the Tsing Ma Bridge, and fireworks discharged from three barges moored to the north of the Tsing Ma Bridge.

The fireworks display, which was televised live, cost about \$5 million and was sponsored by the Sun Hung Kai Properties Group to mark its 25th anniversary.

Guests attending the ceremony included members of the Executive, Legislative, Urban and Regional Councils, District Boards, the Airport Consultative Committee, the Consular Corps, business and trade organisations, consultants, contractors, workers and franchisees as well as people who have been involved in the Airport Core Programme over the years, and advisory and professional bodies.

Representatives from both sides of the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group also attended.

The mayoral leaders of overseas cities were from London and Hull in Britain, Kobe in Japan, Florence in Italy, Le Harve in France, Innsbruck in Austria and Kramfors in Sweden as well as Korsor in Denmark where a large suspension bridge is being built.

Construction of the Tsing Ma Bridge and the Kap Shui Mun Bridge began in 1992, under contracts worth \$7.1 billion and \$1.6 billion respectively.

The Tsing Ma Bridge was built by the Anglo Japanese Construction Joint Venture comprising Trafalgar House Construction (Asia) Limited, which is now part of the Kvaerner Group of Norway, Costain Civil Engineering Limited of Britain and Mitsui and Co. Limited of Japan.

Builder of the Kap Shui Mun Bridge was the Kumagai-Maeda-Yokogawa-Hitachi Joint Venture, comprising Kumagai Gumi (Hong Kong) Ltd, and Maeda Corporation, Yokogawa Bridge Corporation and Hitachi Zosen Corporation of Japan.

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Claims on Right of Abode untrue

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Commenting on claims that the Government had already drafted a Bill on Right of Abode and was deliberately withholding it from the Chief Executive (Designate) Office, a Government spokesman said today (Sunday):

"This is completely untrue, as has been made clear in statements by the Governor, the Administration and the Attorney General."

The spokesman also rejected claims about the role of the provisional legislature in dealing with the issue. "Firstly, there is no statutory or administrative requirement for legislation on Right of Abode before July 1," he said.

"Secondly, it will be the fact that the provisional legislature - which has no constitutional role in Hong Kong before July 1 - has purported to process legislation before July 1 that will expose that legislation to legal challenge.

"If Mr Tsang Yok-shing is genuinely concerned about this issue, he should use his influence with Chinese officials to accept the Hong Kong Government's generous compromise offer to prepare a White Bill, agreed with the Chief Executive Designate's Office, which would provide the basis for a Blue Bill to be considered by the legislature of the day after June 30 - provided that the provisional legislature did not attempt to legislate on this issue before then."

End

Fund raising schedule in May

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Fourteen organisations have been granted permission to raise funds for charitable purposes next month (May), a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department said today (Sunday).

They will either sell flags, tokens or similar items, or place donation boxes in designated public places.

Members of the public can call the Department's hotline 2343 2255 in case of doubt.

Any organisation planning to hold activities involving collection of money or sale or exchange for donation of badges, tokens or similar articles in a public place for charitable purposes should apply for a public subscription permit from the Social Welfare Department.

The spokesman appealed to organisers to take precautions against any possible fraud.

"Sellers should display the permit or carry copies of the permit for inspection upon request if the fund-raising is mobile," he said.

The spokesman also advised them to prepare guidelines for sellers, setting out the places and the times for selling and the collection points for bags.

"Organisers should inform the Police in case of loss of property, and seek their help when fraudulent acts, such as tampering of collection bags or making unauthorised selling, are found," he added.

Permits are given to the following organisations for raising funds next month:

Flag Day

Event Day

Organisation

May 3	Parents Association of the Mentally Handicapped Ltd.
May 10	Society for the Promotion of Hospice Care Ltd.
May 17	Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service
May 24	The Mong Kok Kai-fong Association Ltd.
May 31	The Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod

Subscription

Event Date

Organisation

May 1 - 31	World Vision Hong Kong
May 1 - 20	Dragon Centre Management Ltd.
May 3 & 4	Ronald McDonald House Charities Hong Kong Ltd.

May 4,11,18 & 25 Jesus is Lord School of Ministry (Hong Kong)Ltd.
May 11 Sowers Action
May 14 The Hong Kong Buddhist Association
May 17 & 31 Land of Virtue Centre Ltd.
May 4,18 & 25 Earthcare (Hong Kong) Ltd.
May 27 Bethel Mission of China (Hong Kong) Ltd.

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Removal of Immigration Mobile Office

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The Immigration Department announced today (Sunday) that the Immigration Mobile Office will resume operation from May 5,1997 (Monday) at the Sai Kung Rural Committee Office at 1 Sai Kung Rural Committee Lane, Sai Kung subsequent to the completion of renovation work at the Committee Office.

The temporary office at 25, Man Nin Street, Sai Kung will also be closed from that date on.

For enquiry, the public may telephone 2824 6111 or use faxline 2877 7711.

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