



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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The Governor's "Letter to Hong Kong"

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Following is the full text of Governor the Rt Hon Christopher Patten's broadcast on RTHK's "Letter to Hong Kong" today (Sunday):

Two years exactly from this weekend, the fireworks will be lighting up Hong Kong's skies and the flags will be changing over Hong Kong's roof-tops. Two years to the change-over. And just how big a change will it be?

Well, not so great - I hope and believe - as to cause Hong Kong to stumble. It's a change which Hong Kong should be able to take in its stride. Look at how much bustling change and downright turbulence Hong Kong has survived in the past 50 years. And look where we stand today.

But clearly in these two years, it's important for me, important for my Administration, to do all we can to give Hong Kong the momentum to see it safely through the transition. That means doing everything possible to secure the values and rights and duties enshrined in the Joint Declaration. And it means helping to lay solid foundations for the government of the Special Administrative Region so that it can get off to the best possible start.

So the first thing you should know about our plans for the next two years is that we are going to go on governing - taking decisions, getting things done. We don't intend to put off the tough challenges, the unpopular choices, just because 1997 is coming up fast. That would be fatal for the authority of government. Not particularly the authority of this government, but of government itself. It would corrode the morale of our excellent civil service. It would leave our successors with a bucketful of problems. And which problems ever got easier by putting off doing anything about them?

Second, wherever we can we'll try to cope with these problems in co-operation with those who seek to speak for the interests of our successors in government. I promised that last September and I intend to keep that promise. That is what you expect.

We'll try to work with the Preparatory Committee - and then, necessarily even more closely, with the Chief Executive-designate and his or her team. We've shown our intentions, sensible intentions, with the co-operation we've already launched over the Budget and with the agreement on the Court of Final Appeal.

I hope that we can co-operate over as comprehensive a range of issues as possible. But we'll never compromise Hong Kong's long-term interests. There's a substantial difference between seeking co-operation on the one hand and, on the other, abandoning what's right in return for what you hope may be a quiet life.

Third, we've got a substantial body of work to complete. Work in the first place to protect human rights in Hong Kong. Since 1992 we've extended the convention on the rights of the child to Hong Kong, and we're seeking to bring Hong Kong within the ambit of the convention which bans discrimination against women. We've legislated against that sort of discrimination and against discrimination against the disabled. We've allocated more money to promote human rights education here and we've opened up government. We're implementing an administrative code on access to information. We've made the Administration more accountable to the legislature, extended the ombudsman's power to follow up complaints against the government, and brought in pledges of improved performance right across the public services.

The Judiciary are introducing specialist lists for Bill of Rights cases, and we're providing greater access to legal aid, setting up an independent council to organise the administration of legal aid services. We've substantially completed a review of out-of-date potentially repressive laws, including those which could be used to impinge on press freedom. But I have to say, I don't think that the main threat to press freedom today or in the future comes from the law; the insidious danger is self-censorship.

Human rights and freedom - as well as good government - in Hong Kong are also well served by ensuring that the community gets that development of democratic institutions which it has been promised. We've had very successful elections to the District Boards and Municipal Councils - with record voter registration and turn-out. I'm sure that the LegCo elections in September will also go well. There's record voter registration for them, and this year 16 times as many people as last time will be entitled to vote in the functional constituencies. I hope and believe that this broad-based and fairly elected Legislative Council will do a good job for Hong Kong and I pledge that we will work closely with it.

As you'll know, (after all it's the subject of a rather surprising degree of controversy), we've reached a good agreement with China on Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal. It provides for a decent court, based on the existing principles and practices of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. With such a Court, ready to start work on 1 July 1997, on a basis agreed with China, continuity in Hong Kong's system of justice will be assured. This is an important boost for the future confidence of Hong Kong.

The agreement has been attacked by some, not for what it says but for what allegedly the Basic Law - Hong Kong's written constitution after 1997 - will actually mean for the rule of law in Hong Kong. This is not an argument about the agreement on the Court of Final Appeal; it's an argument about the Basic Law itself. That argument may or may not be good politics. I suspect not. But it is a damaging argument for Hong Kong. Why do I say that? For this simple reason. Any tension between the Basic Law and the common law in Hong Kong has to be dealt with in the courts after 1997. I can't for the life of me see the good in running up the white flag now - as some people seem to be doing - by claiming that the Basic Law will simply punch holes in the common law after 1997. What's the gain for Hong Kong in telling the world that the rule of law is finished here, that that is what the 1990 Basic Law means, when that very rule of law can and will survive provided we continue to have courts which can test it and a community that supports it? I have taken my own modest share of criticism over the past three years for standing up for what I believe to be right for Hong Kong. I haven't changed. But standing up for Hong Kong doesn't mean trying to make tomorrow look as black and as bleak as possible in order to make a dubious political point today.

So we'll complete our human rights programme and our programme of social reform, too. I set out a five year programme in 1992. I want to see better provision for the disabled. We are on target with our plans for them. I want to lay the foundation for an income protection scheme for the retired and to complete the comprehensive improvement of services for the elderly. We need better training and retraining - and more emphasis on quality in our schools. We have to sweep away the worst of yesterday's housing, like the older temporary housing areas and the squatter settlements. We will finish the first stage of a decent sewage scheme for Hong Kong, and continue with the task of cleaning up the New Territories.

There's much to do to prepare for '97 itself: developing our language skills and training, continuing with the localisation of the civil service, co-operating with China to tackle cross-border corruption, stepping up our cross-border contacts and our co-operation in infrastructure projects, working flat out to finish as much as possible of the Joint Liaison Group's Agenda.

So in short, two years with much still to do. That's true for us. And true as well for China.

True for China because, while I'm sure Hong Kong wants everything to go well after '97, while Hong Kong wants to make its own contribution to the continuing successful opening up of China, it does need some more reassurance that everything really will be all right, that Hong Kong's way of life, Hong Kong's success story will continue.

There are a lot of sceptics around, doubters and pessimists. Here and outside. Given the chance Hong Kong will prove them wrong. But China has to trust Hong Kong with that chance. It's not much to ask. After all, it's what's been promised. And to fulfil Hong Kong's promise for the future it's essential that that promise is kept.

End/Sunday, July 2, 1995

ACP works forge ahead

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The Airport Core Programme (ACP) is now entering its peak construction stage, with 62 per cent of the Government ACP works completed so far.

"Excellent progress is being made on all 10 of the ACP projects. Overall, including the airport and airport railway, about 35 per cent of the works has been completed," the Director of the New Airport Projects Co-ordination Office, Mr Billy Lam, said today (Sunday).

He said ACP works had forged ahead in the past six months with 42 more major contracts valued at about \$23 billion had been awarded.

"The ACP projects are rapidly taking shape and are becoming more visible as the months go by," he said.

Mr Lam said the agreement with the Chinese side last Friday on the financial support agreements for the airport and airport railway and the franchises for the provision of air cargo services for the new airport was a major step forward in the ACP.

"On the basis of the continuing progress of the ACP, we are confident that the seven projects directly funded by the Government together with the Western Harbour Crossing project will be completed before June 30, 1997.

"The Provisional Airport Authority's physical works at the Chek Lap Kok new airport will be substantially complete by mid-1997. Allowing nine months for commissioning, trial operations, and planning the move from Kai Tak, we expect the new airport to be open in April 1998, subject to early conclusion of the remaining key franchises agreements.

"As for the airport railway, works will be substantially complete in April 1998, with opening scheduled in June 1998 after a period of tests and trial running," he said.

In a round-up of works progress in the first half of the year, Mr Lam said a number of major milestones had been achieved in the past six months.

These included the following:

* The new airport

The Provisional Airport Authority (PAA) has awarded a total of 34 major contracts with a total value of over \$29.8 billion for the new airport at Chek Lap Kok.

Formation of the 1,248 hectare airport platform was completed in mid-June. The platform is about four times the size of the existing airport at Kai Tak. In late January this year, the PAA awarded a \$10.1 billion contract, the biggest awarded for the entire ACP, for the construction of the passenger terminal building structure. Construction of the new airport entered a new phase of activity with the award of this contract, work on the new airport has moved from the site formation to the building phase of construction activity.

Work on the new airport is now about 36 per cent complete.

* The Lantau Fixed Crossing

The contract for building the 2.2 kilometre Tsing Ma Bridge, one of the two bridges which form the Lantau Fixed Crossing connecting north Lantau to Tsing Yi, is already 76 per cent complete, only 37 months into the five-year contract. In mid-March, aerial spinning of the main span cables was completed on schedule. The construction of the bridge deck is scheduled to begin later this month. The bridge is already becoming a new landmark for Hong Kong.

Construction of the Kap Shui Mun Bridge has passed the halfway mark and the first sections of the main deck spans are now being erected. This part of the job began at the end of May with the lifting in place of the first 500-tonne composite steel/concrete section and so far four sections have been lifted.

Overall the Lantau Fixed Crossing is now 66 per cent complete.

* The Airport Railway

Work is now under way on the Hong Kong station of the airport railway following the contract awarded by the MTRC last month. Since November last year when funding approval was given by the Legislative Council, the MTRC has awarded a total of 30 major contracts at a total value of about \$17.6 billion to build the 34-kilometre railway linking the new airport to the rest of Hong Kong. Work on the airport railway is now 13 per cent complete.

The Hong Kong station is being built underground at the Central Reclamation Phase I. The 20-hectare reclamation project, which has been entrusted to the MTRC, is now 57 per cent complete.

* The Western Harbour Crossing

The first immersed tube tunnel unit for the Western Harbour Crossing, Hong Kong's third cross-harbour road tunnel, was sunk onto the seabed off Sai Ying Pun in mid-March. Since then three more units have been sunk.

The project is now 48 per cent complete.

* The Expressways

Work is moving ahead rapidly on all three expressways in the ACP.

Excavation of the Route 3 Cheung Ching Tunnel was completed in March, two months ahead of schedule. This milestone came only 10 months after the tunnel breakthrough in May last year. The main span deck section of the Rambler Channel Bridge, which forms part of this project, will be completed this month. Work on Route 3 is now 53 per cent complete.

Over 76 per cent of the works on the North Lantau Expressway which links the airport and Tung Chung new town to the Lantau Fixed Crossing has been completed.

The West Kowloon Expressway which will run from the Route 3 Kwai Chung Viaduct to the Western Harbour Crossing toll plaza is 47 per cent complete.

* West Kowloon Reclamation

Nearly all reclamation works on the West Kowloon Reclamation project has been completed. The 334 hectare reclamation, the largest ever undertaken in the urban area, has increased the size of the Kowloon peninsula by one-third. The project is now focused on the construction of roads and associated drainage and sewerage systems. Overall, the project is 83 per cent complete.

* Tung Chung new town

Work on the Tung Chung new town on north Lantau is 46 per cent complete and the first Home Ownership Scheme blocks are under construction.

Mr Lam said so far, a total of 144 major contracts valued at \$89.7 billion had been awarded under the \$158.2 billion ACP by the Government, the PAA, the MTRC and the Western Harbour Tunnel Company Limited.

"These contracts have participants from countries worldwide. Taking the lead are companies from Japan (25 per cent by value), followed by Hong Kong (23 per cent), the United Kingdom (16 per cent), China (8 per cent), the Netherlands (6 per cent) and France (6 per cent).

"Companies from Belgium, New Zealand, Spain, Australia, United States, Germany, Italy, South Africa, Austria, Denmark have also been awarded contracts," Mr Lam said.

"Based on the very competitive contract prices we have received under our fair and open tender system and because of the very stringent cost control mechanism we have adopted, we remain confident that the ACP will be completed within the total cost estimate of \$158.2 billion announced in early 1994.

"Good progress continues to be made on the ACP and we will continue to keep up our efforts in maintaining stringent monitoring of both the progress and the cost of the ACP," he said.

Mr Lam said much effort was also made to keep both the Legislative Council and the Airport Consultative Committee closely informed about the ACP.

"We have submitted two quarterly reports on the ACP to both bodies in the first half of this year and visits to work sites were also arranged for members of both bodies," he said.

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Employers must ensure machinery and summer job safety

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Owners of machinery and employers of summer job workers are reminded to take all possible actions to ensure industrial safety or they will be prosecuted.

Announcing the commencement of this year's Machinery and Summer Job Safety Campaign, Labour Department's Deputy Chief Factory Inspector Mr Tse Ming-sing said today (Sunday): "It is extremely dangerous to leave a machine unguarded or inadequately guarded as even the most experienced operators can make mistakes.

"Dangerous parts of machinery, if not properly guarded, often cause serious accidents resulting in loss of limbs or even deaths," he pointed out.

Mr Tse said although the number of accidents resulting from the use of machinery had been declining from some 8,100 in 1989 to about 2,600 last year, employers have the duty to provide proper maintenance of guards as well as information of potential hazards, supervision and training to machine operators.

"Some machines are particularly dangerous, such as power presses, granulators, dough mixers, machines used in woodwork, paper and catering industries as well as printing and plastics factories," he said.

"Proper guarding of machinery can help avoid injuries at all times and gives confidence to operators," he added.

Mr Tse said during the two-month campaign which would start tomorrow, Factory Inspectors would visit workplaces to explain to employers and workers the importance of effectively guarding the dangerous parts of machines as well as ensuring the safety of summer job workers.

"As the legislation prohibiting young persons under the age of 18 and without recognised training to work in construction sites was enacted in June 1994, construction sites will also be visited and contractors advised on the related law and other safety aspects.

"The legislation seeks to better protect young persons because the nature of work in construction sites is far more hazardous than in other trades," he explained.

He also disclosed that in view of the recent spate of incidents involving the use or handling of chemicals, factory inspectors engaged in the campaign would give proper advice on chemical safety whenever appropriate during their inspections. Prosecutions will be taken out against serious breaches of the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Dangerous Substances) Regulations.

The Deputy Chief Factory Inspector warned proprietors and employers that the department is determined to take vigorous enforcement action against unscrupulous employers who neglected their statutory obligation to protect workers from potential hazards or allowed untrained young persons to work in construction sites.

He also appealed to all employers and employees for their full co-operation towards making their workplace safe.

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Landscaping works in Pat Heung progressing speedily

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The landscaping works in the Pat Heung Pilot Action Area (PHPAA) are progressing speedily and up to mid-June, 106 sites with an area of about 20,000 square metres have been landscaped by the Task Force Black Spots (TFB) of the Lands Department.

In a progress report submitted to the Special Committee chaired by Dr Samuel Wong, TFB said it would endeavour to landscape all the cleared government land in the PHPAA by the end of October this year.

On satisfactory completion, the Landscape Division of the TFB is expected to devote its resources to the North District (East) Action Area next summer.

Furthermore, the Division has proposed a renovation work project for Kam Tin Town area with a view to enhancing the value of this historic rural town as a tourist attraction point in the New Territories.

It is also hoped to set an example of what can be achieved by simple environmental improvements and how the property and hence the land value of the area could be enhanced through proper land management and a better environment.

TFB has initiated discussions with the Kam Tin villagers in liaison with Yuen Long District Office and if the villagers do support the project, it will make a formal request to Yuen Long District Office to co-ordinate the campaign.

It has also submitted two applications under the Town Planning Ordinance as test cases to the Town Planning Board for the carrying out of various environmental improvement works for existing use undertakings and is liaising with relevant government departments on the environmental improvement works.

These works include surface drainage channels, landscaping, proper fencing, improvement to the ingress and egress points.

TFB has started a thorough investigation into the possible relocation areas for both container-related industries and open storage uses.

Five sites zoned for open storage use in Yuen Long district have been examined. They are mostly covered by private land and some of them are occupied by existing open storage undertakings. The availability of these relocation sites will have to depend on the initiative of the various landowners of the fragmented private lots.

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More effective learning underlined

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Hong Kong will benefit from the introduction of Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) which makes learning more effective, schooling fairer and more rewarding, according to leading educational psychologist Professor John Biggs.

A professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong, Professor Biggs specialises in the study of learning outcome. His 'Solo Taxonomy' is known among educational researchers world-wide and has been applied to a lot of research projects in Hong Kong, including a longitudinal study on the Use of Chinese as Medium of Instruction in secondary schools conducted between 1990-92.

Throughout his service in Hong Kong, Professor Biggs has played a key role in the enhancement of learning process among students. He is one of those who agree that the introduction of TOC in Hong Kong's schools can add to that enhancement.

Professor Biggs said TOC made learning more effective by using the "backwash" effects of testing positively.

"Backwash means that the test determines the nature and quality of teaching and learning. It is a universal fact that students tend to focus their learning according to what they think they will be tested on: the test becomes the curriculum," he explained to participants of a Primary School TOC Initiation Workshop held earlier.

"In the past, backwash has had strong negative effects on both teaching and learning. Teachers second guess the examinations and give students notes and model answers to rote learn. So whatever the official aims of teaching a subject, the fact is students reduce their learning to the lowest cognitive level, because that level is allowed to suffice for testing purposes.

"When students know on what they are going to be assessed, then they make that the target for their learning."

Professor Biggs said TOC identified reasonable targets and gave assessment tasks to see where each student stood with respect to each such target, thus clearly showing what each student was able to do.

"The trick is to use backwash positively. Define quality targets and you get quality learning," he said.

Professor Biggs said TOC enabled all students to benefit from learning and each student made progress according to how he learned.

The professor said: "Credit is given when a target is met; that is duly noted in the student's cumulative record. That record is a statement of what each student has been able to achieve; it is not a statement of what the student has not been able to achieve, nor is it a statement of how well or how poorly that student compares to others."

He added that TOC was in keeping with what was now known about how students learn and that the setting of definable stages, or "targets", for curriculum and assessment is part of a world-wide trend.

"Knowledge is not a collection of facts but a growing structure based upon facts. Learning grows gradually with time. Students construct their knowledge from their experience; increasingly, understanding interconnects with other topics and subjects and with previous learnings in the same topic," he said.

Professor Biggs is confident that Hong Kong will benefit from TOC.

Professor Biggs is retiring to Sydney this summer after eight years of active service in Hong Kong. He said he would miss his work on the Co-ordination Committee on evaluation of the development of Assessment Mechanism for TOC, on which he had served for nearly a year.

Also leaving the committee on retirement is Dr Siu Ping-kee, Reader at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Dr Siu was among the first group of academics and educators appointed to the TOC assessment committee. He has had a lengthy service on the Educational Research Section Policy Committee and has made valuable contributions to a number of major educational research programmes conducted by the Education Department.

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Building management course

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A building management course for members of owners' corporations and mutual aid committees in Sham Shui Po will be held in August.

Organised by the Sham Shui Po District Board's Housing Committee, with the assistance of the Sham Shui Po Building Management Co-ordination Team, the course covers the introduction of the Building Management Ordinance, the deed of mutual covenant and its enforcement, the finance and insurance of buildings and illegal structures.

Interested parties may obtain an application form from the Sham Shui Po District Office at sixth floor, West Coast International Building, 290-296 Un Chau Street.

Enquiries can be made on 2720 4251 ext 47.

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