HKGIS 香港政府新聞處

DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

FRIDAY, JANUARY 21, 1977

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HK'S FUTURE PROGRAMME SUPPORTED BY UK
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THE GOVERNOR, SIR MURRAY MACLEHOSE, THIS (FRIDAY) EVENING PLEDGED TO DEVOTE HIS LAST YEARS IN OFFICE +TO MAKE HONG KONG THE PLACE IT CAN SO EASILY BE WITHIN A SHORT SPAN OF YEARS.+

HE WAS REFERRING TO THE VARIOUS PROJECTS AND SOCIAL PROGRAMMES THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO COMPLETE BY THE END OF THIS DECADE OR BY THE EARLY 1980'S.

SIR MURRAY, WHO WAS SPEAKING AT THE DINNER OF THE HONG KONG GENERAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, SAID THAT QUESTIONS HAD BEEN ASKED IN RECENT MONTHS WHETHER HONG KONG'S ECONOMY COULD AFFORD THESE THINGS AND EVEN IF IT COULD, WOULD HONG KONG NOT BE FORCED INTO MORE, THAT IT COULD AFFORD THROUGH EXTERNAL PRESSURE.

+TAKING THE POINT OF EXTERNAL POLITICAL PRESSURE FIRST= I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT SO FAR AS HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED THERE IS COMPLETE SUPPORT FOR AND AGREEMENT WITH THE PLANS I HAVE REFERRED TO TONIGHT AND OUTLINED TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LAST OCTOBER,+ HE SAID.

+THESE ARE HONG KONG'S PLANS DRAWN UP BY THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT TO MEET HONG KONG'S OWN NEEDS.

+BUT HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT HAVE A DEEP INTEREST IN THEM, BOTH BECAUSE OF THEIR CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, AND BECAUSE MINISTERS HAVE A CONSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATION TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM AND TO DEFEND THEM AGAINST CRITICS IN THE UK BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE PALACE OF WESTMINISTER.+

SIR MURRAY WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY INTENTION OR ATTEMPT TO PRESS HONG KONG INTO AN ALIEN OR INAPPROPRIATE MOULD.

WITH REGARD TO THE FIRST POINT, SIR MURRAY EXPLAINED THAT HE THOUGHT THE PRINCIPAL FEAR WAS THAT THE GOVERNMENT TARGETS HAD BEEN SET SO HIGH THAT THEY COULD ONLY BE REACHED BY A RISE IN TAXATION SO LARGE AS TO UNDERMINE HONG KONG'S ECONOMY.

+THIS IS GROUNDLESS,+ HE POINTED OUT.

+IT IS IN FACT A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS, BECAUSE IT IS SO OBVIOUS THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG REQUIRE A FISCAL ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS BOTH ATTRACTIVE IN COMPARISON TO COMPETITIVE COUNTRIES, AND WHICH ALSO ALLOWS A MARGIN OF PROFIT FOR ENTERPRISE AND RISK WIDE ENOUGH TO RETAIN AND ATTRACT CAPITAL FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE ECONOMY AND THE PRESERVATION OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG.

/+THIS IS NOT ...

+THIS IS NOT SOMETHING ON WHICH ANY GOVERNMENT IN HONG KONG COULD POSSIBLY AFFORD TO TAKE RISKS.

+BECAUSE OF THESE APPARENT RESTRAINTS THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES HAVE BEEN PLACED SO THAT ON CERTAIN ASSUMPTIONS AND BROADLY SPEAKING THEY CAN BE FINANCED FROM GROWTH.

+THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY A RESERVE OF TAXABILITY THAT COULD BE SAFELY TAPPED IN CASE OF NEED, BUT BECAUSE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES I HAVE MENTIONED IN PRACTICE IT IS SMALL IN COMPARISON TO THAT OF OTHER COUNTRIES.

+OF COURSE I CANNOT SAY WHETHER PRESENT RATES OF TAXATION CAN BE MAINTAINED INDEFINITELY. THIS DEPENDS ON SO MANY FACTORS -- BUT THE IMPERATIVE OF MAINTAINING A COMPARATIVELY LOW-TAX FISCAL SYSTEM IS INESCAPABLE.+

SIR MURRAY SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROCEED WITH ITS PROGRAMMES IN ALL FIELDS +METHODICALLY AND PRUDENTLY AND WITHIN THE CAPABILITY OF THE ECONOMY.+

+WHILE IT MUST TAKE ACCOUNT OF NORMAL INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS,+ HE CONTINUED, +ITS PARAMOUNT CRITERION WILL ALWAYS BE WHAT PRACTICAL BENEFIT ANY MEASURE WILL CONFER ON THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG.+

REFERRING TO ECONOMIC GROWTH, HE SAID : +THE 16 PER CENT GROWTH RATE IN REAL TERMS CONFIDENTLY PREDICTED FOR THE YEAR THAT IS ENDING IS A REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT.+

WHILE PREDICTING THAT HONG KONG'S GROWTH RATE WOULD PROBABLY BE BETTER THAN SIX PER CENT THIS YEAR, THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT THE PROSPECT OF GROWTH RATE FOR THE REST OF THE DECADE WOULD BE ABOUT SIX PER CENT A YEAR -- ALWAYS ASSUMING NO FURTHER EXTERNAL CATASTROPHY.

THE GOVERNOR STRESSED THAT THIS WAS NO TIME FOR FAINT-HEARTED FEARS. AFTER ALL HONG KONG HAD JUST EMERGED FROM THE DARKEST TIME IT HAD KNOWN FOR MANY YEARS.

+WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO DRAW CONFIDENCE FROM THE WAY HONG KONG CAME THROUGH THE RECESSION AND THE SPEED OF ITS RECOVERY,+ HE EMPHASISED.

+ANGLO-CHINESE RELATIONS ARE EXCELLENT. WE HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND OUR RELATIONS WITH IT ARE FIRMLY BASED ON MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

+THE WORLD'S ECONOMY IS SLOWY IMPROVING. WE THEREFORE HAVE EVERY REASON TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN OUR FUTURE PROSPECTS.

+THIS IS THE TIME NOT FOR QUESTIONING OUR MEANS OR OUR OBJECTIVES, BUT FOR DETERMINATION TO PURSUE THE COURSE WE HAVE SO CAREFULLY CHARTED TO MAKE HONG KONG THE PLACE IT CAN SO EASILY BE WITHIN A SHORT SPAN OF YEARS.

+CERTAINLY MY LAST YEARS HERE WILL BE DEVOTED TO THIS END,+ HE ADDED.

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OCEAN PARK TO HAVE FIRST ROYAL VISITOR

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PRINCESS ALEXANDRA WILL PAY A VISIT TO THE RECENTLY OPENED OCEAN PARK ON SATURDAY (FEBRUARY 5), ACCOMPANIED BY THE GOVERNOR, SIR MURRAY MACLEHOSE.

DURING HER TOUR OF THE OCEANARIUM, HONG KONG'S NEWEST NON-PROFIT MAKING RECREATIONAL AMENITY AND TOURIST ATTRACTION, THE PRINCESS WILL BE SURROUNDED BY SOME 5,000 CHILDREN.

THE CHILDREN WILL BE FROM 55 SCHOOLS IN ABERDEEN AND WAH FU AND FROM INSTITUTIONS FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN.

THE PRINCESS IS NO STRANGER TO HONG KONG AS HER ROYAL HIGHNESS IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH A NUMBER OF CHARITABLE AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS WHICH ALSO BEAR HER NAME.

TO NAME A FEW, THEY ARE THE PRINCESS ALEXANDRA RED CROSS REHABILITATION SCHOOL FOR THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED IN KWUN TONG AND THE PRINCESS ALEXANDRA COMMUNITY CENTRE IN TSUEN WAN. HER ROYAL HIGHNESS IS ALSO THE PATRON OF THE ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY AND OF THE JUNIOR RED CROSS.

ON HER ARRIVAL AT THE PARK, THE PRINCESS WILL TAKE A CABLE-CAR RIDE TO THE HEADLAND.

WHILE AT THE HEADLAND, PRINCESS ALEXANDRA WILL WATCH PERFORMANCES BY MARINE MAMMALS SUCH AS SEA LIONS AND DOLPHINS AT THE PARK'S OCEAN THEATRE.

THE OCEAN PARK, COSTING $150 MILLION TO BUILD, WAS OFFICIALLY OPENED BY THE GOVERNOR EARLIER THIS MONTH (JANUARY 10).

SIR MURRAY DESCRIBED THE PROJECT BUILT BY THE ROYAL HONG KONG JOCKEY CLUB AS +A GREAT AND IMAGINATIVE VENTURE+.

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FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU'S FIRST AREA INSPECTION SUCCESSFUL

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THE OVERALL RESULT OF THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT'S FIRST AREA INSPECTION IN WONG CHUK HANG WAS DESCRIBED BY A SENIOR FIRE OFFICER AS +GOOD+.

+IN A NUMBER OF BUILDINGS, THE SITUATION REGARDING OBSTRUCTIONS TO MEANS OF ESCAPE WAS ALL WE COULD EXPECT,+ COMMENTED MR. ALAN JONES, CHIEF FIRE OFFICER (FIRE PREVENTION).

+IN THESE BUILDINGS, IT WAS APPARENT THAT THE SUSTAINED PUBLICITY HAS ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVE AND PEOPLE HAD RESPONDED,+ HE SAID.

HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT IT WAS REGRETTABLE THAT THE OCCUPANTS IN SOME BUILDINGS HAD IGNORED THE PUBLICITY AND CONDITIONS FOUND IN THEM WERE FAR FROM SATISFACTORY.

+ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN AGAINST THE OFFENDERS AND THEY WILL CONTINUE TO BE SUBJECTED TO ROUTINE VISITS AND INSPECTIONS,+ HE WARNED.

DURING THE TWO-DAY INSPECTION WHICH TOOK PLACE ON WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY, A TOTAL OF NINE INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS BETWEEN SIX AND 24 STOREYS HIGH WERE INSPECTED, RESULTING IN THE ISSUE OF 55 FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT NOTICES. OF THESE, 33 WERE ISSUED ON THE SPOT FOR SIMPLE OBSTRUCTIONS AND THE OTHERS RELATING TO MORE COMPLEX MATTERS ARE STILL BEING PROCESSED.

A NUMBER OF FOLLOW-UP VISITS HAD TAKEN PLACE AND IT IS EXPECTED THAT MORE RE-INSPECTIONS WILL BE CONDUCTED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

MR. JONES SAID THAT THE TIME AND EFFORT EXPENDED ON THIS OPERATION WERE FULLY JUSTIFIED AND THE ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE IN ADVANCE TO RESIDENTS IN THE AREA THAT INSPECTIONS WERE FORTHCOMING GAVE EVERYONE ADEQUATE TIME AND NOTICE TO CHECK ON THEIR PREMISES.

+WE LET PEOPLE SEE THAT OUR INTENTION IS TO HAVE CLEAR AND UNOBSTRUCTED MEANS OF ESCAPE AND FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT PROPERLY MAINTAINED AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE,+ HE POINTED OUT. +WE DO NOT WANT TO HARASS OR TAKE PEOPLE TO COURT WITHOUT PROPER JUSTIFICATION.+

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GOVERNOR TO LAY FOUNDATION STONE OF MACLEHOSE DENTAL CENTRE

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THE GOVERNOR, SIR MURRAY MACLEHOSE, WILL LAY ON MONDAY (JANUARY 24) THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE MACLEHOSE DENTAL CENTRE, WHICH WILL BECOME THE NERVE CENTRE OF THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S DENTAL SERVICE.

THE SEVEN-STOREY COMPLEX ON MORRISON HILL WILL HOUSE A TRAINING SCHOOL FOR DENTAL NURSES AND A SCHOOL CHILDREN DENTAL CLINIC, BOTH OF WHICH WILL BE NAMED AFTER SIR SHIU KIN TANG, WHO HAS DONATED $1.5 MILLION TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION COST.

THE CENTRE WILL ALSO HOUSE THE HEAD OFFICE AND DENTAL SURGERIES OF THE GOVERNMENT DENTAL SERVICE, PRESENTLY ACCOMMODATED IN THE WAN CHAI DENTAL CLINIC AT KENNEDY ROAD.

THE CAPITAL COST OF THE PROJECT IS ESTIMATED AT $7 MILLION WITH AN ADDITIONAL $1 MILLION TO EQUIP AND FURNISH. RECURRENT COST INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT WILL BE IN THE REGION OF $5 MILLION PER ANNUM.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DENTAL NURSES TRAINING SCHOOL AND THE SCHOOL DENTAL CLINIC WILL MARK THE FIRST STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHEME PROPOSED IN THE MEDICAL WHITE PAPER TO PROVIDE A BASIC DENTAL CONSERVATION SERVICE FOR CHILDREN AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL. IN THE FINAL STAGE, IT IS ENVISAGED THAT A FURTHER FOUR SCHOOL DENTAL CLINICS WILL BE REQUIRED TO COVER THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE SUBSTRUCTURE OF THE DENTAL CENTRE BEGAN IN OCTOBER LAST YEAR AND THE WHOLE BUILDING IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN EARLY 1978.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE WELCOME TO SEND A REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER TO COVER THE FOUNDATION STONE LAYING CEREMONY WHICH WILL COMMENCE AT 3.15 P.M. ON MONDAY (JANUARY 24). THE SITE OF THE CENTRE IS ADJACENT TO THE TANG CHI NGONG SPECIALIST CLINIC IN QUEEN'S ROAD EAST.

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IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING WELL APPRECIATED BY N.T.A.
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THE NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION WELL APPRECIATES THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING FOR ITS STAFF WHICH BETTER EQUIPS THEM TO MEET CONFIDENTLY THE DAILY CHALLENGES IN THEIR FIELDS.

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR THE NEW TERRITORIES, MR. JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID THIS TODAY IN A CEREMONY IN WHICH HE PRESENTED CERTIFICATES TO 16 N.T.A. LAND EXECUTIVES -- THE FIRST GROUP TO HAVE COMPLETED A TWO-YEAR PART-TIME DAY RELEASE COURSE IN LAND ADMINISTRATION.

HE TOLD THE GRADUATES : +WITH THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF A LAND EXECUTIVE'S DUTIES, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THOSE WHO DEAL WITH IMPORTANT DAY-TO-DAY PROBLEMS SHOULD HAVE A SOUND KNOWLEDGE OF THE RELEVANT SUBJECTS SUCH AS THOSE YOU HAVE BEEN TAUGHT.+

WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE GUIDANCE THEY RECEIVED FROM THEIR SENIOR OFFICERS, HE SAID, THE GRADUATES WOULD BE WELL EQUIPPED TO MEET CONFIDENTLY THE DAILY CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD.

MR. CHAMBERS SAID THE COURSE WAS INTRODUCED IN 1974 TO REPLACE THE DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATION WHICH QUALIFIED NEWLY-APPOINTED LAND EXECUTIVES FOR CONFIRMATION TO THE PERMANENT ESTABLISHMENT.

THE COURSE IS CONDUCTED AT THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNDER A PILOT TRAINING SCHEME FOR LAND EXECUTIVES JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE N.T.A. AND THE POLYTECHNIC.

HE EXPRESSED THANKS TO THE POLYTECHNIC AND THE N.T.A. STAFF FOR MAKING THE COURSE A SUCCESS.

AT PRESENT, 35 OTHER LAND EXECUTIVES ARE NOW ATTENDING THE SECOND AND THIRD COURSES, WHICH INCLUDE TRAINING IN VALUATION OF LAND AND BUILDING, LAND SURVEYING AND MAP INTERPRETATION, AND LAW RELATED TO LAND ADMINISTRATION.

THE 16 GRADUATES HAVE COME FROM VARIOUS DISTRICT OFFICES - FIVE EACH FROM TSUEN WAN AND TAI PO, TWO EACH FROM YUEN LONG AND ISLANDS, AND ONE EACH FROM TUEN MUN AND SAI KUNG.

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TWO PRE-WAR BUILDINGS DECLARED DANGEROUS

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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY TODAY DECLARED TWO BUILDINGS ON HONG KONG ISLAND TO BE IN A DANGEROUS CONDITION AND ORDERED THAT THEY BE DEMOLISHED.

THE BUILDINGS ARE NO. 321 QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL AND NO. 38 GAGE STREET BOTH OF WHICH WERE CONSTRUCTED OF LOAD-BEARING BRICK WALLS WITH TIMBER FLOORS AND ROOF.

THE PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT BUILDING SURVEYOR SAID THIS MORNING THAT ATTENTION WAS DRAWN TO THE BUILDING IN QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL BY A REPORT THAT ONE OF THE FLOORS WAS IN A DEFECTIVE CONDITION.

DETAILED INSPECTION CONFIRMED THAT THE REPORTED FLOOR WAS IN DANGER OF COLLAPSE AND THE INSPECTION ALSO REVEALED EXTENSIVE SIGNS OF MOVEMENT IN THE MAIN WALLS.

+IT IS CONSIDERED THAT THERE IS A DANGER OF GENERAL COLLAPSE OF THE BUILDING,+ HE SAID.

REFERRING TO NO. 38 GAGE STREET, HE SAID THAT ATTENTION WAS FIRST DRAWN TO THE BUILDING MORE THAN 12 YEARS AGO WHEN THE BUILDING AUTHORITY ORDERED THAT THE KITCHEN BLOCK SHOULD BE REPAIRED.

+A RECENT INSPECTION INDICATED THAT TIMBERS IN THE MAIN ROOF AND BALCONIES ARE DEFECTIVE AND IT IS CONSIDERED THAT LOCALISED FAILURES COULD OCCUR THERE,+ HE SAID.

+THE BUILDING IS, HOWEVER, SO GENERALLY DILAPIDATED THAT THERE IS A DANGER OF ANY SUCH FAILURE LEADING TO A GENERAL COLLAPSE.+

NOTICES OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR CLOSURE ORDERS IN VICTORIA DISTRICT COURT AT 9.30 A.M. ON FEBRUARY 25 WERE POSTED TODAY.

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APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY AIR COMMODORE OF RHKAAF

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THE GOVERNOR HAS APPOINTED WING COMMANDER GORDON BELL AS THE HONORARY AIR COMMODORE OF THE ROYAL HONG KONG AUXILIARY AIR FORCE. HE SUCCEEDS MR. R.P. SMITH.

THE APPOINTMENT CAME INTO EFFECT ON JANUARY 15.

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NOMINATION FOR URBCO ELECTION OPENS

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NOMINATION FOR THE URBAN COUNCIL ELECTION SCHEDULED TO BE HELD ON MARCH 3 OFFICIALLY OPENS TODAY.

A NOTICE TO THIS EFFECT WAS PUBLISHED IN TODAY'S GAZETTE.

THE NOMINATIONS ARE FOR SIX SEATS WHICH WILL BECOME VACANT ON APRIL 1 FOLLOWING THE EXPIRY OF THE PRESENT TERM OF OFFICE OF SIX ELECTED MEMBERS.

NOMINATION FORMS ARE OBTAINABLE AT ROOM 364, THIRD FLOOR, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES (EAST WING), LOWER ALBERT ROAD.

NOMINATIONS WILL BE RECEIVED BY THE RETURNING OFFICER, MR. ALLAN LEUNG, AT THIS ADDRESS DAILY (EXCEPT SATURDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS).

THE CLOSING DATE FOR NOMINATIONS IS FEBRUARY 14.

EACH CANDIDATE MUST BE NOMINATED ON A SEPARATE NOMINATION PAPER AND EACH PAPER MUST BE SUBSCRIBED BY 10 ELECTORS AND NO ELECTOR MAY NOMINATE MORE THAN SIX CANDIDATES.

IF MORE THAN SIX PERSONS ARE VALIDLY NOMINATED AN ELECTION WILL BE HELD AS SCHEDULED ON MARCH 3.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING THE NOMINATIONS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM MR. LEUNG ON TEL. 5-95485.

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LIST OF TOWN PLANS PUBLISHED

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A LIST OF PLANS PREPARED BY THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD WAS PUBLISHED IN TODAY'S GAZETTE FOR GENERAL INFORMATION.

THE PLANS, IN THREE CATEGORIES, INCLUDE APPROVED PLANS REFERRED BACK TO THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD FOR AMENDMENT OR REPLACEMENT, AND DRAFT PLANS EXHIBITED BY THE BOARD FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION.

CERTIFIED COPIES OF THE APPROVED PLANS ARE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION FREE OF CHARGE AT THE LAND OFFICE, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES (WEST WING).

COPIES OF THE APPROVED AND DRAFT PLANS MAY BE PURCHASED FROM THE CROWN LANDS AND SURVEY OFFICE, 19TH FLOOR, MURRAY BUILDING, GARDEN ROAD, HONG KONG.

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MORALE HIGH IN PRISONS DEPARTMENT
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THE MORALE AND EFFICIENCY OF THE PRISONS DEPARTMENT HAS NEVER BEEN BETTER, THE COMMISSIONER OF PRISONS, MR. TOM GARNER, SAID TODAY.

HE WAS SPEAKING AT A CEREMONY AT THE STAFF TRAINING INSTITUTE DURING WHICH HE PRESENTED CLASPS TO THE COLONIAL PRISON SERVICE MEDAL TO 16 OFFICERS OF THE PRISONS DEPARTMENT.

MR. GARNER STRESSED THAT ALTHOUGH THE TOTAL STRENGTH OF THE DEPARTMENT HAD RISEN DRAMATICALLY OVER THE YEARS, THE PERCENTAGE OF EXPATRIATE STAFF HAD FALLEN CONSIDERABLY.

HE SAID THAT IN 1946 THE TOTAL STAFF WAS 611, WHICH INCLUDED 296 EXPATRIATE OFFICERS. NOW THE TOTAL STRENGTH WAS 3,200 WITH ONLY 19 EXPATRIATE OFFICERS.

HE ADDED: +TO-DAY ALSO MARKS A VERY SPECIAL OCCASION WHEN FOR THE FIRST TIME LOCAL OFFICERS WITHIN THE SERVICE, OTHER THAN MINOR OFFICE STAFF, HAVE RECEIVED A SECOND CLASP TO THE MEDAL, AND HERE AGAIN WITHOUT ANY DOUBT I AM SURE THERE WILL BE AN INCREASING NUMBER EARNING THIS AWARD FROM NOW ON.+

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HKGIS 香港政府新聞處

DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

SUPPLEMENT

EMBARGOED FOR 9 P.M. ON 21.1.77

Friday, January 21, 1977

Speech By Governor At HKGCC Dinner

The following is the full text of the Governor's speech at the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce dinner in the Mandarin Hotel tonight:

When I accepted your hospitable invitation, I did not know that my term of office would just have been prolonged. This unlooked for extension of responsibility has given me much pleasure, but also much food for thought. As Dr. Johnson said of a man in a rather different predicament "the prospect concentrates his mind wonderfully".

I remember once asking a Secretary of State why he accepted a position which was making such impossible demands on him, and he replied "because I like to get things done"

Milton was wrong when he wrote that fame was the spur. Now fame is the hot seat, the point at which the buck stops, it is exposure to every critic and personal and political pressure. No, the spur - what it is worth working for - is the satisfaction of getting things done; particularly in a community that is as alive and intelligent and critical and responsive, and that wants action as much as that of Hong Kong.

/It was .....

It was my good fortune to come here after a decade of prosperity in which so much had already been done by wise predecessors and the public service, that it was possible to draw up specific plans to eliminate the basic deficiencies that remained. The effort put into this planning process by the public services was enormous, but it did show us very clearly where we stood, what we had to do, and when and where and how we had to do it; and it enabled the Financial Secretary to draw up both short and long term budgetary forecasts to provide for the implementation of the plans at a pace, and by stages, that would be within our economic capability.

One should never become the slave of plans and of course ours have had to be applied with flexibility as our financial circumstances changed. But without them we would never have maintained the progress that we did during the recession years, and without them we would never have been able to compensate by picking up their speed so quickly afterwards.

As things now stand, provided our prosperity holds - and I will return to this - we should not be far from our original targets though because of the recession there will have been more progress at the end and less at the beginning of the time-span than originally envisaged.

They are intended to produce a steady flow of improvements that taken together will achieve significant physical, social and demographic changes in Hong Kong by the early 1980s. Let me explain what these plans mean in terms say of 1983, only six or seven years ahead. I will start with Communications.

/By 1983 .....

By 1983 the first half of the Tuen Mun highway will have been open for five years and the full six lanes for about three, with consequent impetus for the development of industry and population in the Tuen Mun/Yuen Long area.

Tuen Mun itself will by then be a city of about 375,000 and I should expect rapid development of all sorts to have taken place in Yuen Long where an industrial estate will have been established for several years. Tsuen Wan/Kwai Chung/Tsing Yi will be a complex of over 800,000 people with accompanying industry, and amenities and a cultural life of its own.

In the East, there will have been a comparable process of opening up. The railway will have been double tracked and possibily electrified, a coastal road will have been open for several years between Sha Tin and Tai Po, and Sha Tin will have become a virtual suburb of Kowloon with fast communications by a four-lane highway and a high frequency train service interchanging with the Mass Transit Railway. I should expect it will also by then have a direct road link with Tsuen Wan.

With the impetus of improved communications and more land for housing and industry, and with an industrial estate in its 5th or 6th year, and considerable public housing, Tai Po will have developed fast and Sha Tin itself will contain over 450,000 people and reach most of the way to Ma On Shan.

Ap Lei Chau will have been joined to Aberdeen by a bridge for about four years, and Aberdeen to Wan Chai and the Cross Harbour Tunnel by a tunnel and an over-head road for nearly three years, with consequent implications for the development of the Aberdeen and Pokfulam areas.

/1983 .....

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1983 will be the fourth year of the operation of the Mass Transit Railway which by then will be as much an accepted part of life as the Cross Harbour Tunnel is today.

Communications on the Island will have been greatly improved to the east by the completion of a new high speed road to Shau Kei Wan, and to the West by the Connaught Road high level highway.

In parallel with these developments, the Country Parks authority will have asserted a steadily increasing control over wide areas of mountains and coastline to maintain and preserve them for recreation and tourism, and prevent encroachment on them for other purposes.

I have started by painting the picture in terms of communications because the problem of access lies at the root of the shortage of building land, which in itself represents one of the greatest single impediments to economic and social expansion in Hong Kong at the moment, and only if Hong Kong can expand can it continue to prosper and provide the economic base for all the social things that need to be done.

Turning now to the social programmes, by 1983, or rather by the financial year 1983/84, Government financed housing will have been completed since 1973/74 for 1,800,000 and it will be the fifth consecutive year in which completions will have been for well over two hundred thousand.

By 1983, it will have been five years since there were assisted secondary school places for all children leaving primary, and three years since all children will have had at least nine years

/of free .....

of free or assisted education. Five technical institutes with a capacity of 6,600 day and 20,000 evening students, will have been operating for four years, and no doubt more institutes will have been added. The Polytechnic will for three years have had a capacity for 11,400 day and 30,000 evening students. A whole new generation of trained craftsmen, technicians and technologists will be available. The young workforce will be changed from one with largely a primary school background to one with at least junior secondary and in a majority of cases additional academic or technical qualifications.

The new psychiatric wing of Princess Margaret Hospital will have been open for 2½ years. The Sha Tin Hospital will have just opened and the Tuen Mun Hospital will have been completed and be in the process of opening. The construction of new clinics with increased numbers of consulting rooms should have greatly reduced waiting time for patients. A school dental service will have been in operation for three years. A dental school and a new medical school will be in full operation in the Universities.

I cannot say what the picture will be in social welfare as all aspects of both services and cash payments will be reviewed this year. But I hope this review whose findings will be published as a green paper, will result in general agreement on a system of services and payments appropriate to Hong Kong's particular circumstances which may be gradually introduced, and which will have been in full operation for several years before 1983.

Similarly in the field of labour legislation we will, for some years, have had a system of basic protection for the conditions of work and employment that will be tailored to our own situation and compare favourably with other similar Asian communities.

/Taken .....

Taken together all these things will produce a community whose circumstances are radically different from the present, but not necessarily much different from what they would have been by now or before, had not Hong Kong been swamped by immigrants in the 50s and had to deal with the consequences without external aid.

I have spoken in quantative terms, more or less in terms of bricks and mortar and reinforced concrete, because construction is basic to everything else. Of course this sort of presentation leaves a great deal unsaid about the wide fields in which the right answers must be found if the bricks and mortar are to do the job intended and benifit the public most.

It is on success in these fields that a healthy relationship between the public and government depends, how the various two-way channels of communication can be used and be available to all, how complaints can adequately be investigated, how responsiveness of the Government can be maintained and be apparent to the public. It is a field of importance to any government, but vital here where for well-known reasons Government is not dominated by the electoral process. Since in this respect Hong Kong is unique, unique techniques have been applied and are constantly evolving.

The Media, public bodies such as this, as well as many parts of the official and unofficial sides of Government all have a part to play that is much more important than in any other communities. The subject is as fascinating as it is crucial to the health of Hong Kong and it is one which myself, and all concerned with the Government and well-being of Hong Kong must constantly keep to the forefront of their minds.

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Then there are the related subjects of crime, corruption and narcotics. Of all fields in Hong Kong other than that of income, this is the one which touches people most closely and which has been my major single preoccupation; and I am most grateful for the public spirited and typical practical way in which the Chamber has given its support. All I can say is that with devoted and imaginative leadership and action in the services concerned, and with the newly created organisation and support of the public, some real progress can now be discerned; and I say this realising that some recent spectacular crimes have understandably disturbed the public. Provided the build-up of police strength, the leadership, the pressure and the public support can be maintained and strengthened, I believe that this progress will steadily become more evident.

In this process I am convinced that the provision of proper recreation facilities for young people and the help and organisation that can be provided by voluntary agencies and cen be coordinated by the Government Community Youth and District Recreation Services have a major part to play. The latter services are now well into their stride and should be exerting a strong and widely spread influence within the next two or three years, let alone 1983.

I believe that these goals, and the measures necessary to achieve them, have virtually universal support in Hong Kong. There is genuine enthusiasm at all levels of society to make Hong Kong the place it could so easily be. Of course we want this on its merits for its own sake. We also want to escape from the present situation in which there is sometimes more than a grain of truth in what our

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external and domestic critics have to say - however twisted or distorted or self-interested some of it may be. The only answer is to eliminate the defects as we are determined to do. Nor is it at all safe for a community of such financial and commercial prominence to lay itself open to such criticism for one moment longer than is inescapable. Meanwhile so long as we know we are doing our utmost to eliminate the defects we can accept the criticism with composure.

But the questions have been asked, in recent months, can our economy afford these things, and even if it can will we not be forced into more, that we cannot afford, through external political pressures.

Taking the point of external political pressure first; I can assure you that so far as HMG is concerned there is complete support for and agreement with the plans I have referred to tonight and outlined to the Legislative Council last October. These are Hong Kong's plans drawn up by the Hong Kong Government to meet Hong Kong's own needs. But HMG have a deep interest in them, both because of their concern for the welfare of the people of Hong Kong, and because ministers have a constitutional obligation to take responsibility for them and to defend them against critics in the UK both inside and outside the Palace of Westminster.

Hong Kong has every reason to be grateful for the staunch support that they have given, and this support has been facilitated by mutual agreement on the broad lines of Government action here - subject of course to the advice of the Executive Council and the approval of funds by the Legislative Council.

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There is constant dialogue between the Hong Kong Government and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on what we do. In the constitutional circumstances this is right, and within my experience the dialogue has been understanding, helpful and stimulating. As for pressure if that is the right word, there is just the same sort of pressure from London as we have here in Hong Kong; that is, the way to do things we have said we will do, when we have said we will do them -- always provided that the means are there. There is no evidence of any intention or attempt to press Hong Kong into an alien or inappropriate mould.

With regard to the first point, I think the principal fear is that Government targets have been set so high that they can only be reached by a rise in taxation so large as to undermine our economy. This is groundless. It is in fact a contradiction in terms, because it is so obvious that the circumstances of Hong Kong require a fiscal environment which is both attractive in comparison to competitive countries, and which also allows a margin of profit for enterprise and risk wide enough to retain and attract capital for the expansion of the economy and the preservation of employment in the particular circumstances of Hong Kong.

This is not something on which any Government in Hong Kong could possibly afford to take risks. Because of these apparent restraints the Government programmes have been phased so that on certain assumptions and broadly speaking they can be financed from growth.

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There is undoubtedly a reserve of taxability that could be safely tapped in case of need, but because of the circumstances I have mentioned in practice it is small in comparison to that of other countries. Of course I cannot say whether present rates of taxation can be maintained indefinitely. This depends on so many unknown factors - but the imperative of maintaining a comparatively low-tax fiscal system is inescapable.

I have heard a point of view which is to the effect that we should have the minimum of social programmes and labour legislation, and concentrate only on maximising profits and incomes. I am sure that this view is not shared by a body so responsible as the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce.

The Government will proceed with its programme in all fields methodically and prudently and within the capability of the economy. While it must take account of normal international standards its paramount criterion will always be what practical benefit any measure will confer on the people of Hong Kong. While there could be danger in doing too much too fast, or in undermining the competitive edge of industry or the will to work of the work force, your government will not be so foolish as to do any of these things. On the other hand, there would be very great danger indeed in just leaving things as they are.

This is no time for such faint-hearted fears. After all we have just emerged from the darkest time Hong Kong has known for many years. The 16 per cent growth rate in real terms confidently predicted for the year that is ending is a remarkable achievement. This has restored our prosperity, and the real value of wages and incomes, to the course from which they were knocked by the succession of external

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catastrophies that started with the commodity inflation of 1973 and ended with the recession of 1974 and 1975.

Moreover, the prospect now is for just the sort of solid steady growth that suits Hong Kong best, probably considerably better than six per cent this year, and with an average of about six per cent a year for the rest of the decade - always assuming no further external catastrophy. Though there are many unsolved economic problems in the world and in the markets to which we export, and though analysts have somewhat reduced their forecasts of growth in them, all are agreed that significant growth there will be - certainly sufficient growth to keep Hong Kong's capacity occupied provided we maintain our traditional enterprise and flexibility.

We have every reason to draw confidence from the way Hong Kong came through the recession and the speed of its recovery. Anglo-Chinese relations are excellent. We have the support of the British Government and our relations with it are firmly based on mutual understanding. The world's economy is slowly improving. We have every reason to have confidence in our future prospects. This is the time not for questioning our means or our objectives, but for determination to pursue the course we have so carefully charted to make Hong Kong the place it can so easily be within a short span of years. Certainly my last years here will be devoted to this end.

As I see it, the essential feature of Hong Kong at this moment is that its prospects are good. In these prospects clearly this Chamber has a major part to play. I appreciate how much of their time many of its leading members spend on public affairs. The Chamber includes so many of the important firms of Hong Kong that it is very largely on their enterprise and skill, and that of their

/employees, ...

employees, that the commercial and financial expansion of Hong Kong depends. I acknowledge the initiatives the Chamber is taking in many fields to achieve this object, and the close traditional collaboration it is maintaining with the Government and the Trade Development Council. Provided we all work together, in Hong Kong we can achieve more quicker than anywhere else in the world.

Gentlemen I thank you for your hospitality, and ask you to rise and drink a toast to the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce and the prosperity of its members in the coming year.

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