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# \$127 billion airport, port development confirmed

By ANDY HO

THE Governor, Sir David Wilson, yesterday outlined his boldest plan yet to take Hongkong through 1997 into the 21st century headed by a massive \$127 billion airport and port development, greater educational opportunities and the building of a new town.

As well as seeking to use the territory's economic power to secure the future, Sir David also committed the Government to a faster pace of political reform and a Bill of Rights by next summer.

He pleaded for China to heed the wishes of Hongkong people in formulating the Basic Law, but warned against residents meddling in China's domestic politics.

During his 85-minute annual policy speech to the Legislative Council he outlined the most ambitious development plans ever undertaken by any Governor.

Sir David said the challenges presented to Hongkong could only be met with continued commitment from the community as a whole.

In his third policy speech since taking office in 1987, he also unveiled initiatives on immigration, human rights and manpower training.

The cornerstone of his "building for the future" policy is a new international airport at the Tseung Koon Ook Lap Kok on

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western Lantau Island which would begin operating by early 1997 – ahead of the handover to Chinese rule on July 1.

The two-runway airport would handle 80 million passengers a year – three times the capacity of the existing Kai Tak facilities.

Described as the largest project ever undertaken in Hongkong, the airport will include back-up port facilities, rail and highway links and a new satellite town for 150,000 people in the nearby Tung Chung valley complete with industrial and commercial facilities.

Once the new airport is ready, Kai Tak would be closed down and height restrictions lifted in parts of Kowloon to allow for redevelopment.

Sir David hoped that the enormous cost of the scheme could be shared by the private sector and felt that the projects were commercially viable.

Stockbrokers saw the airport project as a positive sign of the Government's commitment to Hongkong's future and took advantage by selling shares. The Hang Seng Index shed 36 points to close at 2,808 yesterday.

Bankers, on the other hand, reacted swiftly to accept the challenge to help finance the mammoth project. Hang Seng Bank chairman Sir Quo-wei Lee said the banking sector was gearing itself up.

But he was quick to warn the Government of the potential risks and inflationary effects in mismanaging such a huge expenditure.

"The magnitude of the problem is such that the Government would need money skills and management vision of a very different calibre," Sir Quo-wei said.

The Governor himself also admitted that the sheer size of the projects would need a rethink on labour policy.

"It may well be necessary to consider exceptional arrangements to ensure that we have an adequate supply of labour so that they are completed on time and without causing inflationary pressures," Sir David said.

The extra labour demand will most probably be filled by workers from China.

The Governor's blueprint was generally welcomed by legislators as forward looking.

Senior Legislative Councillor Allen Lee Peng-fei hailed Sir David's speech as the best he had heard in his 11 years as legislator.

"It is the best delivery from the Governor when we are facing so many challenges and changes in Hongkong, particularly on the political front.

"I believe the people of Hongkong would be proud of our past achievements and the plans for the future," Mr Lee said.

The Governor's 62-page policy address was his most substantial public statement since the June 4 massacre in Beijing.

Although he avoided any mention of the bloody crackdown, he observed that local confidence had been badly shaken and that the incident had had a traumatic effect on Hongkong.

"We have all been forcefully reminded how vulnerable Hongkong is to developments which occur outside our borders over which we have no control," Sir David said.

This had led to a significant increase in applications for emigrations and demands for right of abode in the United Kingdom, he noted.

He hoped the British Government's planned nationality package would boost confidence and urged Britain to be flexible.

"It will need to be as generous as possible; it will need to minimise divisiveness, so far as possible; and it will

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## Bold vision for Hongkong's future

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need to ensure that those covered can acquire the right of abode in the UK without having to leave Hongkong," Sir David said.

On another thorny issue, he urged Hongkong to show tolerance towards the Vietnamese boat people and ruled out abandoning the first asylum policy.

While noting the growing Sino-Hongkong links, he steered clear of the current diplomatic row between the territory, London and Beijing.

He made no reference to strained relations with Beijing but warned Hongkong not to interfere in China's internal politics and appealed to residents for self-restraint in exercising their freedoms.

Nor did he comment on how Hongkong would handle future requests for political asylum or the stationing of Chinese troops in the territory after 1997.

Instead, Sir David only urged the Beijing-appointed Basic Law drafters to heed local views on the post-1997 mini-constitution now being drafted.

He touched briefly on political development, conveying a government receptive to local views.

Sir David acknowledged that there is a "widely-held view in the community" in support of a faster rate of development in 1991".

Leading liberal activist, legislator Szeto Wah however denounced the Governor's remarks on democratisation as too conservative and cautious.

He said if there was no interference from China, Hongkong should have been able to embark on a faster pace of political reform.

Sir David also announced that the public would be consulted on a Bill of Rights by the end of the year with draft legislation ready by next July.

The legislation would allow those suffering human rights violations to seek redress in the courts.

Educational opportunities were given a major boost by the Governor, who revised upward last year's projection on the number of places in first degree courses from 14 per cent to 18 per cent.

This would mean more than doubling the number from 7,000 next year to about 15,000 in 1995.

As an investment in the territory's young people, who make up a quarter of the population, he decided to set up a Commission on Youth early next year to develop a Charter for Youth to cater to needs and aspirations of the youngsters.

To tap the talent of overseas businessmen, Sir David announced the setting up of an International Business Committee to be chaired by the Chief Secretary, Sir David Ford.

A new Hongkong Technology Centre was also designated to be built close to the City Polytechnic.

The director of the Hongkong General Chamber of Commerce, Brigadier Ian Christie said the Governor projected the right vision of Hongkong's future.

"There has been too much psychological pessimism around, we should do our best to continue to make Hongkong economically prosper.

Sir David ended his vision of the future with a plea for leadership.

"We need leadership from within the community. In 1997, Hongkong will be run by Hongkong people. They must have confidence in themselves, and in the leaders they choose, if they are to enjoy the stability and progress, for themselves and their families, for which this whole community works so hard," he said.