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by Sukke -

A bad week for territory

IF anyone is still in any doubt about the excellent judgement shown by our government all they have to do is look at what happened during one week this month.

A powerful consortium of local and overseas firms told our government to take their cable television and stuff it.

The gentleman who signed the agreement on behalf of the government said that no performance penalties were built into the contract because the government was afraid that they would not get any bidders for the contract.

This means that the government was afraid it would not get as much money if a penalty clause had been built into the contract.

If this had been done then obviously the bidders would have calculated the costs of this penalty in their tender price.

As it is now, the Hongkong public — and especially the taxpayers — will not get any cable television and not get any money.

The same gentleman then said that at the time the tender was written the Hongkong Government had not heard about satellite television, which had been operating for at least 10 years elsewhere in the world.

This proves that civil servants shouldn't try to make out that they are businessmen.

In the same week, while the Chief Secretary was telling everyone in North America how wonderful Hongkong is, the government managed to make Hongkong look about as good as present day Burma.

It defied a High Court Judge and re-arrested 111 Vietnamese refugees who had just been freed by the court.

It was only when the government read the condemnations from around the world on how the judiciary was treated and what effect this action could have after 1997, that it back-pedalled and released the refugees on bail.

The funny thing about all this is the Chief Secretary telling people that when they make speeches outside Hongkong they shouldn't run Hongkong down.

Nothing that anybody could say outside Hongkong could run it down as much as these government actions.

I can promise the Chief Secretary that my next speech outside Hongkong will not mention how well Hongkong has dealt with cable television nor the Vietnamese refugees because I really don't want to run Hongkong down when speaking to outsiders.

I will not mention that the Hongkong Government didn't build the necessary new airport when private finance was available five years ago.

Nor will I mention that they encouraged a destructive labour shortage, which together with irresponsible salary rises for the civil service, added to badly controlled growth of that service and caused a 10 per cent per annum inflation rate for the past two years.

This has served to make Hongkong people poorer and has affected its competitiveness by eroding our industrial capacity and productivity.

This is helped by an unjustified devaluation of the Hongkong dollar because it clings to a fixed US dollar exchange rate.

I won't mention any of this outside Hongkong because I take our Chief Secretary's request very seriously.

I just wish that he would do the same.