

HK Standard

12/6/97

Activists complain at protest venues 'too far from action'

By Priscilla Cheung

PRO-DEMOCRACY legislators claim areas suggested for protests during the handover ceremonies are too far from the venue and the arrangements are an infringement of their rights.

The director of the Handover Ceremony Co-ordination Office, Stephen Lam Shui-lun, said the office was considering designating areas near the Hong Kong Arts Centre and Great Eagle Centre on Harbour Road, Wan Chai, for protests.

Protesters would not be allowed in the restricted areas between HMS Tamar, the Convention and Exhibition Centre and its extension for security reasons, Mr Lam said.

But Democratic legislator Yeung Sum said the arrangements were a deliberate effort to fend off protesters.

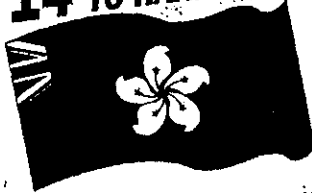
"The protesters cannot even see the dignitaries. Why bother having a protest if the protesters cannot even see the action?" Dr Yeung said.

"You might as well protest in front of the television and shout slogans when the Convention Centre appears on television."

Frontier legislator Emily Lau Wai-hing said: "It's like someone wants to protest the Legco, and you send them to the pier down in Sheung Wan."

Democratic Legislator Lee Wing-tat and April Fifth Action Group leader

14 DAYS COUNTDOWN TO HANDOVER



Leung Kwok-hung said they preferred the area near the Harbour Road fire station, but no protest plans had been made.

"At least the dignitaries could hear our slogans," Mr Lee said.

Mr Lam said banners and placards would be banned from the venue if they posed security and safety threats.

"If they pose security problems, the staff would take appropriate actions," Mr Lam said.

Meanwhile, the Legislative Council Constitutional Affairs Panel passed a motion to write to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, urging him to reiterate Britain's opposition to the Provisional Legislative Council (PLC) in his speech at the handover ceremony.

The panel will also ask non-ministerial level British delegates to boycott the PLC swearing-in ceremony.

Ms Lau said: "Mr Blair should make clear his position regarding the Provisional Legislative Council and whether non-ministerial level delegates should attend the swearing-in ceremony."