

Mainland, HK soccer fans to be kept apart

Even toilets will be segregated for World Cup qualifier to avoid trouble in Mong Kok

Chan Kin-wa and Ernest Kao

Hong Kong and mainland soccer fans will be separated from each other and even allocated different toilets and fast food kiosks to avoid any potential clash at the politically sensitive World Cup qualifier at Mong Kok Stadium tomorrow night.

Mainland visitors will be allocated their own facilities in the North Stand, according to Hong Kong Football Association chairman Brian Leung Hung-tak.

A divide will also be set up between the two groups of fans, he added.

In October, the association was fined 5,000 Swiss francs (HK\$38,500) after Hong Kong fans booed the Chinese national anthem during the home match against Qatar and a carton of lemon tea was thrown at a Qatari player.

The association had been warned previously after fans also jeered the national anthem at their first two home matches against Bhutan and the Maldives.

"We have been warned and also penalised by Fifa for failing to control the crowd, and if it happens again (tomorrow), we definitely face more severe punishment," Leung said yesterday.

"I sincerely hope the fans will follow and respect the rules or the outcome will be very serious, not only affecting the football association but also the Hong Kong representative team," he said.

Chinese fans will have to enter the stadium through Boundary Street, while home fans will use the Flower Market Street entrance.

Reports from mainland websites said coaches would be used to transport Chinese fans from Shenzhen to the venue.

"I would also ask the home fans not to try to provoke the visiting fans and to stay calm if they are provoked," said Leung. "We come to the match because we want to support the Hong Kong team and that remains the most important thing."

Leung also reminded fans to bring few personal belongings to minimise the time needed for security checks.

He said water bottles would be strictly forbidden.

In view of the terrorist attack during the friendly match between France and Germany in Paris, Leung asked fans to remain calm if there was an unexpected incident.

Police have conducted risk assessments for tomorrow's match and arranged enough manpower to deal with any clashes.

Yu Wai-kit, assistant district commander for Mong Kok, urged soccer fans to heed police advice, follow house rules set by the organiser and not to engage in any disorderly activities. While Yu did not cite figures, it is understood about 1,200 officers will be deployed.

From 9.35pm onwards, Flower Market Road, Yuen Ngai Street, Yuen Po Street and the Prince Edward Road West service road will be closed until the 6,000 people attending the match disperse. Police will decide on the day whether further arrangements are needed.

> 'MATCH MADE POLITICAL' C4

AVIATION



The HK\$1.5 million plane, B-Koo Inspiration, takes off for its maiden flight at Hong Kong International Airport yesterday. Photos: Edward Wong

City's first homebuilt plane takes flight

Naomi Ng
naomi.ng@scmp.com

Hong Kong's first homebuilt aircraft successfully took off at the airport yesterday morning.

The two-seater propeller aircraft soared 900 metres into the cloudy skies at around 7.30am, making two rounds in the air before descending 15 minutes later.

The HK\$1.5 million plane, named "B-Koo Inspiration", is the first aircraft constructed, registered and certified in Hong Kong.

"The 'Inspiration' project has been a labour of love for a big group of people over the past seven years and I would like to thank everyone who helped to make my childhood dream become a reality," said Cathay Pacific captain Hank Cheng Chor-hang, who piloted the maiden flight.

Cheng bought the kit from Van's Aircraft Inc, an American aircraft manufacturer, and built it from scratch along with 10 other team members and hundreds of secondary school students from St Paul's Convent School in Causeway Bay over the years.

"I'm very happy, I don't think it could have turned out any bet-

ter," said Cheng, who was worried the wet weather would put a damper on their plans to fly.

"All the work in the seven years paid off, and it doesn't only



I'm very happy, I don't think it could have turned out any better

HANK CHENG CHOR-HANG



Pilot Hank Cheng (far right) and the team behind the aircraft.

carry meaning for me, but also for the team."

The team, consisting of engineers and technicians also from Cathay, was in charge of all pre-flight testing and documenting risk assessments, making sure the plane adhered to all operational standards.

Cheng spent 2½ weeks training to fly the propeller plane in the United States last month – a completely different proposition to the Boeing 777s he usually pilots for Cathay.

The plane still has to complete the rest of its flight test programme, which means Cheng has to log at least 25 hours of fly-

ing time before the plane is considered completely safe to fly internationally.

Afterwards he hopes to embark on an around-the-world journey that would span across 50 countries and would take around four months to complete.

"I've been flying commercial for 14 years, a lot of times when you fly through all these countries, you never really get a chance to get a good look at the places," Cheng told the Post.

His plan is to depart from Hong Kong in June 2016, head north to China, go east through Russia, North America, Iceland and Europe, head back down to India and Thailand, and return to the city by September.

Cheng added that it would make history as the first Hong Kong single-engine aircraft to make the trip.

The amateur-built aircraft, an RV-8, is 6.46 metres long with a wingspan of 7.38m, and has a top speed of 360km/h. The plane is able to make a trip roughly the distance from Hong Kong to Taiwan in five hours before it would have to refuel.

There are currently more than 9,000 similar RV models certified around the world.

POLICY

Beijing tipped to relax fiscal rules to spur economy

Wendy Wu
wendy.wu@scmp.com

The central government is expected to try to counter economic headwinds with a more progressive fiscal policy, possibly by allowing a higher ratio of debt to gross domestic product.

The expectations follow comments earlier this month by Vice-Finance Minister Zhu Guangyao (朱光耀), who has questioned whether fiscal restrictions derived from European Union standards more than two decades ago are still relevant today.

These benchmarks call for a deficit/GDP ratio of 3 per cent and a debt/GDP ratio of 60 per cent. "Rigidly" sticking to the concepts did not help reform or growth, Zhu told a financial summit hosted by Caixin in Beijing. Leaders are due to meet next month for the annual Central Economic Working Conference, where they will set policy directions for 2016.

Li Ruoyu, an economist with

the State Information Centre, an official think tank, said there was room to expand the fiscal deficit ratio next year to about 2.5 per cent. That is higher than the 2.3 per cent this year and last year's 2.1 per cent.

Premier Li Keqiang (李克强) has said the government should have a proactive fiscal policy, increase tax breaks, expand effective investment and speed up infrastructure spending. Addressing the Central Party School last month, Li said the red lines of 3 per cent and 60 per cent were not even observed in the European Union. "We don't have to



Zhu Guangyao, vice-minister of finance, has questioned limits.

copy those standards, but even if we do, there is quite a lot of room left for us," Li said, adding that the fiscal deficit ratio for China would not surpass 2.4 per cent this year.

China's debt/GDP ratio was 56 per cent, much lower than 100 per cent in the United States and 250 per cent in Japan.

"I have required the Ministry of Finance to step up intensity of fiscal policy," Li said.

China might take a cue from developed countries and expand its fiscal deficit to try to stop further economic decline.

Haitong Securities analyst Jiang Chao said fresh stimulus measures were "imperative" and the discussion of fiscal standards indicated a "possible breakthrough of funding restrictions and a more proactive fiscal policy".

There have been increasing calls for China to use fiscal policy to lift demand amid the central bank's hesitation to inject too much money into the economy.

The People's Bank of China said in its third-quarter monetary

policy report last week it would not inject an excessive amount of money into the economy in an attempt to clear the market.

Jiang said there was limited room for further interest rate cuts, and fiscal policy needed to operate alongside monetary policy to boost demand.

Infrastructure construction as a pillar of investment would be one direction for fiscal fund flows. China spent 400 billion yuan (HK\$485.6 billion) on railways in the first eight months – half the year's target.

Jiang also pointed to the government's plan to expand spending on public housing construction in the coming five years as it seeks to reduce poverty.

Li Ruoyu said there was not much room to spend more on rails and roads but other infrastructure areas such as underground pipelines or cable networks could absorb extra funds.

The government should make better use of the 4.6 trillion yuan in outstanding fiscal deposits, which is largely sitting idle.

PROPERTY

MAINLAND FIRMS EYE PRIME HK OFFICES

Evergrande and China Life deals highlight keen demand by enterprises from across broder for grade A premises in major business districts

Peggy Sito
peggy.sito@scmp.com

Hong Kong's grade A office towers are starting to fill up with mainland enterprises as they buy en bloc buildings and lease office space in the prime districts amid rapid business expansion.

Their explosive demand for office space spurred rents for grade A offices to rise for a tenth consecutive month in October, with the vacancy rate in Central dropping to about 1 per cent, according to property consultants.

Mainland firms stole the spotlight again on Friday when two of them acquired two office blocks from Hong Kong-based property companies in the most expensive office tower transactions in the city.

Mainland developer Evergrande Real Estate agreed to buy the 26-storey Mass Mutual Tower in Wan Chai from Chinese Estates Holdings for a record-breaking HK\$12.5 billion.

On the same day, China Life, the mainland's largest insurer, announced the purchase of an en bloc office tower with a two-storey retail block at One HarbourGate in Hung Hom for HK\$5.85 billion from Wheelock & Co.

The trend likely to continue. "Chinese companies will be the key driver of new take-up and office acquisition in the next three to five years," said Thomas Lam, head of valuation and consultancy at Knight Frank.

A study by another property consultant, Colliers International, said mainland banks' demand for office space in Hong Kong would increase by 450,000 sq ft in next five years.

After the first wave of expansion, three of the "Big Four" state-owned banks – Bank of China, China Construction Bank and Agricultural Bank of China – have their own office towers in Hong Kong's CBD in Central.

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) is leasing several floors, or more than

140,000 sq ft, with naming rights at ICBC Tower in Central.

"It has been rumoured that ICBC intends to build its own office tower in Central when the Hong Kong government releases sites in the coming years," a property analyst said.

Colliers sees a batch of mid-sized Chinese banks coming to Hong Kong with the full backing of the central government under the "Going Out" policy and the latest Qualified Domestic Individual Investor (QDII2) programme.

There are 11 mainland banks licensed to operate in Hong Kong and they occupy a total of 780,000 sq ft. Assuming that a second batch of 15 mid-sized commercial banks from the mainland set

\$12.5b
The price Evergrande Real Estate agreed to pay for the Mass Mutual Tower in Wan Chai, in HK\$

up full offices in the next five years, the impact on Central will be new demand for 450,000 sq ft, according to Colliers' estimate. Apart from banks, mainland finance companies such as securities firms are also crossing the border.

"Mainland companies buying en bloc is to get an asset base in Hong Kong ... it shows a long-term commitment to Hong Kong," said Piers Brunner, chief executive greater China at Knight Frank.

However, most of the grade A office buildings in Central are still held by major Hong Kong developers who are showing no sign they intend to sell. Analysts expect mainland firms' bloc office investment opportunities will mainly arise in Wan Chai, Kowloon or non-core districts.



Mainland banks are keen to acquire offices in the city. Photo: Reuters

CONTINUED FROM A1

Occupy protest anger turned against doctors

against paediatrician Dr Alvin Chan Yee-shing over botched treatment of a boy's injured finger highlighted in the recent High Court judgment.

Liberal Party lawmaker Tommy Cheung Yu-yan is introducing a private member's bill to reform the watchdog's operations through a doubling of lay council members to eight and preliminary investigation committee lay members to two. Cheung's proposals will be discussed today by the Legislative Council's health services panel.

In a reply to Post inquiries, a spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau said it was still in discussions with the council about increasing the number of lay assessors.

"To ensure that the council secretariat is able to carry out its functions efficiently, the government is reviewing the manpower and other resource requirements of the secretariat and will make corresponding arrangements when necessary."

Local media reported last year that some medical clinics had re-

fused to treat police officers during the Occupy protests, with one posting a notice saying police involved in using tear gas or pepper spray to attack students or civilians were "not welcome".

Some 600 doctors led by the head of the Occupy medical team, Dr Au Yiu-kai, issued a statement condemning police violence, while over 550 doctors, including liver transplant expert Dr Lo Chung-mau, signed a petition that likened the street protests to a "cancer" damaging Hong Kong's core values.

Au said doctors should treat everyone in the same way regardless of their race, religion or political belief, and it was wrong for a doctor to turn away a patient.

"But I understand that some doctors with specific beliefs might fear facing accusations about under or overtreatment by police officers who consulted them. So they made such a move to prevent building up a doctor-patient relationship with unwelcome parties," he said. "This made people feel uncomfortable, but is understandable."

DIPLOMACY

US allies on 'dual track' as China's clout grows

Beijing seen as an economic partner, Washington as a security anchor

Kristine Kwok
kristine.kwok@scmp.com

As President Xi Jinping (习近平) continues on his whirlwind schedule of overseas tours, an increasing number of countries are treading a delicate line in their relationships with China and the United States as competition between the two intensifies.

As China increases its presence on the world stage – Xi is visiting Turkey and the Philippines this week, Paris and South Africa next month – observers say some of Washington's traditional allies are adopting the "dual-track" system, already in place in some East Asian countries, in

which China is seen as a key economic partner while the US is a security anchor. This is presenting them with a dilemma and forcing Beijing to rethink its approach to diplomacy, they say.

Escalating tensions between the two powers over the South China Sea have polarised the region, with countries – claimants or not – either challenging China's behaviour or seeking to avoid upsetting Beijing.

The issue has already stirred discussions within the South Korean government on how to respond in order not to offend either power, a source said. This year, the US' assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, Daniel Russel, said Seoul

should "speak up" over the South China Sea, presenting a dilemma for Seoul, which increasingly relies on China for its economic growth while the US remains a vital security ally.

Countries outside Asia could find themselves in similar tight spots as China's economic clout expanded, said Yan Xuetong, an international relations expert with Tsinghua University in Beijing. Yan said European countries were increasingly siding with Beijing for economic opportunities while maintaining security ties with Washington.

"These countries have only two choices – either they choose a side or they remain neutral, there is no third choice," Yan said.

London, a US ally, rolled out the red carpet for Xi's state visit last month and signed deals worth billions of US dollars.

Britain's announcement in March that it would join the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank surprised many and prompted Washington to express concern over "a trend of



These countries have only two choices – either choose a side or remain neutral

YAN XUETONG, TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY

constant accommodation" of Beijing.

Yan said China could "hide behind others" in the past when countries shared power more equally than now. But the world was becoming increasingly bipolar and China could no longer "lie low", he said, referring to late leader Deng Xiaoping's (邓小平) foreign policy mantra.

But David Zweig, a professor at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, said Beijing's assertive behaviour had backfired and it had failed to translate its economic power into strategic influence. "Anytime it tries to flex its military power, it creates a backlash," Zweig said. "As its economic power shifts to strategic power, it causes the states to move away from China and get close to the US."