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AIR POLLUTANTS IN HONG KONG ARE LOCALLY GENERATED

Studies carried out by the Atmospheric Research Group of the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology over the past several years clearly indicate that the worsening air pollution in many parts of Hong Kong is caused primarily by local emissions rather than by pollutants from the Chinese Mainland. The most urgent problem to be resolved comes from fossil fuel burning vehicles, aggravated by the "street canyon effect" of high-rise buildings.

Dr. Ming FANG of HKUST's Institute for Environment and Sustainable Development and his colleagues have been studying the air quality in different areas in Hong Kong since 1993. The results show that no part of Hong Kong is free from air pollution. In addition to the well-known "black spots" of Causeway Bay and Mong Kok, air pollution is high in places like Central-Western District, Waterloo Road near the Lion Rock Tunnel and Tung Chung. The prevailing easterly winds transport Hong Kong's air pollutants from east to west raising pollution levels in Tung Chung even before the commissioning of the Tsing Ma Bridge. The results also show that airborne material from Asia, far and near, can be found in Hong Kong's atmosphere. Dust particles from as far as the Gobi Desert were detected in 1996.

Dr Ming FANG believes the immediate solution to the air pollution problem is to reduce the source—vehicular emissions. In the long run, Hong Kong needs a much better inventory of all its air pollution sources, so that policy makers and enforcement agencies can avoid further creation of pollutants through better planning, and stricter enforcement of legislation. An economic policy taking account of most critical environmental and educational issues is therefore needed.

Note to Editors:
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