



大橋高鐵當務之急 是加快完成



中英社評

本港兩大工程基建項目：港珠澳大橋及粵深港高速鐵路香港段，均出現工程建造費用大幅超支及完工日期嚴重延誤的問題；兩大項目追加撥款的申請已定期本月18日向立法會提出，又一場尖銳的「拉布」戰將出現在全港市民面前。

眼前，如何看待這場「拉布」戰，並不是什麼要為特區政府「保皇」或「護航」的問題，而是關係到全港700萬市民的切身利益和長遠福祉。市民必須支持政府追加撥款，讓工程能夠盡早完成、付諸使用。

事實是，兩大工程項目大幅超支，是不可以接受的，所謂地質欠佳、地層複雜以至人手短缺等，都不是可以成立的理由；對此，特區政府相關部門首先必須認真自我檢討、承擔責任，向市民作出清楚交代，而不能企圖卸責。

如日前政府與港鐵公司就高鐵路超支達成的協議，政府支付超支的196億，港鐵公司則借貸後再派息195億予政府，這裏面，應該承認確有「財技」成分存在，但不如此超支問題就無法解決；而港鐵目前財政狀況有能力容許借貸，日後高鐵路建成通車也會令到公司的資產和財政實力進一步提高，小股東和市民不會有太大的風險和損失。

當然，更重要的是，目前兩大工程都已經到了「欲罷不能」的地步，工程一旦擱淺或撤建，損失只會更加慘重，用運輸及房屋局局長張炳良的話說，是「賠了夫人又折兵」，市民只會一無所得。

而更令人感到憤慨的是，今日口口聲聲要對工程超支撥款「拉布」的反對派議員，真正就是造成工程延誤和成本



▲港珠澳大橋出現工程建造費用大幅超支及完工日期嚴重延誤的問題

上升的罪魁禍首，當日不是他們會內會外連成一氣、唆使菜園村村民拒絕遷村、提出司法覆核，高鐵的動工日期最少可以提早一年。

還必須指出的是，兩大工程項目出現超支和延誤，與工程本身的正當性和必要性是兩回事。直到今天，「長毛」一夥醞釀「拉布」，阻止追加撥款，矛頭除了指向特區政府和港鐵公司外，還再次企圖從根本上否定大橋和高鐵的興建，指兩大工程是什麼「大白象」、「好大喜功」和「討好中央」，完全否定加強兩地聯繫和跨境交通的必要性。

事實是，大橋和高鐵，連接粵港港珠深澳，是一項重大的區域建設，高鐵路建成通車後更納入「四縱四橫」全國高鐵路網，「夕發朝至」，睡醒一覺已抵京城。隨着未來國家重大戰略部署「一帶一路」的落實施行，粵港深高鐵路的作用將會更加突出，其重要性不是一時一地短期利益的「井蛙之見」所能比擬的。

因此，面對今日兩大工程超支、需要追加撥款的事實，當日阻撓工程上馬的反對派議員如再「拉布」作梗，只能再一次徹底暴露他們與全港市民為敵、損害港人利益的醜惡嘴臉。對此，立法會財委會主席陳健波、工務委會主席盧偉國，對特區政府提出的大橋、高鐵路追加撥款申請，正考慮於今年底新年、聖誕假期及明年春節假期前開會議商討解決，因為大橋追加的54.6億撥款需明年一月底前解決，高鐵的196億追加則需於明年三月底前解決，否則兩大工程的用款就會「乾塘」，無以為繼，從而造成進一步的、更大的額的超支。

至於高鐵路「一地兩檢」問題，涉及「一國兩制」和基本法，事關重大，不能匆匆解決，更不應與工程追加撥款混為一談。反對派不要節外生枝、枉作小人。

資料圖片

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Urgent priority is to speed up construction of the Bridge and Express Rail Link

Two large-scale infrastructure construction projects, the Hong Kong sections of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, both suffer problems of excessive overspending and serious delay in completion. Additional funding applications for the two projects are set to be submitted to the Legislative Council (Legco) on the 18th of this month. Another fierce filibustering campaign will be mounted before the eyes of Hong Kong people.

At this moment, how should this upcoming filibustering campaign be viewed? This is not an issue concerning "defending" or "convoing" the SAR Government, but one concerning 7 million Hong Kong people's own interests and long-term benefits. Citizens must support the government's request for additional funding so that the projects could be completed and in operation as early as possible.

As a matter of fact, the excessive overspending of the two projects is unacceptable. So-called poor geological conditions, complicated geological strata and shortage of labour, are all untenable reasons. For this, relevant authorities of the SAR Government must do some serious soul-searching, accept responsibility and face the music. They must make a clear explanation to the public instead of trying to shirk responsibility and put the blame on others.

Taking for example the agreement reached earlier by the government with the MTR Corporation Ltd on the overspending of the Express Rail Link project, according to which, the government will bear the extra cost of \$19.6 billion, and then the MTR Corp. - after borrowing loans - will pay a HK\$19.51 billion special dividend to the government. Admittedly, some "financing technique" is involved here, but otherwise the problem of overspending cannot be solved. And given its current financial position, the MTR Corp. has the capability to borrow. After the Express Rail Link starts operation, the company's assets and financial strength will be further improved. Hence, small share-holders and citizens won't face too heavy risks or suffer too much losses.

Needless to say, more importantly, it is now too late to give up the two projects. Once they are shelved or canceled, losses would be even much heavier. Or in the words of Secretary for Transport and Housing Anthony Cheung Bing-leung, it would be like "pouring good money after bad", nothing to be gained by citizens.

What is more outrageous is that the opposition lawmakers now vowing to launch a filibuster to block the extra funding for the two projects are exactly the culprits who have caused their delay and excessive overspending. Had they not ganged up inside and outside the Chamber to instigate residents of Choi Yuen Village to refuse removal and file a judicial review, construction of the Express Rail Link could have started at least one year earlier.

It must also be pointed out that overspending and delay of the two projects have nothing to do with their legitimacy and necessity. Up to date, "Long Hair" and his ilk plan to launch a filibuster to block the additional funding applications, once again in an attempt - besides targeting at the SAR Government and MTR Corp. - to completely reject the construction of the Bridge and the Express Rail Link, asserting the projects as "White Elephants", "overambitious and unrealistic" and for the purpose of "fawning on the Central Government". As such they completely deny the necessity of strengthening linkage between Hong Kong and the Mainland and cross-boundary transport.

In fact, the Bridge and the Express Rail Link are major regional infrastructure projects to link together Guangdong, Hong Kong, Zhuhai, Shenzhen and Macao. After completion of construction, the Express Rail Link will be linked into the nation's "four vertical and four horizontal" high-speed railway network. By then, one starts at dusk and will arrive in Beijing overnight. With the implementation of the nation's major strategic plan of "One Belt One Road", the role of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link will become even more important, which can hardly be seen by one with temporary, local and short-term interests in mind like a frog living at the bottom of a well.

Therefore, in face of the fact that extra funding is needed for the two overspending projects, if the opposition lawmakers who had obstructed the start of the projects once again launch a filibuster to block the extra funding, then they will only once again fully expose their ugly features of making an

enemy of all Hong Kong people and damaging Hong Kong people's interests. Now, Chairman of the Legco Finance Committee Chan Kin-por and Chairman of the Public Works Subcommittee Lo Wai-kyok are considering to hold extra meetings respectively ahead of the Christmas and New Year holidays and before the Lunar New Year holiday to deliberate the government's extra funding applications for the Bridge and Express Rail Link. For, the \$5.46 billion extra funding for the Bridge has to be granted before the end of January, 2016, and the \$19.6 extra funding for the Express Rail Link must be decided before March, 2016. Otherwise, the two projects will run out of funds and construction has to be suspended, which will cause even more overspending.

As for the issue of "juxtaposed border control" of the Express Rail Link, it is matter of principle concerning "one country two systems" and the Basic Law. Thus it must not be dealt with in haste. Neither should it be confused with the extra funding for the project. In this regard, the opposition must not create side issues to lower themselves.

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WORDS AND USAGE

Untenable (adj.) - If something is untenable, you can't defend it or justify it. (站不住腳的，不能成立的，難以維持的)

Examples: 1. If three people in four no longer support the government, isn't this an untenable situation? 2. If your disagreement with your teacher puts you in an untenable position, you better just admit you made a mistake and get on with it.

Soul-searching (noun) - Deep or critical examination of one's motives, actions, beliefs, etc. (自我反省，閉門思過)

Examples: 1. You'd better do some serious soul-searching before you decide to leave her. 2. After much soul-searching, he decided it was wrong to vote in the elections.

Face the music (idiom) - to accept criticism or punishment for something you have done. (承擔後果)

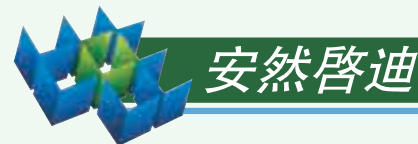
Examples: 1. Mary broke a dining-room window and had to face the music when her father got home. 2. After failing a math test, Tom had to go home and face the music.

Pour/throw good money after bad (idiom) - To spend more money on something that has already failed. (賠了夫人又折兵，賠了又賠)

Examples: 1. If you try to fix that car, you'll simply be pouring good money after bad. 2. Investors in the project began to pull out as they realised they were simply throwing good money after bad.

Fawn on/upon sb (phrasal verb) - To praise and flatter someone. (阿諛奉承，溜鬚拍馬，討好)

Examples: 1. She doesn't seem to mind being fawned on by her fans. 2. The puppy was fawning on its master.



安然啓迪

擇師而教

教育下一代是關於社稷興衰的大事，很多人都要求政府在教育方面有更多作為。然而，正如佛利民所說：「其中一個最大的錯誤，就是從一項政策的意圖而非效果去判斷其優劣。」

在美國，聯邦教育部是在1980年才由卡特總統設立，但美國在1980年前的國力也不是太差。三十多年來，教育部的規模膨脹了幾倍，但公立教育的實業卻節節下退，並加劇貧富懸殊。首都華盛頓、巴爾的摩、紐約是政府教育經費最高的地方，同時也是最差的學校的集中地！

何以如此？從前，美國的公立學校由細小的地區各自經營，鄰近的學校在招生方面有充分的競爭；但當上級政府日益掌控、壟斷教育制度，不僅扼殺因材施教的多元選擇，也壓滅學校間競爭的創新動力。2010年推出的全國「一刀切」公立教育標準Common Core，更是人神共憤。

佛利民生前積極提倡「學券制」，給每個孩子的家長一筆政府資助的學費，可選擇在任何公立或私立學校充用。於是經濟環境較差的孩子也有條件入讀私立學校，學校之間的競爭可促進教育質素。但我對這個建議有所保留，因為政府一旦用納稅人的錢補貼私立學校，勢必連原本相對自主的私立體系都要加緊管制，令教育選擇反而減少。

市場競爭 進步之泉

我的建議則不牽涉增加對私立教育的資助。現時，香港中學文憑試基於其公營和法定地位，實際上壟斷了絕大部分學校的課程。若使文憑試不再享有官方專利，而是跟其他考試對等存在，各種課程和考試便可公平競爭，讓學校自由選擇。就像美國私校課程變化多元，私營的大學入學試SAT和ACT相爭互長，不見得有什麼問題。

我無意質疑教育官員的水平，但我知道任何人在競爭下都會比在壟斷下有所進步。如果政府對文憑試有信心，真金不怕火煉，不用擔心其地位被取代。如果有人設計出比政府更好的課程，歡迎加入市場，惠澤師生；如果他的課程很差，乏人問津，也不用怕他傷害到什麼人。在官方課程下，經常有人抱怨這個教得太深、那個教得太淺。增加教育選擇，不但有助因材施教，亦可消弭對於課程的爭議，促進社會和而不同。

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英語節拍

由土耳其的伊安高鐵路談起

大家知道土耳其有一條伊安高鐵路（或曰伊安高鐵路）嗎？它的第二期，是中國製造。

伊安高鐵路是由土耳其安卡拉至伊斯坦布爾的高速鐵路。全程總長500多公里，第一期路段由安卡拉至埃斯基謝希爾段，於2003年動工，2009年初通車。而多山路、難建的第二期（由伊諾諾至科斯基亞），全長158公里，由中國鐵建率領，聯同土耳其企業合組集團公司中標承建。當時是2005年，是中國在歐洲拿下的第一宗高鐵路生意。中標後經融資、勘測、定設計方案等程序，在2010年正式動工，2014年7月通車。通車後，從前一小時的路程，現在20分鐘便走完。伊安高鐵路第二期要穿山建隧道34個；隧道之外還要建橋，最長的橋樑長1.96公里。此外，整個路段多花崗岩，技術難度可想而知。

土耳其親歐洲，一直想加入歐盟，所以伊安高鐵路的第二期由設計、施工到監管，土耳其方面都要求遵循歐盟標準。能建成這樣的一條高鐵路，令中國高鐵路建設企業從此獲得歐洲高鐵路建設市場的入場券。

上述三百多字是高度濃縮的文字描述，落為現實，對中鐵建來說，由中標到建成的八年相當長，也異常艱苦。中鐵建總裁張宗言曾用「八年抗戰」來加以形容。究其原因，是土耳其合作方的前期地質勘測不夠精確，導致項目不得不邊勘測，邊設計，邊施工。此外，土耳其政府亦不斷提出新要求，令設計方案一變再變。總之，伊安鐵路第二期的困難度大概非一般跨國企業可以抵受得住。但是中國企業及員工，乃至融資單位最終都完成任務。

介紹伊安高鐵路，是因為土耳其政府在11月下旬擊落俄羅斯反戰戰機，「紅」了。於是，不妨看看這個熱點國家的狀況。土耳其由先天的地理位置，到後天的基礎建設、經濟發展，本來都一手好牌。不幸卻在埃爾多安的任內沾上聖戰組織，日後禍福吉凶未可知。

回頭說中國高技術產業的成果。這成果還見於邦交關係良好的巴基斯坦、不少非洲國家，以及幾個南美國家。也因此，在非洲馬里被恐怖分子殺死的三個中國人，都是搞基建的國企高層。當時正在酒店內洽談工作項目。有良好的基建，貧困國家的人口才有望脫貧。

以新加入歐盟的中東歐成員國為例，不少中東歐國家都是歐盟中的經濟弱國。當中以近年來的捷克是個例外。翻查資料便知道，中國與東歐的合作，有所謂的「16+1」模式，當中以捷克跟中國的經貿關係較為密切。捷克總理曾表示，捷克是中國企業進入中東歐的大門；意思是對中捷貿易大表歡迎。就是因為引入中國元素，令捷克失業率低，也是歐盟財政狀況較好的國家之一。

說這些，是想讓大家體會今天中國走的是互惠共贏的大方向，跟一些國家走好戰、或以破壞別人國家來自肥的路線完全不同。希望香港年輕人多讀兼聽，理性看待自己國家的發展。日後如再聽到將中國妖魔化的論述，懂得向那些論述說不。 余非



社區關懷

英基學生聖誕前夕送暖

聖誕節漸近，英基學校協會轄下沙田小學首次舉辦免費派發食物活動，安排學生及家長在深水埗街頭向長者及基層市民派發食物及日用品，並送上由學生Janice Mang親自編織的「溫暖牌」頸巾，在寒冬下為社區添上一份暖意。超過260個師生及家庭參與是次活動。

今次送出的食物包括有五穀類（一包一公斤米、粉麵、麵包、餅乾及麥片）和水果（香蕉及橙）等；日用品則有牙膏、牙刷、毛巾及肥皂等，總值港幣200元。

是次活動是沙田小學週日社區日的活動之一。沙田小學第六班老師兼活動負責人Komal Daswani表示：「舉辦週日社區日的目的，是希望有助增強年輕人對社會的責任感及歸屬感，並從中學習如何與社區連接、溝通及合作。」

