

Author discusses his vision of alternative to Kyoto accord



Author Oliver Tickell points out that while Hong Kong has good green practices it could do a lot more to cut its energy use. Photo: Robert Ng

Dan Kadison

An environmental writer thinks the international community should produce a new climate agreement because the Kyoto Protocol is failing to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

British author Oliver Tickell, 50, sat down with the *South China Morning Post* in the city last week and asserted why the climate accord should not be reformed after its commitment period ends in 2012.

"We're better off having an agreement which is actually designed to be effective, efficient, equitable, and operate on a much shorter time scale," Tickell said.

His book, *Kyoto2*, published in July, focuses on climate change, the accord and solutions to the problem. The Kyoto Protocol, which was



signed in 1997 and came into force in 2005, calls for certain industrialised countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet targets for a 2008

to 2012 commitment period. Unfortunately, Tickell added, it "provides an inadequate vehicle" for eliminating pollution.

"For a global agreement that's really going to work... all countries have to be involved. And greenhouse gas emissions have been going up faster in the developing countries with no targets - China, India, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa."

Tickell's book proposes a three-part strategy in which greenhouse gas permits are capped and auctioned off to fossil-fuel producers, the estimated trillion dollars raised from the purchase of permits are spent on energy improvements, and regulations are enacted.

"What you're doing is bringing down those emissions in a targeted way, in an efficient way. At no point

does the carbon price have to reach a level at which it is painful."

As for Hong Kong, Tickell said there were environmentally friendly features that other countries could learn from - walkways and the Mid-Levels escalator for pedestrians, plenty of green space and the taxis burn clean fuel. To make it greener, Hongkongers could build more green-friendly buildings, use more energy-efficient appliances and rely on less air conditioning, he added.

Tickell met city corporate and environmental leaders, discussing climate change with the Climate Change Business Forum and the Earth Champions Foundation.

The *Post* is the media sponsor of the Earth Champions Quest, a search for local people and groups improving the environment.

3 held after customs seizes biggest haul

Arrests in HK\$200m smuggling operation

Agnes Lam

Customs officers have smashed a syndicate and seized HK\$200 million worth of goods in Hong Kong's biggest sea-smuggling case.

Three people were arrested over the haul, which included food, fur, and video and gambling machines. The most expensive item was Canadian ginseng, which costs about HK\$600 per tael (38 grams) in Hong Kong shops.

About 17.5 tonnes of ginseng was confiscated in the operation with a total value of HK\$95 million, the Customs and Excise Department revealed yesterday.

Also recovered were more than a million electronic items, 95 tonnes of walnuts and pistachio nuts, 7,000 monitors, 400 video games and gambling machines, and fur.

Albert Chan Chi-hung, head of the Customs and Excise Department's Ports and Maritime Command, said it was the first time officers had seized so many smuggled goods in just one operation.

"The goods were packed in 16 containers. The syndicate could have smuggled the goods by transferring one container at a time. But then they would have had to run the risk of being caught 16 times. So they took a chance in the hope of smuggling them all in just one go to reduce the risk of being busted," he said.

He estimated the smugglers would have saved up to HK\$50 million in tax if they were not caught.

Mr Chan said the gloomy economic outlook had created a market for second-hand durable goods.

"We believe the foodstuffs among the seizure were intended to meet strong demands for festive food such as walnuts for the Chinese New Year," he said.

Acting on intelligence from mainland authorities and a tip-off through the customs hotline, officers carried out an operation code-named "Monsoon" last Thursday.

Officers of the Marine Enforcement Group intercepted a vessel heading for Zhaoqing, Guangdong, in Hong Kong waters with 32 containers on board. Officers were told that the vessel contained plastic waste but instead they discovered a variety of smuggled goods in half of the containers with a total value of HK\$200 million.

A subsequent large-scale operation was then conducted in which officers searched six companies in Yuen Long, Tuen Mun, Kwun Tong, and Sheung Wan. It led to the arrest of two men and a woman aged between 24 and 44.

"The three arrested people are believed to be members of the smuggling syndicate. The investigation is ongoing and more arrests might be made later," Mr Chan said.

In Brief

Death in Deep Water Bay

A woman named Chong, 69, drowned while swimming in Deep Water Bay, Aberdeen, at around 6.30am yesterday. Other swimmers saw the woman was having trouble and brought her to shore. She was certified dead in hospital.

Son held for armed assault

A man, 27, was arrested for attacking his father, 50, with a rod and a hard object in a dispute at a flat at Tai Fung Street, Yuen Long, at around 8am. The mother, 41, sought help from police. The victim was admitted to Pok Oi Hospital.

Elderly man survives leap

An 83-year-old survived an attempt to jump to his death in Wong Tai Sin at around 10am. A pedestrian spotted him lying in Choi Hung Road and called police. The man was admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Initial investigation showed he had a chronic disease.

Bottle attack in Wan Chai

Two men armed with bottles attacked a 24-year-old man in Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, at around 4.30am. The victim was admitted to hospital. The attackers fled and no arrest had been made.

Body found in flat

A body was found in a public-housing flat at Yiu Hing House in Tin Yiu Estate, Tin Shui Wai, at 1pm. A security guard called the police because an odour was coming from the flat. Firemen entered and found the body of a man in his 70s. The man had been chronically ill.

Cyclist in collision with bus

A cyclist was injured when she collided with a bus while riding around Central with another cyclist at 11.15am. The injured woman, identified as an Australian called Ryan, 37, was on Queensway, near Garden Road, when she collided with the bus going in the same direction. She injured her hand when she fell. She was taken to Queen Mary Hospital.

Jobless brothers in suicide

Two unemployed brothers killed themselves by burning charcoal in their Wong Tai Sin home. Police were called to the Wang Yiu House flat in Wang Tau Hom Estate at about 3.45pm on Saturday. The pair, named Li, were aged 47 and 53.

New course responds to demand for carbon skills

Cheung Chi-fai

A group of professionals are warming up for an emerging market as the government and businesses begin to address climate change.

A pioneering course in carbon auditing, designed for the government's audit guidelines, has been launched by the Association of Energy Engineers of the United States to help Hong Kong train up to 200 specialists a year in the field.

Market demand for specialists is expected to increase after Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen last week announced plans partially to subsidise building owners to conduct carbon audits and carry out improvements, while periodic carbon audits would be made compulsory in the future.

Dozens of professionals, mostly engineers with backgrounds in energy audits and facility managers working for government and large companies, completed the four-day course

and examination last week and acquired the certificate.

"This is kind of a mini degree in carbon audit," said instructor Eric Woodroof, who has 15 years' experience in energy and carbon audits.

"If you hire someone not certified, you will not be sure you are doing [the carbon audit] right and in line with international standards. Then you might get into trouble," he said.

Dr Woodroof said one overseas company saw its reputation damaged, its share price plunge and consumers turning their backs on it after it falsely claimed to be carbon neutral. Despite these potential risks for companies who carry out their own audits, he said it was up to the Hong Kong government to decide whether it should be made mandatory for all carbon audits to be carried out by certified professionals.

He said small operators might be happy with a formula found on the internet to gauge their carbon footprint, but for large businesses hiring a

certified professional might deliver significant savings.

While most businesses were now worried about the financial crisis, Dr Woodroof said it should not overshadow the opportunities presented by climate change.

"Environmental issues might be pushed aside now because people are more worried about their money and the economy.

"The economy [always] takes priority over the environment.

"But they are linked. Even now there are ways to reduce carbon use and save money, and ways to reduce carbon use to make money," he said.

Dr Woodroof said Hong Kong had an advantage because, as part of China, it was eligible to benefit from the Clean Development Mechanism.

Under the mechanism, companies succeeding in cutting their carbon emissions could sell their carbon credits overseas.

"But it all starts with a right measurement," Dr Woodroof said.

Green group takes dim view of Prada's bright signboards

Cheung Chi-fai

Consumers will be urged to boycott upmarket fashion chain Prada if it refuses to dim its illuminated signboard in Central, a green group has warned.

The warning came as Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen last week said the government would study the need for legislation to control light pollution.

Friends of the Earth said the board at Prada's flagship store at Alexandra House was unnecessarily lit from dusk until dawn.

While many of its neighbours kept their signboard lights on until early morning, Prada's exterior lighting was the most extravagant, a survey by the group found.

Assisted by overseas activists, the group also found Prada's Beijing store was lit up until at least 4am, while its counterparts in Singapore and Taipei showed more restraint by switching their much less extravagant lighting off no later than 2.30am.

A letter has been sent to Prada in Hong Kong asking it to rectify the situation, said Hahn Chu Hon-keung, Friends of the Earth's environmental affairs manager.



Prada's flagship store in Central. Photo: Courtesy of Friends of the Earth

"The brand shops show no taste at all in this unrestrained quest for brightness. The consequences are a waste of energy and an unnecessary emission of greenhouse gases," he said. "If Prada does not stop the light pollution, we will appeal to consumers to boycott it."

"We have also written to two Beijing-based green groups to ask them to follow up the issue there."

A spokeswoman for Prada in Hong Kong said it was looking at the issue to see if a solution could be found. "The exterior lighting is part of

our architecture design and we are reviewing options to reduce the lights," she said, without saying why the lights could not be switched off earlier.

In a poll by the group, Prada's exterior lighting was voted the second-most-ridiculous in the city, beaten only by the advertising boards on Windsor House, Causeway Bay.



Talkback
Should there be laws to control light pollution? Send your comments to talkback@scmp.com