

Warner Bros to Sell Discounted DVDs in China

02/25/2005

New York, February 23 (Reuters) – Time Warner Inc.'s Warner Bros. Entertainment will release more than 125 movies on DVD in China at discounted prices in an effort to offset piracy losses, the Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday.

The newspaper said the movie studio would release the below-market priced DVDs this year to retailers in China in hopes that they will compete well enough with bootlegged DVDs to offset losses caused by piracy.

"It's pretty daunting going into that market to release a legitimate product," the newspaper quotes Warner Bros. chairman and chief executive Barry Meyer as saying. But we really think if we can get in there, we can be a part of the solution and not the problem."

Yamaha raided over export of helicopters

Japanese police today raided the headquarters of Yamaha Motor Co on suspicion of illegally exporting to China unmanned helicopters that can be diverted to military use, public broadcaster *NHK* reported.

The motorcycle and engine producer is suspected of violating trade laws by selling the helicopters to China without obtaining trade ministry approval, *NHK* said, showing footage of officials entering the Yamaha headquarters in Iwata City in Shizuoka prefecture, west of Tokyo.

Japanese police did not immediately confirm the report.

Japanese newspapers reported earlier today that the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry was to file a criminal complaint against Yamaha as early as today.

Yamaha allegedly sold an unspecified number of helicopters for pesticides sprinkling, which can be diverted to military uses such as spreading chemical weapons or spying, the *Asahi* newspaper reported. No other details were immediately available.

Hawke named in mine dispute

By Sean Cowan
January 24, 2006

THE former prime minister Bob Hawke has been accused of threatening to use his political and military connections to have an Australian mining entrepreneur expelled from China during heated negotiations over a business deal.

Stuart Bromley, a Perth mining entrepreneur, made the damaging allegations in the Supreme Court of British Columbia last month as part of a vitriolic tit-for-tat legal battle with a Perth prospector, Robert Gardner, and an accountant, Mark Bojanjac.

It is alleged in court documents from Vancouver that Mr Bojanjac called Mr Hawke to a meeting with Mr Bromley in Singapore last year in the hope the 76-year-old former ACTU chief could settle the dispute.

But Mr Bromley followed the October 31 meeting with legal action, in which he accuses Mr Hawke of threatening and intimidating him in an attempt to force him out of a multimillion-dollar Chinese gold mining venture.

Mr Bromley's petition said that in the course of the Singapore meetings, Mr Hawke threatened to call upon his political and military connections to revoke Mr Bromley's residency visa in China and to denigrate his personal and business interests in both China and Canada, if Mr Bromley and his company did not accept the Gardner Group's settlement offer.

Mr Hawke could not be contacted for comment yesterday.

In a related court case in Hong Kong, lawyers for Mr Gardner labelled the allegations scandalous.

Mr Bromley claims in his petition, filed with the court on December 9, that Mr Hawke's actions were an attempt to intimidate him and cause him to divest his interests in the mining company, CICH, to the benefit of the Gardner Group and to the detriment of Mr Bromley.

At all material times, Mr Hawke was allegedly acting pursuant to the instructions of Mr Bojanjac and the Gardner Group. The legal battle kicked off in June when lawyers for the Gardner-linked Hawkshead Investments Limited launched an action in the Supreme Court of British Columbia over an attempt by Mr Bromley to transfer Chinese mineral leases to a Canadian company.

Mr Bromley stood to receive shares worth \$6.4 million from the sale. He claimed CICH had forfeited the leases because the Gardner Group had not paid for them.
The West Australian

Asia-Pacific sees drop in economic freedom

Friday January 9, 06:05 PM

HONG KONG, (AFP) - The Asia-Pacific region became less economically free in the past year, according to a survey released in which Hong Kong remained the world's freest economy and Singapore was second.

Sixteen Asia-Pacific countries lost ground, 11 others improved while three remained the same according to the 'index of economic freedom', published annually by The Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal.

The number of countries placing restrictions on their economies outnumbered those that granted their citizens more liberty,

representing a reversal of the trend reported in the 2003 index.

"A country's level of economic freedom is critical," said Marc Miles, director of the Centre for International Trade and Economics at The Heritage Foundation.

"Countries with the highest levels of economic freedom also have the highest living standards," Miles added.

The Asia Pacific remained a region of marked contrasts boasting the three freest economies in the world, Hong Kong -- which took the top spot for the 10th consecutive year, Singapore and New Zealand.

However, the region also has six of the world's 10 most repressed economies, namely North Korea, Laos, Burma, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Low government intervention in the economy saw Hong Kong continue to be the world's "poster child" for economic freedom.

Singapore also excelled despite its relatively high level of government intervention because it boasted a moderate cost of government and had very low -- virtually zero percent -- tariffs, the study said.

Britain Backs Hong Kong's People on Democracy Moves

Saturday January 10, 10:42 AM

HONG KONG (Reuters) - Hong Kong should follow the wishes of its citizens and move toward greater democracy in line with the constitution agreed before Britain handed the territory back to China in 1997, the British trade secretary said on Friday. "Clearly, we want to see Hong Kong become more democratic in line with the principles of the Basic Law and the wishes of the people of Hong Kong," Trade and Industry Secretary Patricia Hewitt told reporters during a visit to the territory.

"In the past year, we have seen the people of Hong Kong express their view on this

very forcefully, but very peacefully, and with great dignity," she said.

Hong Kong's Beijing-backed leader Tung Chee-hwa said in his annual speech on Wednesday that China's views must be heard first before full-scale public consultations on democratic reforms can take place.

Pro-democracy activists condemned the move and accused Tung of ignoring the growing demands of Hong Kong people for more voting rights.

Nearly 100,000 people demonstrated in Hong Kong on New Year's Day to demand full democracy. It was the biggest protest in the territory since half a million people took to the streets in an anti-government march in July, shocking China's leaders.

On Friday, the United States backed the protesters.

The demonstrations "reflect the desire of the people of Hong Kong to advance the democratization process, as provided for under the Basic Law," the State Department said in a statement. "The United States strongly supports democracy through electoral reform and universal suffrage in Hong Kong."

Britain drew up the Basic Law with China before the handover to ensure the territory would have a high degree of autonomy under Chinese rule. But the constitution stipulates that Beijing has the final say over any electoral changes.

In his policy address, Tung made no mention of a timetable for public consultation on democratic reforms, angering many citizens and raising fears that any reforms would be dictated by Beijing.

Hewitt said a timetable for public consultations was a matter for Hong Kong's government and its people.

Political turmoil in Hong Kong has brought one of the most historically sensitive

chapters of Sino-British ties back onto the agenda. The two sides have spent the years since the handover trying to redefine relations in terms of trade and investment.