LEADERSHIP STYLE FOR BUILDING PROJECT MANAGERS IN HONG KONG

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Abstract
This paper advances a theoretical framework to argue for an appropriate style of project leadership for building developments in Hong Kong. Based on the contingency theories of leadership, the study contends that a directive style would be the more effective one. It is due not only to the cultural characteristics and nature of tasks, but perhaps more importantly the resource power that project leaders have when they act as agents of major local developers who are large by international standards. However, a directive style does not necessarily mean that project management could become bureaucratic, straightforward and efficient. A process that is less participative, as otherwise a supportive style would imply, means that there are less opportunities for project managers to get immediate responses and feedbacks from their team members. They need to be more anticipatory of and proactive to problems that are yet to arise. Otherwise, their team members may become confrontational when disputes do arise. The job of a ‘directive’ leader is no less, if not more, demanding than a ‘supportive’ one.

Keywords
Leadership, power, building project management, Hong Kong

INTRODUCTION
Asia is a one of the three largest construction markets in the world. The other two are the USA and the European Union (Mawhinney, 2001). Asia construction contributes 26% of the world GDP, but 35% of the world construction market (Bon and Crosthwaite, 2000). The Asian construction market is relatively larger than its economy. Yet, literature on project management in the Asian or oriental context is relatively scanty. Though there is large diversity in the values, customs, beliefs, philosophies, practices, institutions, languages and races among Asian economies; a study in the context of Hong Kong does provide some insight into the related issues of leadership, power and culture in an oriental community, and grounds for comparisons with what is now a large and growing body of knowledge in the western economies in this area.

Project management is not only about time, cost and money. It is also about human resources management. The construction industry is fragmented (CIRC 2001). Even a typical small building development involves different factions of people and parties who have agendas of their own. Individuals have their own objectives. That their objectives do align with that of the project is no more than wishful thinking. The main challenge to any project leader or project manager is that, despite of the usual conflicting objectives, the works of the individuals or the individual groups could be
planned, coordinated, managed, monitored and controlled so that at the end of the day a building project is completed on time, within budget and of the quality expected. This in turn asks for competent leadership. The question is what is it, or how it should be in the local construction context.

THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE PROJECT LEADERSHIP

Because of the ad hoc, outdoor, multi-stages, multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, inter-organizational and multi-layered subcontracting nature of construction, the need for effective project leadership could not be more obvious. Managing even the most typical building project of a modest scale has never been easy, and quality of building (the process and the product) suffers when project leaders become dysfunctional. There were frequent and alarming instances of malpractices and corruption cases (Appendix A) that the Government of Hong Kong set up for the first time a high level committee, the Construction Industry Review Committee, in 2000 to review the prevailing practice and to give recommendations to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of the industry. After nine months of intensive consultation with the industry, the Committee published its report in the following year (CIRC, 2001). Among the findings is that project failures could quite often be attributed to ‘poor planning and interfacing, inadequate logistics management and lax site supervision’. There is a need for more integrated project delivery processes, and that calls for better co-ordination and a broadened outlook that extends to project and site management. The aspects of site management have been fully featured in the report, and Site Supervision Plan has become part and parcel of the construction process. However there is not much on leadership of the project managers who play a vital role in any construction project. This paper will address this specific issue, and examine the effective leadership style of a building project manager. The project manager here is defined as the one representing the client overseeing the entire development process, but in particular the design and construction stages.

Project managers and leaders need to possess a sufficient amount of technical knowledge to communicate with their team leaders, and to carry out the more mundane managerial functions such as planning, coordinating, monitoring and controlling. However, having the required technical skills fulfils the necessary but not sufficient conditions to become effective project leaders. It is always the ‘soft’ skills that are the more important. El-Sabaa (2000) found that human skills of project managers influence the most in project management practices. Human skills are one of the three developable skills of effective project managers, according to Katz (1974). Wirth (1996) surveyed a sample of 41 project managers from five industries including construction. It was observed that only 20% of their tasks are specific to their industries, such as construction design. The remaining 80% are such generic tasks as planning and co-ordinating, using project management techniques (project evaluation and review technique, and critical path analysis), personnel hiring, motivating and others. Yet, knowing what the human skills that contribute to effective leadership is not enough, because there is a wide range of them. What becomes more important is to understand what particular skills are more instrumental in a given situation. One way to answer this question is to know whether a participative or directive style of leadership is the more appropriate one. Each of the two styles calls for different sets of skills.

FROM TRAITS AND BEHAVIOURS TO CONTINGENCY THEORIES

There have been extensive studies conducted to examine the closely interrelated areas of leadership, power and culture. For example, Cleland (1995) reported that were already 5000 research studies and monographs cited by Bass (1981) on the subject of leadership alone more than two decades ago. The problem is what theory to choose. Many leadership studies focus on leaders’ traits or what makes good leadership. For example, Fraser (2000) established from a survey on construction site managers that their effectiveness is correlated more with their personal characteristics than their formal
education, professional qualifications or their working experience. However, Fraser (2000) also acknowledges that though the study identifies a wide range of effective traits of leaders, there is the ‘dynamic nature of personal characteristics’. Project leaders need to be aware of the changing circumstances and job natures that may call for different leadership and managerial styles. As leadership is as much as “followership”, there are the relativity, balance and domain of power. It is more than traits and behaviour of leaders. It is also what Walker and Newcombe (2000) called a ‘two-way process’. This calls for an understanding of the environment, and nature of the work that people perform.

The contingency leadership theories of Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) and Fiedler (1967) take into consideration such variables. The appropriate leadership style is contingent upon the prevailing situation, that could be analysed with three dimensions (Pugh et al., 1983): leader-member relations, task structure and leader’s position power. There are basically two leadership styles: structuring/ directing or supportive, for which the arguments are perhaps best represented by Leavitt and Whisler (1958) and Likert (1961) respectively. The former would be appropriate for a situation that is either very favourable or very unfavourable to the leader. The latter would be appropriate for a situation that is moderately favourable. The situation would be favourable to the leader under three conditions: (1) the leader is well accepted by the group, (2) the task is well defined, and (3) the leader has at least resource and/or position power. The following sections shall discuss the three conditions in a typical building project in Hong Kong. In particular, this paper will make special mention of the buying power of developers and discuss its implication on power and leadership of their project managers. Power facilitates project managers’ exercise of their leadership. This paper will argue that the more directive style of project leadership is the more appropriate for the majority of building projects in Hong Kong. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework of this paper.

Figure 1: A Model of Effective Leadership
THE ELEMENTS DEFINING THE SITUATIONS

LEADER'S ACCEPTANCE BY THE GROUP

The first element defining the situation a project leader would face is the acceptance by his or her team members. To what extent is a leader accepted by the group varies between individual cases. However, we can generalize that culture generally prescribes the psychological contract between the team leaders and members, and thus plays important role in leadership and the exercise of power. How they see each other is very much coloured by the set of belief, values and customers that are collectively described as culture. Hofstede (2001) measures cultural differences with four dimensions, namely power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity.

Loosemore (1999a) concluded from a number of studies based on Hofstede’s (1983) that the construction industry in the UK is a ‘masculine’ one of high ‘power distance’. There is a high level of ‘uncertainty avoidance’, and it is highly ‘individualistic’ and ‘confrontational’. Perhaps this cultural background and thus the consequent problems have given rise to the practice of partnering. Rowlinson and Root (1996) in their comparative study on the cultural differences between the Hong Kong and the UK construction industries found that, based on Hofstede’s model, the local industry has a higher power distance, lower masculinity and lower individualism than the UK, though there is a similar level of uncertainty avoidance. The conclusion of their study in the local construction industry is typical of other similar studies conducted in the more general context of Chinese community. Its implication is that construction team members in Hong Kong are more ready to accept the authority of their leaders and subject themselves to the group norms, than their UK counterparts. Indeed, Rowlinson (2001) reported one incident where high power distance dimension led to centralization of decision making in a local government department. Originally, the department, in its planned change into a matrix organization, had wanted to de-centralization its decision making. Instead, it has become more centralized.

NATURE OF TASK

The second element defining the situation in contingency theories of leadership is the nature of task. Much of the work of a typical building project development involves routine decision making. The work may be of a specialist nature demanding in-depth knowledge of the profession. There may be times that problems arise and that demand interaction between different parties to work out the solutions. Yet, typically a problem could be solved by people of a relevant discipline or profession. What requires of a project leader is mainly the co-ordination of efforts of the individuals or individual parties. Mintzberg (1979) suggested that such coordination can be facilitated by the standardization of outputs. Professionals, technologists and technicians in the construction industry have acquired their skills and learnt problem solving techniques from their respective professional education and training schemes. What they need from their project leaders is not much more different than musicians from their conductors. The nature and scope of most building work, at the level of individual building elements or components or trades, is relatively standardized and well-defined. Everyone knows exactly what or where to do for his or her own parts. What they are not certain is the timing. For this, it takes a project leader to put together the numerous tasks in an orderly and timely manner.

LEADER'S SOURCES OF POWER
The third and last element defining the situation is the power base of a project leader. As Walker and Newcombe (2000) observed, there is generally a consensus of opinion on sources of power. Handy (1993) gave a comprehensive and succinct account of it. He described power as a source of influence, the process whereby one modifies the attitudes or behaviour of the other. How effective is the exercise of power in modifying the behaviour of the recipients depends not only on how legitimate the source of power has been sanctioned from the authority delegated, but also from how the recipients perceive the authority or sanction of it. Drawing from the work of Weber (1947) and French & Raven (1959 and 1960), Handy (1993) categorized power by six sources: physical, resource, position, expert, personal and negative. Position power, or the formal contractual power conferred upon, for example, the project manager; is all but a one of the six sources of power. Leaders of project teams have the challenge of managing people from outside their organisations, thus calling for power other than that of position. Loosemore (1999b) argued that it plays a minor role in managing a construction project. Written documents, in particular legal contracts, are inflexible.

If position power is not the most effective one enabling project managers to exercise their leadership, what is? Based on the case study of the planning and construction of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Walker and Newcombe (2000) put forward the use of ‘positive’ power to achieve project success. They described how the Chairman of the Planning Committee, and the Jockey Club as the main financier and project manager of the project, exercised principally their ‘referent’ or ‘prestige’ power to achieve what they called a ‘win-win’ situation for all.

Cheung et al. (2001) conducted a survey on a group of project design team members in private developments of Hong Kong. They found that a ‘charismatic’ leadership behaviours contribute most to the satisfaction of project team members. The study reason that professionals are ‘highly matures and skilled specialists who treasure participation’, and are in constant ‘quest for autonomy and independence’. In an earlier overseas study, McCabe et al. (1998) found also that, based on Weber’s three forms of authority (1947), charismatic authority is a viable alternative to the legal rational one when quality managers lack the full support of senior manager and hence are deprived of the legal rational authority.

However, in the private building sector in Hong Kong, it is perhaps the resource power that is the most effective source of power for project managers to exercise their leadership. The buying power of local developers is considerable. Their agents, the project managers, have sizable authority over their team members who naturally would depend on the developers for repeated business. The following section describes how big the local developers are and the implications.

**BUYING POWER OF DEVELOPERS**

Hong Kong had the largest and the most profitable property developer, Cheung Kong Holdings, in the world in 2000 (BusinessWeek, 2000). Of all property firms in the world, Cheung Kong Holdings made most profits “from companies’ continuing operations before extraordinary or special items” (BusinessWeek, 2000). According to the “Global 1000” annual surveys conducted by BusinessWeek (2000, 1999, 1998 and 1997), major local property developers have consistently ranked at the top. In 1997, there were altogether 7 local firms in the Top 10 list. After the Asian financial “turmoil” that adversely affected also the property sector in Hong Kong, there were still 4 firms that made it to Top 10 one year after in 1998. There were 5 firms in 1999, and 3 in 2000. During this 4-year period, the largest property firm in the world was either Cheung Kong Holdings or Sun Hung Kai Properties. Large developers have large buying power. Hong Kong Consumer Council (HKCC, 1996) found that there is a high degree of market concentration among residential property developers. Between 1991 and 1994, 26% and 61% of all residential property supply came from the top one and top five
developers respectively. The Herfindahl-Hershamann Index (HHI) of the top-5 property developers is 0.10 (Chiang et al., 2001).

In Hong Kong, the property sector comprises an elite group of developers who are large by international sector. Contractors and consultants, on the other hand, are small and many. Intuitively it transpires that developers have more bargaining power than professional consultants and contractors. Collectively, there are more consultants and contractors selling their professional and construction services than developers requiring them. To capitalize their economy of scale and buying power, developers have formed strategic partnering with contractors and consultants in Hong Kong. In this highly concentrated local residential property market, major developers have their in-house construction arms, their construction subsidiary firms, or a small group of “inner-circle” contractors (Chiang et al., 2001). They do this not to maximise property sales, but to minimize transaction costs. There are high costs of procurement and contract administration each time a property project is developed. It makes perfect sense for these developers either to have their own construction teams or maintain strategic partnership with their “inner-circle” contractors to cut down business costs. Their huge buying power has enabled them to secure good deals with their chosen contractors. The latter become the “inner-circle” contractors, who would almost exclusively build for them at very competitive prices in return for relatively stable workloads.

The competition between building contractors is much more intense than property developers. For slightly different periods, the HHIs of the top-5 building contractors in public and private sectors are 0.02 (1992-1997) and 0.04 (1992-1995) respectively (Chiang et al., 2001). The building sector is about 2.5 to 5 times more competitive than the property development sector, on the basis of HHI. As mentioned before, most of building contractors are small. In contrast to the property sector, only one house-building contractor in Hong Kong made it to an international listing. The local contractor, Paul Y. – ITC Construction Holdings Ltd., made it to the “Top 225 International Contractors” (Engineering News Record, 2000). It ranked 54th in terms of international revenue. Incidentally, it is a subsidiary of Cheong Kong Holdings.

There is thus stark contrast between the property and construction sectors in Hong Kong. Developers are large by international standard and the market is dominated by the ‘big five’. On the other hand, contractors are small and competition in the market is intense. The consultancy sector is also similarly predominated by small firms (Anson, et al., 2001). The total number of consultants’ firms (architectural, building services, civil and structural engineering, and real estate) varied a little between 1297 and 1350 during the 4-year period of 1996-99. In 1999, there were altogether 19807 people employed, or 14.7 persons on average in one firm. Thus, we have a situation where relatively small consultant and building firms need developers more than vice versa. Developers have sizeable amount of bargaining power over their contractors and consultants. Subsequently, their project managers have the necessary power to lead because they have the resources their team members want: business opportunities.

THE DIRECTIVE STYLE OF LEADERSHIP

The Chinese culture and the nature of traditional building work suggest that an appropriate style of leadership should be the more directive one. Walker and Newcombe (2000) described such a situation where the use of directive approach produced results. Rowlinson (2001) also found from his survey on the professionals that they stayed with their government department only because the cost of leaving being greater than remaining. They are ‘rational-economic’ man, with mercantile outlook. They have been more receptive to directive management than a participative one, and hence there is some cultural dissonance when the department changed to a matrix organisation. An autocratic style that may be extremely inconsistent with the more egalitarian western culture would find better
leadership style for building project managers in hong kong

acceptance in an oriental city like Hong Kong. Indeed where a directive approach of leadership is more appropriate, attempts by managers to involve their subordinates in making decisions ‘may threaten social norms and be resisted’ (Low and Leong, 2000).

This directive leadership style is even more effective to be facilitated with resource and position power, or legal rational authority in terms of Weber (1947), when project managers have while representing developers with large buying power. Project teams from various professional disciplines and groups are ready to accept directives issued by their project leaders. The study of Lingard and Rowlinson (1994) found that project leaders would use a more directive style of leadership when the construction process moves from the feasibility and pre-contract stages to the post-contract stages. After the design phase is completed, the construction process becomes all the more routine. The power distance between project leaders and contractors is likely to be even larger than between project leaders and consultants. The possession of resource and position power by the project leaders enables them to best discharge their duties with a more directive leadership style.

Green (1996) questioned the traditional simple classification of clients into a few types. Instead, the Morgan (1986) concept of organizational metaphors is introduced to understand clients’ organization and the implication on the working relationship that would be expected between construction professionals and their clients. Morgan’s first machine metaphor is perhaps the most appropriate one for the case of the largest developers in Hong Kong. Years of property development have enabled them to move up along the experience curve. They have exploited the economy of scale and accumulated not only wealth but also experience in dealing with the bureaucrats and in marketing their properties to principally a Chinese community, in turn raising barriers to entry and consolidating their leading positions (HKCC, 1996). The experience they gain is valuable and quite often tacit and not codified, thus becoming part of the organizational culture. Their aims are profit maximization, and their strategies are standardization of procedures (Mintzberg, 1979) to make the machine more efficient. Yet, the standardization need not be as formalized as typically found in a government bureaucracy. Major developers are integrated both horizontally and vertically. Most if not all of the functions of design, construction and marketing are provided in-house or by an inner-circle of subsidiary firms or firms that are strategically allied with the developers. Most of them talk the same language, both figuratively and literally, that in turn helps the build up of trust among themselves. As Wong et al. (2000) asserted, organizational performance and project success can both contribute to and result from increased levels of trust. They have clear ideas of what is expected of them. Their roles are clear to them, and they are expected to work with each other in the most efficient ways. Each group of people are usually well experienced in their own fields. For most of the typical property development projects, all they need is some coordination from project leaders. A typical, traditional and well-tested building process needs not be very iterative in nature. Indeed that innovative attempts are marginalized by the developers who rely more on their ‘gut feeling’ than everything else is not unheard of. A directive style of leadership is therefore fitting and instrumental in the efficient operation of this property development ‘machine’ to get things done quickly, especially if the external environment is relatively static though complex.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

There is thus a high expectation of project leaders from the team members, who are ready to receive ‘directives’. Such attitude typically reflects the high power distance and collectivism that are usually observed in a Chinese or oriental community. Yet, this does not mean that project leaders’ job is easy. Should the expectation of the team members not be met or should their own interest be jeopardized, they would be ready to solve the problem by facing directly with the other party or parties. When the leaders fail to perform, the Cheung and Chuah (1999) study suggested that the various groups would be ready to ‘confront’ with the leaders to protect their territories. They concluded from 63 cases
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covering different industrial sectors in Hong Kong that there is a shift of conflict management styles. The ‘confrontation’ style of conflict resolution was adopted in almost half of the cases, and all but one of those cases reported that the problems had been solved with positive efforts or consequences. This was in contrast with earlier studies where the ‘compromising’ and ‘withdrawal’ modes had been found to be the dominating styles. It has been generally believed that confrontation should be avoided to preserve human relationships that are highly valued in Asian societies. Not talking directly about problems helps maintain harmonious working relationships (Low and Leong, 2000). The reasons why ‘confrontation’ style is adopted more than others are attributed to the increasing use of matrix organisation structure. About half of the cases arose from conflicts between groups. Though their study was not confined to the construction industry, it does have implications for it. This style is expected to be more popular as Western management philosophy and paradigm continue to exert their increasing influence. It is also likely that as the pressure of producing good work within limited amounts of resources intensifies, factions of interests would have to rise to protect their interests. As project-based temporary matrix organisation is expected to be popular among development and construction of projects, this ‘confrontation’ style is expected to stay on for a while.

However, on the other hand, Cheung and Chuah (1999) noted that the ‘forcing’ model was used in dispute resolution when the issues were related to resource allocation and managerial and administration procedures. They related this finding with the family owned and managed firms. They represent a large proportion of firms in Hong Kong (Berger and Lester, 1997; and Redding, 1990). In such firms, ‘autocracy in decision making and conflict resolution is still very much the norm’. Understandably, none of the cases where this ‘forcing’ mode had been adopted was reported to have been resolved satisfactorily. This brings particular bearing on the property development sector in Hong Kong. Major developers here are family owned and managed. Indeed Redding (1990) argued that there is a higher correlation of stock performance between firms belonging to the same family than the same industry sector.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the best-fit contingent leadership theories, whether a leader adopts a directing or supporting style depends on the expectation of their subordinates and nature of the task, all taken in consideration of the environment. In Hong Kong, and in the private building sector in particular, the nature of the work, the relationship between leaders and the various disciplines, the power of the leaders, and a less litigious environment call for a directive rather than supportive style of leadership. Building construction is complex but predictable, and Hong Kong is a Chinese community especially for local developers’ projects. The procedures and methods are well known, at least for typically designed and constructed buildings. All that the various people and parties need from their project leaders amount more to coordination efforts than otherwise. Empowering is unnecessary at best and counter-productive at worst. Team followers look for their leaders’ instructions to coordinate the works that are otherwise highly professional and autonomous. For the construction of a typical building development project, the construction itself does not have too many complex and open-ended situations that prescribes the need for a more participative style of management. Further, if a directive style of leadership leads to project leaders keeping a distance from the group and thus not mixing up social life and work, that may contribute to a tighter supervision of work.

However, a directive style of leadership does not necessarily mean that everything will go smooth. On the contrary, it would mean more work to the project leaders who need to second guess how their team members would feel and react upon getting the directives. It is not uncommon to find that people working in the construction industry prefer to remain in a low profile, get the orders and get the jobs done. Yet, as the study of Cheung and Chuah (1999) suggests, they could become vocal and confrontational when their interests are at risk. Of course, quite often, local family owned and
managed firms are prone to force their business partners to accept settlements. There has been anecdotal evidence that conflicts are resolved only when the heads of the firms promise a better deal or a new business next time. This again further illustrates the importance of resources power. Therefore, a directive style of leadership does not necessarily mean that the leader should become indifferent or hostile towards team members. There is a possibility that a directive style of leadership is compatible with a considerate and supportive one; one that is conducive, according to Yukl (1971), to job satisfaction of employees. It is perhaps no surprise to find that people would be satisfied if their project leaders make them feel ‘good’; the way charismatic leaders, by definition, excel. However, such conclusion cannot invalidate a possible scenario where charismatic leaders adopt a directive style of leadership and remain charismatic and thus accepted by the team.

Like the sources of power and Hofstede’s dimensions of cultural differences, the Fiedler’s contingency theory of leadership has been among the most widely tested and applied. This study applies the now classical theories and puts forward the case for directive leadership style. This study supports the seemingly obvious assertion that leadership is more than leaders’ traits and behaviour. It is also about the nature of the task, the perception of and degree of acceptance by their followers, and their level of maturity, autonomy and independence; that is, the situational approach of leadership theory. The next stage forward would be an empirical test to substantiate the arguments, for comparison with international studies also based on similar methodologies.

REFERENCES


# APPENDIX A - INCIDENCES OF CONTRACTORS' MALPRACTICE IN HONG KONG BETWEEN 1997 AND 2000 (MAY)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Incident Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26/05/2000</td>
<td>Yuen Chau Kok, Home Ownership Scheme estates in Sha Tin, are set for demolition because of faulty piling works up to 13 meters short. Superstructures of the two towers had been completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/02/2000</td>
<td>Chek Lap Kok airport contractors and subcontractors were accused the day before in court of compromising workers’ safety in the rush to complete the project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29/11/1999</td>
<td>The Government sued a contractor over substandard piling at five construction sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16/09/1999</td>
<td>Hsin Chong Foundations, a leading foundation contractor, is held responsible for uneven piling settlement for Tin Shui Count at Tin Shui Wai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/09/1999</td>
<td>Five airport railway construction sites have found to have substandard piling works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/03/1999</td>
<td>210 tones of flawed steel bars were found to have been used to build flats at Tung Chung Area 30 Phase I and III.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/02/1999</td>
<td>Construction problems have forced Amoy Properties to delay completion of its luxury residential project near Happy Valley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/01/1999</td>
<td>A shopping center complex could have been in danger of collapse in an alleged piling scam, but Paul-Y ITC Construction Holdings, the only local contractor that made it to ENR (Engineering News Record) Top 225 International Contractors in 1998 and 1999, defended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/10/1998</td>
<td>B+H, a leading piling contractor, faced $1 billion repair bill for substandard foundation work on at least four sites at the center of a Building Department probe into an alleged piling scandal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/07/1998</td>
<td>Substandard foundation work on the northern site of the Airport Railway’s Hong Kong Station was disclosed with bribery scandal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/06/1998</td>
<td>B+H Construction faced a bill estimated at $500 million to rectify sub-standard piling work at the International Finance Center (IFC) being built as part of the Hong Kong Central station property development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/06/1998</td>
<td>Shui On, a leading contractor, was penalized for an accident that had left a nine-year-old boy seriously injured by a defective railing at the Ping Tin Shopping Center in Lam Tin in December of 1997.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/01/1997</td>
<td>A site manager told an inquest the day before that he had not instructed workers to remove parts on props supporting a Tseung Kwan O footbridge, which subsequently collapsed and killed a driver.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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