

Former Chief Secretary Of Hong Kong Anson Chan To Deliver IR/PS Commencement Address On June 11

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Anson Chan, former Chief Secretary of Hong Kong, will deliver the main address at the 2005 commencement exercises of the Graduate School of International Relations & Pacific Studies at UCSD on Saturday, June 11. The ceremonies for the graduating class of 105 will take place at 10:00 a.m. in the Institute of the Americas Plaza.

Anson Chan was head of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's civil service during British Colonial rule, and she continued to hold this prominent position after the territory's handover to the People's Republic of China. She was the first woman and the first Chinese to hold the second-highest governmental position in Hong Kong. Chan joined the civil service in 1962 and was Secretary for Economic Services before becoming Chief Secretary in 1993. As one of Asia's most powerful women, she has been called "Iron Lady" Chan because she was once described as being "an iron fist in a velvet glove."

Chan continued to serve the Hong Kong SAR government under Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa from 1997 to 2001. After the transition, Chan came to symbolize the continuity between British and Chinese rule, in large part because she publicly warned the Chinese that she would rebuff any attempt to corrupt the government, play favorites, or silence dissent. She resigned in January 2001. Chan said before her resignation that she was ready to quit if asked to accept policies that clashed with her democratic principles.

IR/PS Dean Peter Cowhey has remarked, "Chan has been an extraordinary leader in Hong Kong for many years. She began as a secretary in the civil service and rose to the position of head of the civil service and the key figure overseeing the transition from British rule. She firmly supported the new constitution's guarantees of democracy and rule of law in the marketplace. Since her resignation from the Hong Kong government, she has remained as one of the preeminent opinion-makers in Hong Kong. Our goal at IR/PS is to help shape the Pacific Century and to build a strong Pacific community rooted in democratic values. It is an honor to have Mrs. Chan visit IR/PS, share her wisdom, and speak at the School's 2005 commencement ceremony."

Leading Chinese scholar and IR/PS Professor Susan Shirk added, "When I was in government I got to know Anson Chan, who was then the Chief Secretary (top civil servant) in Hong Kong. Anson remains the most popular political figure in Hong Kong, according to all opinion surveys. Even after her resignation, she continues to be very influential."

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