

Getting  
Hongkongers to laugh  
is no joke



TYR

The Young Reporter  
-by HKBU journalism students since 1969-

05

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Are Hong Kong people happy at all?

Ranking as the freest economy for the 17th consecutive year and the fifth most global city in the world, Hong Kong is placed 81st among 155 regions in a global survey about happiness.

To quantify happiness, researchers polled thousands of respondents in each of the regions between 2005 and 2009. They asked people questions that reflect their overall satisfaction with life, and ranked their answers using a "life evaluation" score from 1 to 10. They were also asked how they had felt the previous day to score their "daily experiences" - things like whether they felt well-rested, respected, free of pain and intellectually engaged.

It turns out that 65 per cent of Hongkongers feel they are struggling. There is no coincidence that rich countries or cities are happier. People in Guatemala with frequent earthquakes or Mexico and Columbia with massive drug wars are a lot happier than we are.

To find out more about how to live a happy life, please turn to our cover story.

Alan Kwok Kim-fung  
Chief Editor

# Glass bottles in new green bins

A pilot recycling programme could help reduce waste, but will it be sustainable?

BY CECILIA CHAN

**L**ight green recycling bins have been placed in selected areas in East Kowloon under the government's pilot scheme on source separation of glass bottles.

The 12-month programme is jointly launched by the Environmental Protection Department and the Hong Kong Housing Authority in six public housing estates since December 20, 2010.

About 50 recycling bins have been placed beside the existing yellow, brown and blue waste separation bins at every building across the estates.

Glass bottles collected undergo re-processing and are made into glass sand. The sand will then be used to make environmental friendly paving blocks. This technology was developed by the Polytechnic University with government sponsorship since 2004.

Mr Stephen Siu Chi-wai, senior environmental protection officer from EPD, says the government believes now would be the right time to promote glass recycling with this advanced technology.

During the first month, 2.5 tons of glass bottles were collected from the recycling bins. Mr Siu says it is a good start because it takes time for the public to get used to the scheme.

The result of this pilot scheme will be a reference to consider further promotion of glass recycling in Hong Kong. "We pay most attention to citizens' participation and their comments on improving the procedures," said Mr Siu.

The availability of a long-term sustainable glass bottles outlet is another concern that the government has to consider in expanding the scheme.

According to the EPD, glass bottles accounted for about 95,800 metric tons of solid wastes in 2009, but only 2.9 per cent was recycled. Mr Angus Ho, chief executive of Greeners Action said this was a serious problem.

"It (the pilot scheme) is a good thing, yet the scale is too small, and it's too late and slow," Mr Ho said. The possibility for it to be sustainable in the long run may not be high.

Mr Ho said there were also constraints in re-using glass bottles besides recycling them.

"Glass is actually a durable material but the cost of buying a new one is lower than reusing an old one," he said.

If the "Polluter Pays Principle" was implemented for all kinds of municipal solid waste, it would help slow down the saturation of landfills and provide scope for developing the local recycling industry, Mr Ho said.

Ms April Lai Mui-ching, the coordinator of a similar project launched by the Dumper Truck Drivers Association, shares the same view.

"People should re-think the connections between themselves and these potentially useful materials," she said. "To fully utilise the glass bottles, use them as containers, vases or fish jars."

Besides raising public awareness, the groups aim to put glass recycling and re-using in practice. To facilitate this, two collection points have been set up in Wan Chai and Tai Koo Shing.

However, Ms Lai said it was difficult for an NGO to do this with little government support.

"When we applied to use the Luard Road Refuse Collection Point as our glass bottles collection point, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department seemed unwilling to cooperate with us. They even rejected us as one of their contractors although the EPD had already approved our proposal and provided funding," she said.

Ms Lai said she believed if the government had recognised the recycling industry and set up a response team, the problem could have been avoided and those enthusiasts could have achieved more in recycling glass bottles.

EDITED BY LEILA POON





*Christian Action teaches female refugees handicrafts in its centre.*

*Christian Action*

# Outcasts from the world

Not permitted to work, asylum seekers struggle to survive in the city

BY THOMAS CHAN

Arriving in the city four years ago with a hope to start afresh, asylum seeker Steve (pseudonym as he is still afraid for his life) is satisfied as long as he is still alive.

"At least I'm alive. It surely can't get any worse," he always tells himself.

The 28-year-old beauty stylist, born into a Christian family, fled Pakistan because he could be killed by Muslims, who constitute 95 per cent of the country's population.

Although he no longer faces stark choices between life and death, Steve still struggles to survive here.

"I feel so bad because I can't get a job. Sometimes I want to go to the fitness club, but I have no money," Steve said.

Given refugee status for which he had waited four years, he now lives on a monthly allowance of \$2,000 from the government and shares a three-bedroom flat with friends in Mongkok because none of them can afford to rent a flat on their own.

Steve is not alone in his despair because refugees are prohibited from taking up employment under the Immigration Ordinance.

"That's not the life we are looking for," said a 30-year-old refugee from Ghana.

"We are not here to rely on anyone. I hope the government could allow us to get a job."

According to figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are currently about 500 asylum seekers and 100 refugees from South Asia and Africa in the city.

Some of them are fleeing torture and political, racial or religious persecution, while others are seeking economic advantages in developed countries.

Among the several hundred claims processed in the city every year, only about 100 asylum seekers successfully obtain refugee status from the UNHCR. Those who are rejected may end up appealing and waiting, or in exile or returning home.

The absence of refugee laws has worsened asylum seekers' plight in Hong Kong. "The Hong Kong judicial system is so advanced that it has ordinances and laws regulating every other area. But there is a big gap in refugee laws," said Mr Brian Barbour, executive director of Hong Kong Refugee Advice Centre.

Due to its concern about possible abuses of refugee laws, Hong Kong government has not signed any international conventions relating to refugees

except for one against torture.

Instead, the government has funded the International Social Service to help refugees pay for housing, food and emergency health care.

Racism is another problem for many asylum seekers. "Waiting is painful, but discriminatory stares from the locals, who clearly have no clue as to what we've been through, are no better than that," said Ali (pseudonym), 47, who fled Burundi for genocide against Tutsi seven years ago.

He recalled that when he first arrived in Hong Kong, no one dared to sit next to him on the MTR.

"Racism against African people was serious, especially among the older generation," said Ms Jonnet Bernal, spokesperson of Christian Action's Chungking Mansions Service Centre, the only drop-in service centre for refugees in the city.

Today, the situation has improved. Discrimination is less common and Ali, the Burundian refugee, is not afraid to stand out in the crowd.

"I am perfectly fine with my skin colour," he said. "Things are getting better because people of this generation are better educated."

EDITED BY ALAN KWOK

# One in two HK people gamble

Hongkongers make up 40 per cent of gamblers in Macau

BY VERONIKA TOMANOVÁ

**A**lmost every second Hong Kong citizen engages in gambling, according to a local gambling counselling organisation.

Betting on horse races and soccer matches, visiting casinos and buying lotteries are all favourite pursuits of Hong Kong people.

"Gambling is a serious problem in the city. About 40 to 50 per cent of Hong Kong people participate in gambling," said Mr Wu Ping-chuen, managing director of Hong Kong Gamblers Recovery Centre.

According to him, 200,000 people, almost three per cent of the local population, are seriously addictive. "Gambling is like drug," he said.

Young people are also fond of gambling. He said some youngsters have wrong judgements on their ability to resist addiction. And it is easy for them to cross the border to gamble in Macau.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club organises betting on horse racing and football matches, as well as Mark Six Lottery. The Club, which has been granted monopoly on racing and betting, is also the largest private charity donor.

"First of all, it is because of excitement, you always hope that you win," said Ms Cherry Cecilia Chan, a 23-year-old who buys Mark Six once every two months and visits casinos annually.

"Secondly, it is about hope. There is no problem if you lose, because you know the money goes to charity."

Some of the casinos (in Macau) are not so strict about the age, so sometimes I went to gamble with my mum when I was not 18 yet," Ms Chan added.

Minors under 18 are not allowed in gaming areas, but the restriction is not always upheld.

In 2007, a 16-year-old girl from Hong Kong won a \$740,000 slot machine jackpot at Sands Macau casino. The casino refused to pay when they discovered the girl was underage. But the prize was handed over to the girl's mother at last.



*Casinos in Macau have become major tourist attractions.*

"In Las Vegas, you have to be 21 to gamble. But in Macau, 18 is enough and when I was there they did not even check how old I was when I was buying chips," said Mr Nicholas Corbin, a 21-year-old student who visited Macau.

Although gaming is prohibited in Hong Kong and the mainland, people can still gamble in the nearby casinos of Macau, where gambling is one of the city's main industries.

"There is a big boom of casinos. There used to be only a few casinos in Macau, but there are up to 33 now and the number is increasing," said Mr Wu from the Hong Kong Gamblers Recovery Centre.

After the liberalisation of the gaming market in 2002, six gaming companies have obtained franchises to operate gambling outlets in Macau.

"Gamblers coming to Macau are from everywhere, but approximately 40 per

cent come from Hong Kong, which is a big number," Mr Wu added.

Stanley, who lives in Hong Kong, goes to Macau from time to time.

"I was visiting Macao to gamble, but now it is also about entertainment. Casinos are more spectacular," he said.

As the world's largest casino, the Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel casino is decorated in a golden theme and has approximately 3,000 slots and 750 table games of all sorts, including baccarat, blackjack and roulette.

While more tourists are flocking to Macau to buy a chance, some Macau citizens welcome their visitors for more job opportunities and a better economy.

"For citizens of Macau, casinos are generally good, because we don't have to pay so much tax," said Macau resident Mr Pathai Tong.

EDITED BY MINERVA CHENG

# Desperate young Hongkongers fall prey to surging home prices

The city's youngest street sleeper is only 26

BY LOLA AYANBUNMI



*One of the male quarters of a homeless hostel at Un Chau Street in Sham Shui Po.*

Homelessness is not a new issue in Hong Kong, where life has long been a struggle for the grassroots. But what is alarming is that more young people have become street sleepers because they cannot afford to rent the most basic accommodation.

Grace, a street sleeper who refused to give her full name, is just 26 years old. She fell out with her family years ago due to a relationship her parents disapproved of.

Being homeless is bad enough. As a woman, Grace feels she gets a double dose of discrimination: "People stare at me as they pass by."

With nowhere to go, Grace spends her day loafing along the Shing Mun River and sleeps on the benches at night around Shatin.

"I found myself with absolutely no money to buy food," she said. And when the weather is cold or rainy, she finds it even harder to survive.

According to two surveys of street sleepers conducted by the Society for Community Organisation in 1999 and 2010 respectively, the average age of the homeless is getting younger. Last year, it

was 43; 11 years ago, it was 50.

Although the government provides low-cost public housing, demand is high and the elderly and the mentally ill get priority. The younger and single applicants are left at the bottom of the list and many of them have to wait to be housed for years after years. Grace has been on the list for six years.

Mr Tung Wai, SoCO's community organiser, said the latest survey also found that 50 per cent of homeless people who got housed were on the streets again within four years.

SoCO is a non-governmental agency that, among other things, helps the homeless find jobs and housing.

Mr Tung said changes in the government's social welfare programmes had hit this section of society the hardest.

"Before 2005, there were cheaper housing provided by the government," Mr Tung said. "The rent of some flats was only about \$430 a month. But the government stopped that, saying the cost was too high."

The rents for many newly completed flats now cost over \$1,000 a month.

In the private housing market, win-

dowless cubicles are the cheapest option for low-income workers.

But the meagre wages of the low-paid jobs that the homeless can get are not enough to pay the deposit for even a small cubicle.

A large proportion of the homeless earn about \$3,000 per month. However, with an average deposit of \$1,200 plus one month's rent in advance, utility bills, as well as other costs, it is impossible for them to afford even these tiny rooms.

SoCO's Sham Shui Po office accommodates 20 per cent of the homeless in Hong Kong. It tries to open more shelter hostels to reach out to as many street sleepers as possible during this freezing winter.

The charity found Grace shortly after she found herself on the street for the second time. They provided her with a place to sleep in a temporary shelter and helped her find a job in a bakery.

But while Grace attempts to get her life on track, many are still struggling.

Mr Tung urged the government to take social housing back from property developers and introduce lower-rent-housing to get people off the streets.



*Grace, 26, is the latest example of the homeless getting younger.*

EDITED BY MAGGIE TAM

# Ocean Park “fails to protect ocean”

## Environmentalists criticise import of endangered whales

BY TANIKA CATO

**E**nvironmentalists criticise Ocean Park’s plan to import a number of threatened species for its latest polar exhibit set to open in 2012.

More than 17 local and international organisations signed a petition initiated by the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society and Green Sense to express concern over the import of Beluga Whales and Walrus species.

According to the petition, few countries have Beluga Whales in their waters, so scientists believe that the park will likely catch them from the wild, such as in the Okhotsk Sea in Russia.

“Beluga Whales live in Arctic areas only and may not suit Hong Kong,” said Dr Samuel Hung, chairman of Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society. “Ocean Park does not have concrete scientific research about these species to ensure it can sustain and protect them.”

Although Ocean Park has launched an acquisition policy and promised to carry out independent scientific research to ensure it can sustain the species in the long-term, Dr Hung said it may not be effective.

“It should take at least five to ten years to complete a scientific study, which is impossible to be done in time,” he said.

Dr Hung worries that Ocean Park may even abandon this policy at any time: “According to an employee at Ocean Park, a dolphin training pool has already been reconstructed for the Belu-



Samuel Hung

*Mr Samuel Hung criticises Ocean Park for importing the endangered whales.*

gas, which are scheduled to be imported this coming March or April.”

Ms Naomi Rose, marine mammal scientist for Humane International Society also criticised the Park for not having enough scientific research: “They cannot claim to be a conservation organisation when they participate in practices that are unsound scientifically.

“There is no way to humanely capture these aquatic mammals; encircling them with nets or ropes are stressful and traumatic. This has been catalogued and reported in several studies,” she said.

The scientist added that Ocean Park cannot demonstrate that its exhibits will directly benefit the conservation of wild Belugas or walrus. Therefore there is no justification for subjecting any whales or walrus to the trauma of capture.

The Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society and Green Sense are also concerned that the new polar exhibit will consume huge energy in order to main-

tain the cold air and water temperatures for the polar animals. The consequent emission of carbon dioxide is believed to be harmful to the environment.

The Park has also caused controversy when its new aquarium opened in February this year. Green groups have questioned the welfare of scallop hammer head sharks and bluefin tuna that can be seen at the aquarium.

They criticised the Park for placing the bluefin tuna inside a new pool which was not yet properly prepared in order to meet the opening of the Grand Aquarium in Lunar New Year holiday.

Ms Una Lau, Ocean Park’s spokesperson, was unable to speak on the matter and yet to reply to questions via email.

Legislator Ms Audrey Eu Yuet-mee has promised to follow up the issue by writing to the Legco Panel on Environmental Affairs in the hope of increasing transparency on the Park’s operations.

EDITED BY VIVIAN CHUI

# The joy of farming in the city

Community gardening raises environmental awareness, promotes social harmony and provides new sources of food

BY JENEMY MA



*Lok To Garden has 100 plots for residents to experience the joy of city farming.*

City farming has become an increasingly popular activity among Hong Kong residents.

"I am happy to see my seeds grow into plants and harvest with my own hands," said Ms Ko Yuk-chun, a resident of Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po who started farming two years ago.

"This is why I prefer my produce over vegetables bought from supermarkets."

Introduced by some private housing estates and the government, this greening activity has not only improved relations among residents, but has also served as a way to raise environmental awareness.

The concept of city farming, or community gardening, refers to farming activities by residents of the same community on a nearby piece of land, which can be a flower pot, an open ground or wherever spacial.

Wang Fuk Court is one of the private estates which first introduced city farming in 2002. The estate's farm, called Lok To Garden, provides plots for a hundred residents to experience farming. Each of them is granted a piece of farmland for one year by drawing lots.

The "farmers" have to follow certain rules during the farming period. "We are required to keep the farmland free of pests. Once insects are found, it is our responsibility to eliminate them to prevent them from spreading and affecting other farms," said Ms Ko.

"Pesticides are forbidden as we practise organic farming. This ensures vegetables grow healthily and are chemical-free. That's why I love growing crops here."

Apart from being organic, environmentally friendly and sustainable, city farming also promote neighbourliness among the residents.

"Some of my neighbours are very experienced farmers. They share information with us and are very willing to help when we have troubles," said Ms Ko.

"We are friends and we often talk about the crops we grow and exchange farming tips."

According to Produce Green Foundation, the organisation that set up Hong Kong's first organic farm, city farming promotes social harmony as well as provides extra sources of food.

The government is also putting more

efforts on promoting city farms.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department launched the Community Garden Programme in 2004 and implemented city farming at selected parks or tree banks in all districts. Participants are offered a chance to plant and harvest various kinds of vegetables under the guidance of instructors.

The aim of the programme is to encourage citizens to actively participate in greening activities, according to Mr Man Sung, director of green campaign section of LCSD.

"We hope it can integrate city farming into people's daily lives. Through such activities, we can build and strengthen their sense of environmental protection," Mr Man said.

LCSD offer courses by professional

**"We are friends and we often talk about the crops we grow and exchange farming tips."**

- Ko Yuk-chun,  
Wang Fuk Court resident

farmers to equip residents with basic knowledge of farming and also to trigger their interests in it.

There are currently 21 community farms and at least one can be found in each of the 18 districts.

Mr Man says if infrastructure and suitable locations are available, more city farms will be built. Tuen Mun and Sai Kung are two chosen districts for building extra city farms.

LCSD is still planning to cooperate with schools and district organisations to stage other greening activities apart from city farming, such as the "One people, one flower campaign".

"Subsidies are given for organising greening activities and promoting green campus. We hope this can help saving the environment," said Mr Man.

EDITED BY MINNIE LI

# Experts doubt HK's greening strategy

The government is planting trees in the wrong places

BY GARY KWOK

Despite the government's effort to combat possible threats brought by decaying trunks and boughs, professionals say its tree maintenance strategy has yet to protect Hong Kong people from dangerous trees.

Implemented by the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Greening Master Plans launched in 2007 aims to define the overall greening framework of different districts. But professionals warn that the plan was not well thought through.

"To fulfill people's expectations in a short period of time, the government's strategy aimed at improving the overall environmental situation, but lacked long-term planning," said Professor Chiu Siu-wai of the Department of Life Sciences at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

The noticeable achievement brought by the GMPs was the sudden plantation of packed trees around polluted roads and skyscrapers, but the greening effect may not last long, he said.

"These plans came too hastily and the density of greening is way too high. The trees may now seem healthy and strong, but when they are out-competed by other trees, they will die and leave the trunk empty, causing potential danger," said Prof Chiu.

The danger caused by dying trees came into public spotlight after the fatal collapse of a tree in Stanley Market

in 2008. Since then, increasing attention has been paid to the maintenance of trees to avoid similar tragedies.

Arboriculturist Mr Aaron Liu Kwok-hing agrees GMPs may not be able to save lives and protect properties from the threat of falling trees.

"Trees planted along roadsides absorb vehicle emissions and become unhealthy. As a result the death rates of these trees are higher than those in other areas," said Mr Liu.

If they collapse, they may cause human casualties and property losses as people walk and drive pass them all the time, he added.

Human damage on trees is another cause of their possible death. "Some obvious wounds left by human damage like cutting in the wrong place or collision by cars take a long period of time, say, ten years, to heal. If the wound is too deep,

the tree may have to be removed," said Mr Liu.

He argued that inserting trees blindly in the little spaces available in the crowded city is not the best way of greening it.

"This is 'low-level greening' and it won't work in the long run. The best way to plant trees is to set up an area for trees solely and strategically," said the arboriculturist.

Another arboriculturist Mr Andy Lam Tak-ho suggested Hong Kong should learn from its counterparts.

"In Singapore, they map out a specific area for greening primarily. That way, nutrition is ensured and trees grow without competition," Mr Lam said.

"Hong Kong government can start with country parks, where there are more open spaces," he added.

EDITED BY CANDICE WONG



A tree bend towards the crowded pedestrian Parklane in Tsim Sha Tsui.

# The express way to enterprise

Inspired by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, young people start their business through intermediaries

BY GOOSIE CHAN



After a month's operation, Mr Mok Yik-kwan has become an expert in classifying VCDs.

Arranging VCDs in a 400-square-foot video rental shop, Mr Mok Yik-kwan, 18, is not a part-time worker but its boss. He bought it a month ago from a business intermediary company for \$180,000.

"I'm expecting to earn back the investment in two years," the young boss said confidently.

Mr Mok is one of many young people who have started to run their own shops by directly buying from a business intermediary, which specialises in brokering the sale of businesses.

According to Ms Joey Wan Chi-kuen, senior manager of Hong Kong Business Intermediary, 70 to 80 per cent of their clients are inexperienced young people in their 20s.

She says such kind of business buying is attractive to them because they regard it as an express way to start an enterprise. The intermediaries provide them with a whole package of services, from coaching staff to licensing and buying raw materials.

And buyers could enjoy the advantages of the brand name sold as the in-

termediaries screen each request to sell a business selling and unqualified ones are turned down.

"In the past, the shop was the only transfer of a deal. Now clients can also acquire extra help such as skills, sources of customers and brand names through a business intermediary," said Ms Charlotte Chan, business strategist of business intermediary OWNA.

"It is an easier way for youngsters to start their own business."

In the "buying a business" process, the sellers are required to operate the businesses with the buyers for a period and teach them how to run the operations.

And the sellers are asked to leave their contacts behind so the buyers could get in touch with them if they need advice.

Mr Mok said the seller had shown him how to book VCDs from distribution companies and compare different sources to bargain for a cheaper price.

The seller also reminded him of regulations related to the VCD rental business, he said. For example, VCDs should not be rented out until they are available

for sale in the market.

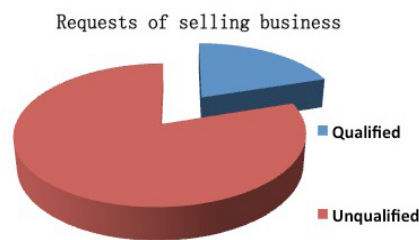
Starting a business requires capital. Many young people look for help from their parents. Mr Ken Au, 20, successfully bought a Taiwan snack store by borrowing money from his family.

"Some parents would be willing to pay for their children's businesses because they are worried that their children may not be suitable to work as employees," said Ms Wan.

"By running my snack store, I experience more," said Mr Au. "There are lots of things that you cannot learn when you work just as an employee."

Unlike Mr Au, Mr Mok believes that he is not competitive enough to get an office job because of his education qualifications, or the lack of them.

He sees operating a video rental shop as a stepping-stone towards running a



Source: HKBI

Over 80 percent of selling requests were turned down after screening.

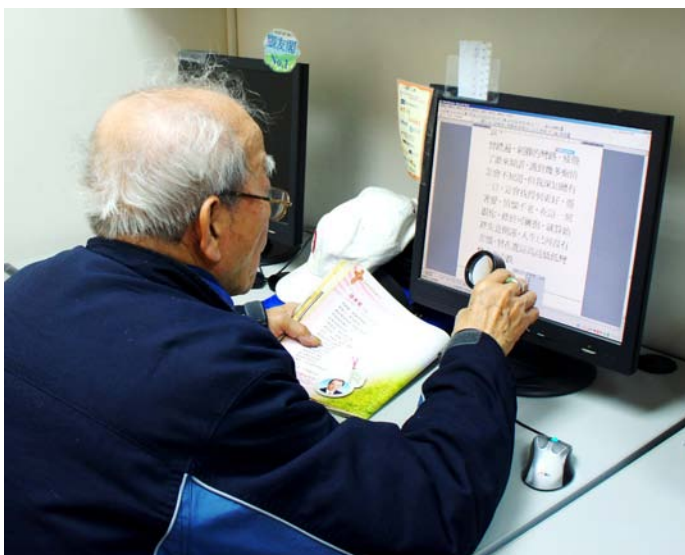
bigger business in the future.

"I have planned to set up a business since I was in secondary school. Starting with this little shop, I'm getting closer to realising my dream," said Mr Mok.

Rather than competing with thousands of fellow youngsters for a job, buying a business may become an enticing alternative for young people who want to put their own business plans into practice.

Mr Mok is now planning to rearrange his products and install a new Octopus payment system.

EDITED BY VERA CHEN



# The rise of computer age seniors

CyberSenior bridges gap between retirees and technology

BY JUDITH KI

**T**he stereotypical thinking that old people lead a dull and lonely life after retirement is challenged much nowadays, as our society is evolving further into the information age.

Ten years ago, when only about three per cent of Hong Kong elderly were using computers, Legislative Councilor Mr Law Chi-kwong noticed the internet's growing importance.

Then, in January 2001, he founded Cyber Senior Network Development Association (CyberSenior) to help re-establish their self-esteem and interpersonal relationships via getting online.

Located at Cheung Sha Wan, the centre offers charged and free monthly courses and workshops. Members are introduced to common online applica-

tions, such as Facebook, Yahoo or Sina blogs, e-mail and forums.

Mr Wong Lam, 92, was a KMB ticket seller in 1937 and was promoted to public relations manager after five decades of hard work. He began using cameras at the age of 20 and is still engaged in the art of photography.

"I have been learning for 70 years and that'll never come to an end," he said. "This is the right attitude towards life."

**"I have been learning  
for 70 years and that'll  
never come to an end."**

- Wong Lam, member of CyberSenior

Years after retirement, the diligent "Uncle Lam" still keeps himself busy and never stops pursuing knowledge.

He participated in the "Smart Net Tutors" programme, which let experienced computer users assist their fellows with the practice.

As a tutor, Uncle Lam said it was easier for his pals to learn from him because they understood each other's abilities and had the patience.

Mr Poon Sum, 80, another CyberSenior member, is also known as "Grandpa Potato" on his personal blog.

At first he felt discouraged as there were very few comments from other

bloggers. But 95-year-old Mr Wong Wai-chiu, the oldest member, encouraged him to continue and has been commenting on almost every entry since then.

"I exchange valuable opinions with and befriend unknown bloggers," Mr Poon said. "We even go *yum cha* for further chats."

He said many people have been amazed to discover that a man with a primary-level education like him could have written such thoughtful passages.

Ms Judith Chan Po-ling, 56, member of the video-taking crew, said: "The old people here are not ordinary. We enjoy the process of learning and feel great to lead a fruitful life after retirement."

For this year's February workshop "Seniors Learn to Shoot", Hong Kong-based actor, film director and screenplay writer Mr Lee Lik-chi came to talk about photographing techniques and ways to choose digital cameras and video recorders.

Workshops and courses like these help the elderly publicize their photographs and videos online.

"Learning is not a privilege for youngsters and the public should encourage the elderly with continuing education," Uncle Lam said.

"Playing chess and mahjong can never keep us updated like the Internet does," he said.

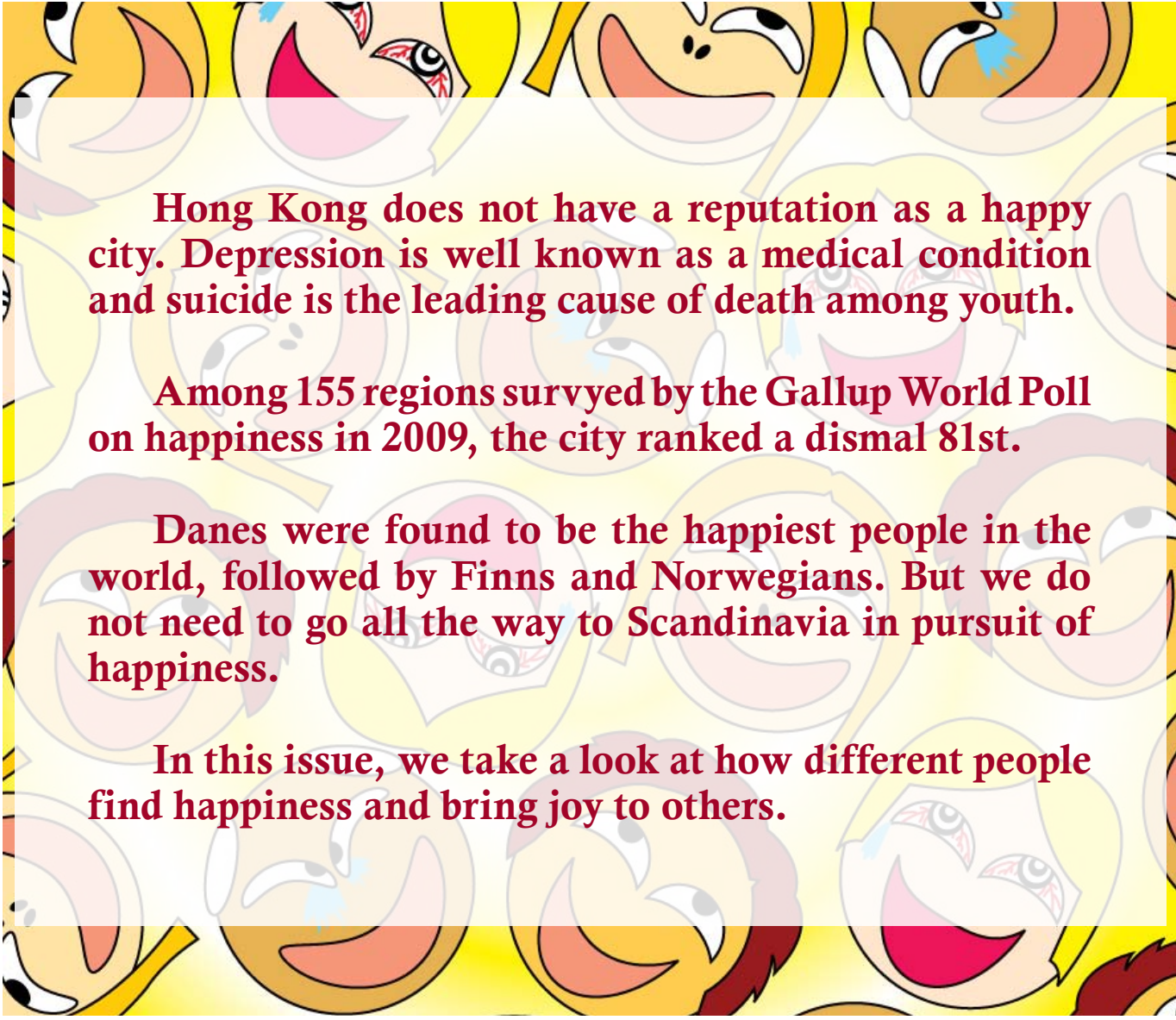


Grandpa Potato tells his path of learning.

EDITED BY HOA PHAM

# Shy culture makes joke-telling a venture

BY SADIE LO, LAURA LUO, GINA NG, JOHN XIAN & JASMIN YIU



Hong Kong does not have a reputation as a happy city. Depression is well known as a medical condition and suicide is the leading cause of death among youth.

Among 155 regions surveyed by the Gallup World Poll on happiness in 2009, the city ranked a dismal 81st.

Danes were found to be the happiest people in the world, followed by Finns and Norwegians. But we do not need to go all the way to Scandinavia in pursuit of happiness.

In this issue, we take a look at how different people find happiness and bring joy to others.



*Mr Butch Bradley is a veteran comedian who has been in the industry for 14 years.*

**H**ongkongers are shy and serious, said Jameson Gong, an American comedian in the city, but still they love a good laugh.

At least that is what Mr Gong hopes.

Even though he has run a comedy club in Central for four years, he has hardly made much money. But the 41-year-old comedian from New York is still set to “bring the American comedy culture over” and “find Hong Kong’s next Wong Tsz-wah (the popular comedian)”.

The club in Elgin Street offers weekly English and monthly Chinese stand-up comedy shows. It charges \$150 to \$250 per person and hires comedians on a part-time basis.

Members of the public can also perform on stage for \$50 twice a week.

Mr Gong said he had not made any profits from the club yet.

“People here are not used to this. Audience interaction is key to this type of American stand-up comedies. This is very different [from the Chinese shows]. People have never seen it before, so this takes time,” he said.

Mr Gong said Chinese comedies tended to last longer, but American comedies

last at most an hour, with more punch lines. Chinese audience also seemed to be shyer when it came to laughing.

“Westerners laugh out loud and Chinese people cover their mouths, but they have just as much fun. We want them to laugh out loud more,” he said.

Local comedy fanatic Ms Fiona Chan Si-nga agreed.

“Hong Kong people are quite serious, so comedians have to be really humorous to make them laugh,” she said.

She likes Chinese-style stand-up comedies better because they were “better organised”

“The pace of western stand-up comedies is too fast,” she said.

But Mr Gong is confident of the club.

“If people are happy, we’ve done our job,” he said, “We are creating an untapped market, and a brand new comedy market. We have brand new materials that we can talk about on stage and people can laugh with us.”

He came to Hong Kong nine times in two years for research before setting up the club. Although there were people doing stand-up comedies then, no one was doing it on a regular basis, he said.

“I know if we find the right venue, people will come to try stand-up comedy, and we would be happy to discover new talents,” Mr Gong said.

“People here always want to make money, but there’s more to life than making money. We want them to laugh more,” he added.

Now some eateries are sponsoring the club, and Mr Gong said his business was progressing every year.

Ms Tonia Yim, a performer at the club, said the biggest challenge for a comedian was to find something funny from a seemingly unfunny situation.

“I find myself constantly thinking of ideas which can be turned into jokes. It’s hard but one must keep on trying and believing in oneself,” said Ms Yim.

For Mr Gong, stand-up comedy, despite being a hard job, is a powerful tool to gather people with different social backgrounds and of different ages.

“Our club brings people together, we are relieving stress,” he said.

“Comedy unites the world. It doesn’t matter who you are. Who doesn’t want to laugh?

(Turn to next page)

“My name is Tom,” the young man imitates a conversation in the listening paper of HKCEE, and laughter fills the hall.

Vivek Ashok Mahbubani is a part-time bilingual stand-up comedian. Born and bred in Hong Kong, the 28-year-old Indian speaks fluent Cantonese and just collaborated with famous Hong Kong comedians Cheung Tat-ming and Dr Tsang Fan-kwong in a show organised by the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association.

“I’m still new in the industry, not many people know about me, and the interaction with audience would not be that much,” Vivek said.

“Unlike Cheung Tat-ming, people might feel a bit awkward if I interact too much with them, therefore I need to adjust by myself.”

Stepping into his fourth year of being a comedian, Vivek never thought his dream to make people laugh would come true. Winning the Hong Kong’s Funniest Person Competition in 2007 came as a surprise because he was just trying to

make others happy.

Vivek’s grandfather first came to Hong Kong for business and stayed here ever since. For secondary school Vivek attended the Diocesan Boys’ School, as the only Indian in class he faced discrimination.

“Indians usually have longer eyelashes, they screamed and asked the teacher why there was a girl in a boys’ school,” Vivek said. “But they were just curious because they do not have a concept of how Indians look like.”

As he grew older the problem lessened because Indians are more common in Hong Kong and the younger generation are more open to non-Chinese people.

“They think it’s a ‘jetso’ to have a foreign friend without a bother to speak English,” said Vivek.

His schedule is filled up every day. He runs his own web design business and is also a musician. When he has spare time, he comes up with ideas for his show.

The comedian has his own ways when facing depression: “When I am re-

ally stressed or unhappy, I usually time myself of being sad, and I’ll ask myself ‘what cause me to be unhappy’.”

Vivek met his good friend Mr Wong Yuk-lun, president of the Hong Kong Wrestling Federation when he used to wrestle. Mr Wong is now trying his luck to be a Cantonese comedian.

“I want to make others laugh as well, so I want to have a try to stand on stage,” Mr Wong said.

The comedy club where Vivek performs every weekend is in Soho, close to his flat in Sheung Wan. He likes Hong Kong so much because here is convenient and small.

“Unlike big countries or cities where I’ll have to spend a whole day on travelling, in Hong Kong, I can go to the beach and shopping on one day, and I can make good use of my time.”

For Vivek, comedian is a lifelong career and his aim is simple.

“My dream and goal of being a comedian is not materialistic. I don’t want to be a star and lose all my privacy. I just want to make you laugh.”



New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association

Vivek (left) collaborates with famous Hong Kong comedians Cheung Tat-ming (right) and Dr Tsang Fan-kwong (middle) in a show.



Mr Cuson Lo Chi-kong's work, "Snow White", portrays the Democratic Party.

# Have fun with comics on the cutting edge

Many people like reading Japanese comics like "Doraemon" and "Crayon Shin-chan" for fun, while Hong Kong comics are dominated by some violent content.

Since the 1970s, kung fu has become a mainstream among local comics. It was popular among the grassroots because the main characters are usually heroes who defeat the big boss, relieving their resentment towards daily life.

"I am unhappy. People now are unhappy," Mr Nickie Lee Wai-leung, an art director, said. "But happiness is the best emotion in the world."

Mr Lee's parents used to be stopping him from reading comics. But he always regards reading comics as a way to be happy and relax.

Now things have changed. The golden era of kung fu comics has ended since people were no longer satisfied with violence and bloodiness. Instead, more people are sharing their own productions on the Internet.

"Drawing comics is a dream of many," Mr Lee said. "I am always fond of drawing. With the rise of the Internet, I started posting comics onto my blog."

One day he was told by a net friend

that his blog became one of the recommended blogs on Yahoo. Then he decided to publish his comic series "Comedy Family". But he said it was hard to sell books of ordinary people at news stalls.

"As the vendors are slack, they only sell gossip magazines, newspapers and a few popular comics," Mr Lee said.

Mr Cuson Lo Chi-kong, a full-time visualizer of an advertising agency, is well-known for drawing cartoons for the League of Social Democrats. His comics, which explained the five district by-election in 2010, caught people's attention.

He is labelled as a political cartoonist after those comics were published, but actually he draws comics mostly about daily life. His latest work "My Kong-gal wife" is about the funny stories between his wife and him. And his work, "Devil Snow White", was even appreciated by a Croatian magazine.

"I've been a visualizer since I graduated, but what I drew was not things I liked," Mr Lo said. "Being a comic artist is my real dream."

In 2005, he started to draw his own comics and shared them on the Internet. But when it comes to reality, it was impossible for him to be a full-time comic

artist in Hong Kong as the income was too unstable to support a living.

Mr Lee Wai-leung also said it was difficult for him to make money by merely selling his comics and much of his time would be occupied by the production.

"I don't expect earning much from my books," he said. "I just want to create a brand, like Simpsons in America, to express my opinions on the society."

He added that comics are the best way to deliver messages and complaints in a short period of time.

"Commuters, like me, face pressure from their bosses every day," he said. "There are so many discontents in our minds and that's the motivation for me to make jokes of those bosses."

But the small reader group limits the development of local comics and publishers do not dare to publish alternative comics. But many new artists, like Siuhak and Yeung Hok-tak, are drawing comics of different styles, said Mr Lo.

Mr Donald Tong Wai-shing, who has been reading comics for 20 years, is a fan of comic artist Chao Yat.

"Chao Yat's comics are about current affairs. People would want to read and know more about news in Hong Kong."



Mr Conrad Lee Kwong-wah visits poor children in Shanxi province.

Conrad Lee

# Giving is better than receiving

**M**r Conrad Lee Kwong-wah owns Nikko Sports Company which has over 300 stores in the mainland as well as Hong Kong.

He was awarded the Model of Young Entrepreneur and received the trophy from Taiwan president Ma Ying-jeou.

But he is not really happy.

Mr Lee does not walk alone. According to ranking of the world's happiest regions, Hong Kong is 81st with 65 percent of residents feeling they are struggling in the city.

In 1993, Mr Lee's family moved to Australia.

At that time, Mr Lee and his wife frequently travelled between Hong Kong and the mainland for business. And their sons were alone in Australia.

"We seldom stayed with our sons and almost had no chance to talk with them as I was busy working all the time," said Mr Lee, "I felt quite regretful then."

Mr Lee spent little time with his parents as well. When his new business just

started, he was terribly busy. And just at the moment, his father passed away.

"My father supported me to start the new business. Unfortunately, he couldn't see my achievements today," said Mr Lee. "The most regretful thing for me is that I did not spend enough time with my parents."

"They helped me a lot but I didn't realise I should have spent more time with them until it was too late," he added.

After seven years, Mr Lee decided to make a change - his family moved back to Hong Kong and he started to spend more time with the family.

He stays at home frequently and plays with his grandsons. "The happiest thing for me now is staying with my two lovely grandsons. They are really cute."

Mr. Lee is also a sports lover. Tennis, hiking, swimming are his favourites.

"Sports cannot only release my pressure from work but keep my body healthy as well."

Mr Lee doesn't only focus on his

family life, but also others' lives. He is a member of the Rotary Club, Kowloon Chamber of Commerce, and Scout Association of Hong Kong. Every year, he participates in these organisations by donating money and organising workshops for children.

"When I help kids and see their lives improve, I feel really satisfied."

According to Dr Tsang Fan-kwong, a psychiatrist at Castle Peak Hospital, there are two main reasons that make people feel unhappy - materialism and individualism.

Dr Tsang suggested people should pursue less materialism to make themselves feel happier. Also, focusing less on yourself and helping others will help you gain eternal happiness.

"The pursuit of physical sensation such as smoking and eating junk food will not really make a person happy."

"The way to be happy is to pursue long-lasting joy such as devoting yourself into a good course," Dr Tsang said.

EDITED BY BONNIE FUNG, SARAH LAI, ADA LEE, INES NARVAEZ & THOMAS YAU

# Find the right man for your face

Gone are the days when women were the only ones in the make-up industry

BY PEARLIE YIU

Men may not be the biggest group of consumers in make-up but that does not mean they cannot be skillful and experts in the industry.

The number of male make-up artists have been steadily growing. Mr Nic Chan Ka-wing has been learning make-up styling for three months and says male make-up artists are in great demand.

"Most women dress up to look good for men," he said. "So girls may want men's comments. It is better if a guy does the work to make her look good."

Fellow freelance make-up artist Mr Jess Yung agrees there are a lot of male make-up artists today.

"They are more professional and more objective," he said.

He believes female make-up artists may have biased preference in using cosmetics and ignore the clients' requests but male make-up artists focus on what looks best on their clients.

Mr Chan and Mr Yung always stay attentive of their models to ensure they feel comfortable.

"A poke in the eye or an untested base powder can be allergic," Mr Chan explained. He said he would test every new product before applying it on his models.

Mr Yung has helped many models and artists in make-up. However, he still gets embarrassed when doing jobs like weddings, during which he may have to help with the bride's wedding dress.

"I was the only guy in the room but the bridesmaids and I hid our embarrassment," he said, with a little shudder.

He compares the make-up industry to the pharmacist industry.

"Like specific and useful drugs, make-up that suits your skin can be beautiful and luxurious," he said.

"Besides, the working hours are flexible and you get a sense of accomplishment when you help solve someone's make-up allergic condition," he said.



*Jess Yung applies a final touch of eye-liner to model CiCi just before the runway starts.*

"I want to be the next Zing," said Mr Yung, by referring to the famous make-up art director who owns a beauty school and works for Max Factor, SKII as well as stars like Faye Wong and Sammi Cheng.

Mr Yung was a salesman of a cosmetics company but he quit his job and did freelance make-up jobs while working as a part-time cook at a Japanese restaurant. "It was a nightmare, but I knew if I gave up I would never be able to fulfill my dream," said Mr Yung.

Luckily, he was able to do make-up for former girls' band Cookies' member Angela, and his career to flourish.

"Dare to do what others don't is the key of being creative and successful," Mr Yung said, who takes inspiration from a photographer he met long ago.

"He told me that it doesn't matter if

I applied makeup for famous artists or your average customer," he said. "In the end, what's important is that you make someone beautiful, and that's a gift you never take lightly."

Mr Chan will graduate from 'Beauty School' in three weeks but he worries about his future career because there is a great competition. He plans to gain experience by doing internships that would hopefully make him stand out.

Mr Yung would like to travel soon for work and fun. "I want to see the beautiful designs and their makeup artistry in the capitals of fashion," he said, adding that it is okay for the young generation to join the industry. "Just take caution with itchy face powder and undercutting," he said.

EDITED BY JOHN A.L. NICOLAS

# Caught in the jazz groove

Bands are finally getting their music out to a bigger audience with the help of NGOs.

BY JACKY YIN



*Mr Benny Inot plays saxophone at a rehearsal of Lando Bernal's Big Broad Band.*

Most of the time when you think of jazz, American jazz from Chicago or New Orleans may first pop into your mind. But what about Asian jazz?

While most of the credits go to the Western style of jazz, Filipino jazz is a popular genre in Asia and Filipino jazz performers such as Charmaine Clamor and Sandra Lim Viray have a huge following in the region.

In Hong Kong, Mr Rolando Bernal, conductor of Lando Bernal's Big Broad Band, founded his Filipino jazz band 20 years ago. "I love jazz. It's the feel in my body. It explodes in my head," he said.

He says pop is where all the money is

but the root is always in jazz, "If you can manage jazz, any other kinds of music will be easy."

Lando Bernal's plays a wide genre of music from traditional big band standards to Latin and the more difficult contemporary repertoire. Many band members work as freelance musicians and some play for other bands.

The band will be performing jointly with renowned singer Rebecca Pan in March at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Mr Bernal has been giving difficult pieces to the band members to practice so that "they can play anything at ease on the stage".

Mr Benny Inot, 52, has been Lando

Bernal's saxophonist for four years. He also plays regularly in Central three days a week. He says a musician normally earns around \$25,000 a month by performing.

More bands have emerged in recent years as Hongkongers became more familiar with jazz and prefer live performances. Apart from Lando Bernal's, other live jazz bands such as Saturday Night Jazz Orchestra, Ned Kelly Big Band, Discovery Bay Big Band and Basic Notes Jazz Big Band are also hitting town.

Music director of Saturday Night Jazz Orchestra Mr Taka Hirohama says high operating cost is a critical challenge for big bands worldwide.

Hong Kong Fringe Club, a non-profit organisation, subsidised the bands' tour to Shanghai Expo last autumn and its annual performances at City Hall in January.

Mr Benny Chia, artistic director of the Fringe Club, says it pays the bands monthly while future sponsorship comes from donation and membership fees.

But on top of subsidies, Mr Hirohama says the key lies in getting enough support from the audience.

By comparing Japan, Italy and Hong Kong where he visits for regular performances, Mr Hirohama says jazz is not fully developed in Hong Kong, more recognised in Japan, and a daily dose in Europe.

"Education is the key to appreciating jazz. It informs people of knowledge they don't know. Jazz is not popular because people haven't heard of it yet," said Mr Hirohama.

It may take time for the younger generation to start appreciating jazz but once it gets to their ears, it may well be a big hit.

"I was amazed by the energy the music had. And I will definitely keep up with it," said Mr Vance Lv Pinyi from Hong Kong Baptist University.

EDITED BY CARRIE CHENG



From left to right: Wai Lee the bass guitarist, MW Lai the drummer, Six the vocal singer and Clement Fung the leader and guitarist.

# Dare to be different

From earthquake in Haiti to teenage suicides, RubberBand has a message to tell in every song

BY HEI IN LAI

The value of a singer in Hong Kong is very much determined by how much money he earns and how marketable his albums are. But some singers have dared to be different.

In 2004, five music lovers formed a band called RubberBand, believing that music should be connective and flexible like a rubber band.

They all had a full-time job but knew that only music would enable them to convey their messages effectively.

By observing things that were happening around, they composed songs regarding the issues.

"Rooftop Trapeze" is a light-hearted song encouraging people to overcome difficulties and not to commit suicide.

"We embed our views into our music. It doesn't matter if our audience agrees or not, as long as our music arouses their emotions," said MW Lai, the energetic drummer.

"Haiti" is another song composed by the band dedicated to the 2010 Haiti earthquake victims.

Although appearance and gimmicks are keys to survive in the industry, the band believes they still have advantages over solo artists.

"Band artists can have more variations and stronger affections on stage than solo artists", said "Six", vocal singer of RubberBand.

When they decided to become full-time singers, they signed a contract with Gold Typhoon Entertainment Limited.

At the beginning, the band planned to release a single album only. After gaining popularity they got more chances to perform and even won the "My favourite group singer award" in a music awards in January.

Like any other groups all band members had different ideas at the start.

"But after all these years, we know each other very well and now we are honest with each other," said leader and guitarist Clement Fung.

Years of cooperation means they trust each other's decisions and share similar perspectives.

They also try not lose focus on music while promoting their albums. "Our core value is music," said MW. "We might be commercialised in some of our activities like promotions, but never in our music."

"Six" says the public's ignorance towards independent music is obvious when it comes to music awards. The spotlights are always on individual singers but not on bands.

Back in the 1980s, there were much more chances for local bands whereas now it is always about following the trend. "What they want is entertainment rather than appreciation," said MW.

Only a handful of band artists are popular in Hong Kong compared to the mainland, Taiwan and the US, where solo and band artists are in good balance.

Local bands are always perceived as rock, but RubberBand shows that whether they are producing pop or rock songs, it is still good music

EDITED BY DAISY ZHONG



*Devotees of the Latin American dance tango come to practise.*

# Tango and socialise

Learning tango might help you release the pressure of living in a stressful city

BY JACK AUNG MIN KHIN

**D**o you want to socialise, meet new friends, have fun and get fit? Then I would suggest you try going to a tango class.

In a conference room in the basement of Helena May building in Central, swirling dancers follow the steps of their instructors with their left hands paired in the front and right hands holding their partner's waist.

This is where many devotees of the Latin American dance tango come to practise in Hong Kong.

An instructor who leads the workshop reminds dancers not to hold tightly onto each other because the basic skill of tango is moving easily.

"See, I don't support her! She is walking by herself," he said while demonstrating to the students.

Like many other Latin social dances,

tango is a popular dance and is gaining popularity among Hong Kong adults because of the romantic feeling and the attraction of Latina American culture.

The beauty of tango lies in the perfect harmony and intimacy between the dancers. It is a very sensual dance and relies on perfect communication between the man and the woman.

"Tango is all about expressing oneself. It is much deeper than the dances. It's nonverbal communication between two people," said Ms Mona Kuk, instructor at Tango Tang Club of Hong Kong.

She said two people really did not have to know each other. With tango they could be friends and they would get to know each other through tango.

I used to learn salsa, so tango is completely new to me. I didn't know how to start at all.

But the director of Tango Tang, Mr Clement Siu said: "Tango is quite simple. It is just walking with music."

He said for women it took them a very short time and they could dance the basic steps and dance the whole night, but for men it is a bit more difficult because they had to learn how to lead and navigate around the traffic as well.

However, as the man is in the leading position, it gives men a chance to show off their dancing talent to attract their partner.

Of course it is not as easy as it sounds: for me it involves a lot of effort to master. It is also true that if you do not master the craft quickly you may get disappointed and quit.

At the first stage, I was observing how people step and move. I felt frustrated and disappointed. I didn't even think I could step as a dancer but after I have improved slowly, it became more enjoyable.

What you need to remember is that a basic movement of tango is 'ocho', which means number 8 shape in Spanish: dancing four steps forward, side steps and backward steps.

Although tango is all improvised, you can create your own dances, and you don't have to follow exactly the steps to the rule; it can be stressful to follow the rules when you have to think about what comes next to match the music.

But, and here's the catch, when you do master the steps, you never want to stop dancing. The art of tango is contact: body contact and sensual contact.

Ms Kathy Kearney started dancing four years ago.

"The guy always holds you. He never lets you go. He never spins you around," said Ms Kearney.

If you think this is a great barrier, you should think twice about whether tango is for you.

If you decide to take up dancing, it is never too late to try tango. I was reluctant to come back without dancing tango on the first night, so I went back again to invite a female partner to dance with me. However, it was impossible for me to do that because I did not dance well.

If you want to invite a partner to dance with you, make sure you have adequate skills. Otherwise you will end up like me spending \$80 for tango party, but didn't have a chance to dance at all.

EDITED BY BRIAN LAW

# “Jasmine revolution” in China is a distant hope

BY HOA PHAM

All the spotlights are on China as it emerges internationally as an economic giant, and the exceptional non-democratic one of the sort.

On myriad occasions China has faced harsh criticisms and challenges for its authoritarian treatment of human rights activists. Yet, the Communist Party's determination to keep the country function as a one-party rule nation is as strong as ever.

Could that be a sign for an imminent revolutionary event to occur?

Nobody could have foreseen Tunisia's Jasmine revolution in January, which explains precisely its immense scope of success.

Due to China's frequent record of protests, the mini pro-democracy demonstrations that broke out in 13 cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, on February 20 are hardly unpredictable. But this time the attempt appeared momentous.

Timing is perhaps a factor. A wave of protests following Tunisia's had been breaking out in the Middle East, notably in Egypt, Morocco and now Libya. These have essentially provoked this “Chinese

Jasmine revolution” idea among activists online. So when disruptions occurred, the mainland government and foreign countries anxiously looked out for the progress of this domino effect.

It is, however, not in the foreseeable future for political reforms to happen in China as a result of these protests. Not unless the country's economy plunges into rock bottom, the Chinese Communist Party's strong structure collapses, or when the majority of this fast growing economy's common people is pushed to an edge with absolutely no other way out for survival than to start a revolution.

While the state media have unsurprisingly not given any reports on the protests, Hong Kong and foreign publications have gathered responses from analysts and commentators who generally agreed on the unlikelihood of the issue. The Chinese government is still very effective in holding the country together.

For most people, the risks of breaking the acceptable living standard are too high to convince them to act against the government. Protests for democracy have yet been widely supported by

the public, even though many of them harbour discontents. Punitive actions towards dissidents are sympathised mostly by outside onlookers.

Nevertheless, that is not to say that the ruling elite would not feel threatened by the meaning of these gatherings. The mainland authorities' typical explanation that the Chinese are unsuitable culturally to be able to function democratically is no longer satisfactory.

With an example of a dictated country like Egypt, even though there are grave differences in terms of economics and how the governments run the systems, China can look and see for itself that the strength of the people's unity is not to be underestimated.

President Hu Jintao has recently given directions to central and provincial-level party leaders across the nation to step up on security and, at the same time, “improve people's livelihood”.

Meanwhile, the West's call for an improvement from the Chinese government towards the treatment of dissidents makes little difference. A political change in China can only be imagined in a long run.

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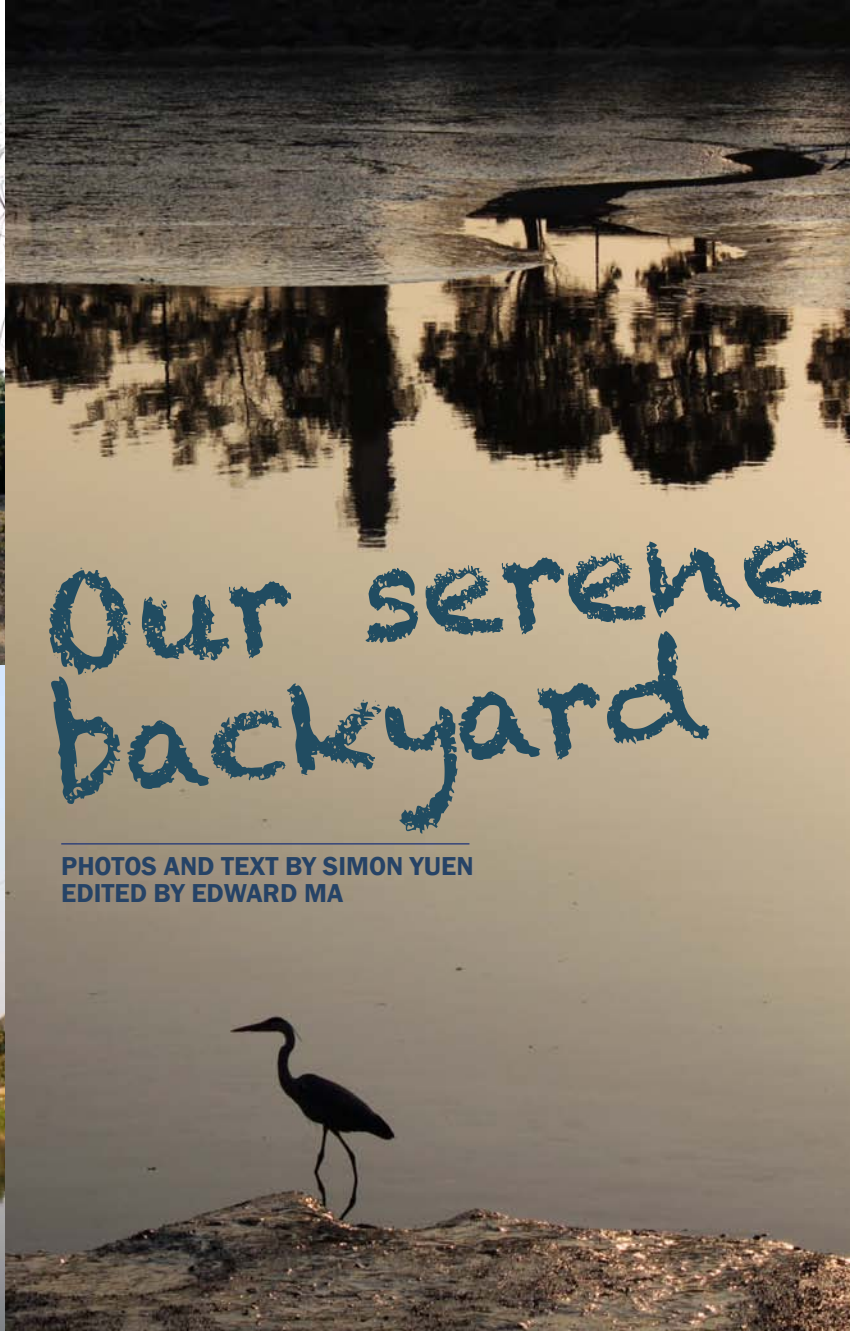
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Located just north of Yuen Long, Nam Sang Wai is an oasis of tranquility for Hongkongers to spend their leisure time. They fly kites, ride bicycles and take photos at this retreat from the city's hustle and bustle.

The wetland has long been famous as a stopover for migratory birds and for its beautiful natural sceneries. But what catapulted it to wide public attention was the discovery of a crocodile at Kam Tin River, one of two rivers flowing through it, in 2003. The crocodile has since been caught and named Pui Pui after the river.

The cable ferry - the only means of crossing Shan Pui River - is another attraction. People pay \$5 for the voyage that takes less than a minute. It is a pity that several fires in recent months have wiped out large chunks of the area's vegetation - a sign that some visitors are not taking good care of the city's rural backyard.



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