

The fight continues

*Unions want better benefits
after winning wage floor battle*



TYR

The Young Reporter
-by HKBU journalism students since 1969-

08

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VOL.43, ISSUE 8, August 2011

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EDITOR'S NOTE

While the minimum wage has been implemented for a month, there are still loopholes in the legislation which some employers are using to evade their legal responsibilities. Workers' statutory pay may have been raised, but it remains to be seen if all will really get a better deal.

Although a wage floor has been introduced, there is still much room for improvement in other labour benefits, such as holiday entitlements and paternity leave. TYR looks into these issues with a view to triggering more discussion.

Another year has passed. A new editing team has taken over TYR in the hope of keeping the flavour of the magazine and improving its quality. A big round of applause goes to this year's editorial board. Not until after we took up the task did we realized it is not easy to sustain the reputation of TYR. Well done, our seniors. We learnt a lot from you.

Issue 8 will be the last issue of TYR in this academic year. We are planning changes to make TYR better and livelier next year. Stay tuned and we promise a more attractive TYR after the summer holiday!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Kwok'.

Gary Kwok Ka-lok
Chief Editor

Many Sheung Shui residents regularly buy food from unlicensed hawkers



Food hawkers are fading away

The government is resolutely ousting unlicensed food vendors

BY DENNIS LEE

Unlicensed food hawking at night may be disappearing from the city, as the government is firmly against them.

Hawker Control Teams regularly crack down on unlicensed hawking. In 2010, there were 24,565 convictions of unlicensed hawkers or hawker-related offences.

According to the Food and Environment Hygiene Department (FEHD), the number of unlicensed hawkers has dropped significantly from about 7,100 in 1990 to about 1,900 in 2010.

The raids were necessary to ensure food safety and environmental hygiene as illegal hawking not only caused obstruction in public areas, but also created hygiene nuisance for the environment, said a spokesman for the department.

But former night hawker Ms Chan did not agree. "We are self-disciplined," she said. "We tidy up and clean the places before leaving."

Ms Chan has been a night hawker for almost 20 years at Sheung Shui MTR Station. She said it was the harsh economic environment that made her stay in the trade.

"I don't have enough money to rent a place to do business in the public market

or elsewhere. Also, my sons are not well-paid. If I quit the trade, I will have no food, no home and, most important, no money," Miss Chan sighed.

Cheung Mui, a 60-year-old hawker, said unlicensed hawkers just wanted to make ends meet without becoming a burden to the public purse.

"If I quit, I will have no food, no home and most important, no money."

-Ms Chan, pancake seller at Sheung Shui

"We want to make our living on our own, instead of relying on the government. But the government doesn't understand this. We make little money every day. I wonder if all the hawkers will apply for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme when the Hawker Control Team increases the frequency of their enforcement activities," she said.

However, applying for the CSSA may not be as easy as the hawkers think.

According to the Social Welfare Department, hawker applicants for the CSSA are usually not accepted. "Since

unlicensed hawking is an offence, our department will strongly encourage the unlicensed hawker applicants to give up hawking. If illegal hawkers face financial difficulty, they should get out of unlawful hawking first. Physically fit applicants who are aged between 15 and 65 should participate in the department's Support for Self-reliance (SFS) Scheme to look for jobs before lodging a CSSA Scheme application." Ms Wong, Information Officer of the Social Welfare Department, said.

People who are in favour of hawked food hope the government would give the hawkers some breathing space.

Miss Lee, a Sheung Shui resident, feels that unlicensed hawkers sell not only "delicious food", but their presence also has cultural significance. "The food gives a taste of the past," she said.

Peggy Butt, 20, said she had been a frequent customer of the hawkers for almost ten years. "Hawked food is a part of Hong Kong culture. Its historical value is enormous," she said.

Cheung Mui wished the government would be more tolerant. "I'm not committing crimes. Applying for the CSSA Scheme is my last resort. If the Hawker Control Team carries out fewer raids, it will mean a lot to us."

EDITED BY CARLOS CHENG

Tobacco tax increase- not so effective after all

South Asians smoke dipping tobacco instead

BY JOHNNY LO

An increase in tobacco tax seems to have failed to achieve its aim in the city's ethnic minority circle as they have found an alternative way to smoke.

Financial Secretary Mr John Tsang Chun-wah announced a 41.5 per cent rise in tobacco tax in the latest Budget. The price of a pack of cigarettes has raised to \$50 since February 23.

Ms Carol Bishnu Gurung, a Nepalese ambassador at the United Christian Nethersole Community Health service (UCN) said that the ethnic minorities didn't care about the tax increase.

"They can easily get cheaper ones," she said. "They can buy dipping tobacco from the retail shops or restaurants run by their countrymen such as Nepalese or Pakistani."

Dipping tobacco is a kind of smokeless tobacco product. It refers to a pack of moist snuff that contains nicotine. Smokers can dip snuff on their gums to absorb nicotine, which normally lasts for one to two hours, into bloodstream or saliva.

Ms Gurung said that each pack of dipping tobacco cost \$4 only. The price is much cheaper than that of cigarettes in Hong Kong.

Ms Gurung said smoking has become a habit of many South Asians, but they are not aware of the harmful effects.

"They don't like smoking but they can't stop as they've been addicted to it," said Ms Gurung. "Most of them are not educated about the harm of smoking."

Ms Emily Shiu Sheung-kit, a health and medical service manager of the United Christian Nethersole Community Health Service (UCN), also agreed that health education and healthy life styles are rarely mentioned in their birthplaces.

To help non-local smokers quit smoking, the Department of Health commissioned UCN to operate a Pilot Outreach Programme last year.

The programme started from No-



The government has announced a 41.5 per cent increase on tobacco tax in the last Budget.

vember last year. It aims at finding out the smoking habit of the South Asians and new immigrants for a better plan of future services. UCN spreads the smoke-free message by networking with religious groups, district centres, non-governmental organizations and ethnic minorities' retail shops and restaurants.

"They (South Asians) can easily get cheaper ones."

-Ms Carol Bishnu Gurung, ambassador at the UCN

Ms Shiu said although smokers from the two groups showed interest in attending the programmes, not many of them joined because of accommodation and jobs concern.

Ms Tang Shan-li, a smoking new immigrant, is dissatisfied with the increased tobacco tax but she has no time to join the programmes since she needed to look after her mother-in-law. To relieve the financial burden, Ms Tang has started buying non-duty paid cigarettes.

Since it was harder for the ethnic minorities to obtain smoking-cessation information through the media due to different language, Ms Chan Kit-ying, a project manager of Pilot Outreach Programme, said that UCN set up a booth in different places on Sunday to attract smokers from minority ethnic groups.

"We found that smokers of ethnic minority group like a counter of blood pressure measurement so we provided this service for free to catch their eyes," said Ms Chan.

After the health check at the booth, staff will collect the personal data of smokers. Ambassadors like Ms Gurung will follow up the cases by calling them to advocate them to stop smoking.

The ambassadors are also members of ethnic minorities as smokers of this group are more willing to talk with people of the same race. However, there are only two full-time female ambassadors in UCN.

Ms Chan pointed out that a lack of male ambassadors slowed down the progress of the programme as females had difficulty entering a men-only mosque, where many ethnic minorities usually went, due to religious beliefs.

She thought the government should spend more resources on training more ambassadors and providing more all-round health check-ups. Not only for new immigrants and the ethnic minorities, she added that the revenue of increased tobacco tax could be spent on education, promotion and services of smoking-cessation campaigns.

"The resources used on smoking control are far less than our neighboring countries," Ms Chan said.

EDITED BY SADIE LO

Education goes online

Forums are set up not just for school students, but also for teachers and parents to get info

BY JOYCE CHEUNG

While online past papers are valuable resources to students, they are not easy to be found on the Internet. Online education forums thus gain popularity, especially among public exam candidates.

Hong Kong Education City (HKed-City) and the Little Soldier (LS) Forum are two typical examples. Not only do students visit the forums frequently, teachers and parents account for a portion of the registered members of these websites.

HKedCity was founded in 2000 after the government vowed to incorporate technology into education in 1998. It aimed at providing resources, interaction and online softwares to teachers, students and parents. According to the website, about 90 per cent of Hong Kong schools and teachers are registered members of the site.

Parents find the online resources approachable and informative. Ms Wong, a mother of a form four student, is a registered member of the LS. She said she got hold of more updated details and she could engage more actively in helping her son's studies.

"Originally I knew nothing about the

3-3-4 curriculum," she said, "but [now] I get used to going to the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) forum in Little Soldier; I can share it with my son."

Teachers, on the other hand, make use of these online resources to plan the curriculum more effectively using the syllabus listed on the web.

"It is not like drilling," said Ms Ng Mei-mei, executive director of HKed-City. "Teachers do not use [the sorted questions] to drill but adjust their teaching strategies; it also saves time for marking."

"Our aim is not profit making but helping students,"

—Mr Bernard Kung,
founder of Little Soldier Forum

She added that students who are going to take the HKDSE could skip the "out-of-syllabus" questions. "We cooperate with the Education Bureau," said Ms Ng.

Similar to HKedCity, the LS aims at creating a platform for students – especially those in high schools – to discuss public examinations, according to its founder Mr Bernard Kung.

The LS is currently comprised of exam resources repository, tutor service, Q&A area and the bookshop. "We are trying many ways to improve our services by providing more platforms

and services to members such as exam seminar, image uploading service, book exchange and selling and the tutoring services," he said.

Mr Kung thought the interactivity is an important element of education forums. "The e-platforms should allow students to learn and study online, and encourage more communications between different schools by breaking the borders of schools."

Mr Kung thought education forums were important not only to students. Some teachers answer questions raised by students in the LS while some teachers search for other schools' mock exam paper.

Parents are getting more involved too, especially at times near the release of Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination results. "They [parents] would like to know which school is better, so they can plan for their children," explained Mr Kung.

As a former candidate who seated for the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination back in 2006, Mr Kung understood the importance of a platform which aims at helping students instead of making money.

"Two years ago, a businessman approached and asked me to sell 80 per cent of the shares of LS to convert the site into a commercial one," said Mr Kung, "the offer was of six digits but I rejected the offer as our aim is not profit earning but helping students."



Ms Ng Mei-mei, executive director of Hong Kong Education City.



Brand new development of traditional

Practitioners combine Chinese medicine with Western technology to

BY ALVINA HUNG, SOPHIA FU



Chinese medicine

to form a new kind of medical skill

Riding on its medical value, traditional Chinese herbal medicine has successfully broken the boundary of age and won the hearts of the young generations.

“There is a rising trend of young people trying Chinese medicine or acupuncture because they are aware of the side-effects of western medicine,” said a veteran Chinese medicine practitioner Mr Lee Wai-chung.

There are now more than 6,000 Chinese medicine clinics in Hong Kong since an authorization system came into effect in 1999.

But there are also people who see the strength of both western medicine and Chinese medicine and try to combine the two of them.

Mr Chau Chiu-ki believed that this was feasible as Chinese medicine was particularly useful in defeating viruses or chronic diseases and was helpful in first aid.

He said that this method has been used in the mainland for a long time and it has been proven effective. “The cost is also cheaper when the two combine together,” said Mr Chau.

Lee, a specialist in acupuncture, said his customers included youngsters and foreigners. “They (foreigners) come here for one to two times, usually when they are travelling in the city,” he said.

As the demand for Chinese medical practitioners keeps increasing, Hong Kong’s universities have launched Chinese medicine programmes to train future practitioners. Local hospitals have also set up Chinese medicine departments to offer treatments to the public.

Competition among practitioners is keen as more fresh graduates join the profession. Mr Lee said that though competition was inevitable, their skills could be sharpened.

But Mr Chau said that the new generation still left a lot to be desired. “Chinese medicine is not confined to theories only. It also requires people’s creativity and appreciation,” he said.

“I have been lucky from the start as plenty of people have been seeing me,” Mr Chau said. “Of course, it is mainly due to my willingness to innovate and transform!”

Chinese medicine combines with optometry

Mr Wong Wai-kit is both a Chinese medicine practitioner and an optometrist. He first studied optometry at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and started his business as an optometrist.

A few years later, he trained as a Chinese medicine practitioner by studying part-time at the Hong Kong Baptist University. He has been practising as a Chinese medicine practitioner-cum optometrist since 2007.

Mr Wong believes that it is possible to combine the skills of Chinese and western medicine. In his case, he has incorporated his skills of inspecting the eyes as an optometrist with Chinese medicine practitioners' traditional method of diagnosing illnesses by enquiring about the patient's symptoms.

Traditionally, Chinese medicine practitioners hardly understand the real situation of the eyes. Now, with the help of apparatus used by optometrists, practitioners are able to look more deeply into the eyes and use their knowledge of Chi-

nese medicine to cure illnesses.

By combining the two together, Mr Wong said the chances of correctly diagnosing a patient's illness and offering him the best treatment would be higher.

But he said many people were still not confident of the treatments, because they knew little about optometry in Chinese medicine. Also it was relatively more time-consuming and many patients gave up before there was any improvement.

However, Mr Wong said he was optimistic about the future of the new industry. Several Chinese practitioners already specialized in optometry like him, and he was confident that the trend would grow, he said.

Over time, more people would come to realise the merits of drawing on the strengths of both Chinese and western medical skills, said Mr Wong.

Chinese medicine changes into a different form

Traditionally, Chinese medicine was all about herbal tea, which was cooked

on the site and sold in bowls. Now, the way of making herbal tea has been modernized. Herbal teas mass-produced and bottled in factories have become very common and the public like them.

Mr Sam Luk, a shop assistant of "Chan Tse Traditional Herbal Drinks", said that they could sell 3,000 to 4,000 bowls of Chinese herbal drinks every day. Customers can either drink in the shop or take a bottle away.

A shop assistant at Health Works said that they usually sold 500 bottles of herbal drinks every day. "Our customers are from all age groups," she said.

With modern technology, traditional Chinese medicine has taken on new forms as pills and powders, which are more convenient to consume.

"There is no rapid development of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong; only that the public has become more receptive," said professor Leung Ping-chung, the director of the Institute of Chinese Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Breakthrough maybe on its way as practitioners of Chinese medicine make use of western technology.

Human touch the key to running a long lasting business

People still prefer heart-warming old cake shops

BY COCO ZHENG

When western restaurants and bakeries are flourishing, it becomes difficult for traditional cake shops to survive. Yet there are still people who hold on to these specialty stores, not just to taste the food, but also to have a bite of nostalgic feelings.

"It's not about the food, it's about the memory," said 28 year-old Alex Yeung.

Mr Yeung visits traditional bakeries frequently. "Most of my friends prefer western style cakes, but I stick to the 'Lo-Beng'. They remind me of so much."

Annette Shek, 15, also finds traditional cakes" rather interesting, though she did not grow up with classic specialties. "My secondary school is very close to some old food stores. After class, I usually stop by and get something to eat," she said.

"It's fascinating," she said. "I often picture how my parents walked into those shops and ordered food when they were at my age. It's like communication between past and present."

"Old food shops are very different from western fast-food restaurants," said Louise Kwok, a friend of Ms Shek. "People working in those traditional food stores would chat with us and ask about our studies. It's very heart-warming."

Mr Cheung had been the owner of "Kee Tsui Cake Shop" since 1984. He



Many people still like the heart-warming atmosphere of old cake shops.

said it was difficult to strike a balance between preserving traditional formulas and making a living. "Simply by selling traditional baked cakes you are not likely to make a fortune," he said.

"We focus on traditionally baked cakes, but we do make western-style ones, like egg tarts, butter cookies and muffins, so that even if you are not a fan of old-fashioned treats, there are still something for you," he said.

Old-fashioned treats not only offer a drippy taste of the past generations, but also create brand new experiences for foreign customers.

"My best friend got married last week. She ordered some traditionally baked cakes for the wedding. It was really, really meaningful." Florence Dupond, an international school teacher, said.

"I have always been a huge fan of traditional food shops. They have human kindness that modern restaurants often lack." Mrs Dupond added.

Some shops are happy to see more and more people starting to care about old-fashioned food, while the other still

face the pressure of closing down.

Mr Wong has run a breakfast shop in Sham Shui Po for over 50 years. However, his son had always insisted on selling it.

"I'm 84, and I'm not sure how much longer I can make it," Wong said. "I saw many specialty shops closing down. I wonder if we will all come to an end someday."

"We tried to keep our menu traditional, but the reality is, people always expect new things," said Ms Lau, 57, who used to be the owner of a Hong Kong-style café in Tsim Sha Tsui. Three years ago, the café closed down due to financial difficulties.

Most of the traditional snack shops are small businesses operating on very low margins. However, the business climate has turned against them.

"Inflation is pushing the price of everything up," said 44 year-old Mei, whose shop shrank to become a stall over the past five years. "We can't afford the rent any more, and if we raise the price, customers will go. There's no win-win situation."

EDITED BY PEARLIE YIU

A little pain for a smartened face

Traditional threading has been smoothening millions of faces over hundreds of years.

BY FECHON WONG

古法美容
脱痣
拉面毛
修眉



The equipment needed for threading includes thread, facial powder, cream and tissues.

Coiling a long piece of cotton triangular thread, a woman uses it to roll and slide over the face meticulously and tactfully. Within minutes, tiny hairs on the face are removed and the face becomes slithery. It is what Ms Hung Ying, 54, has been doing routinely for 20 years.

Ms Hung's little stall in Tuen Mun is not the only one who inherits threading, the traditional ancient cosmetic hair removal treatment. Ms Hung says more than 100 similar small vendors or big beauty salons are providing threading nowadays.

Founded as early as in Qing Dynasty in the Eastern world, this traditional beauty technique was once a smash hit and numerous ladies had tried this treatment. Ladies can have their untidy and unwanted hairlines on their faces or eyebrows removed by threading.

This traditional technique may have been less popular but it still has its market nowadays. Ms Hung says threading has attracted lots of people, regardless of their genders, ages, careers and nationalities.

On weekdays, there are usually about 15 customers while the number would reach 20 during weekends in her stall.

Customers come here as threading can remove dead skin cells and eliminate wrinkles. If clients keeps doing it, they could have a smoother skin texture and smaller pores, according to Ms Hung.

While the traditional threading veteran thinks threading can enhance skin texture, a modern beautician also holds positive views on this ancient treatment. Ms Lee Hoi Van, the owner of Hoi Van Beauty Centre, also provides threading service in her centre.

"As skin cells age and die off, threading helps them to shed and our skin could be more radiant and youthful," says Ms Lee.

The effectiveness is also witnessed by customers. Mrs Wong, 52, a client of Ms Hung, has the treatment once a month. "It makes me look young even in my 50s," she says.

"You see how it works," she adds, pointing to her ruddy cheeks.

"People would find the pain worthy as it makes their skin brighter and smoother."

-Hung Ying, threading beautician

Sometimes Mrs Wong would even come with her teenage daughter.

Male customers are not scarce too. Kit, 35, a male movie director, loves this hair removal technique not only because it can smoothen his skin, but also due to its low price. "It's cheap – only \$30 for each treatment!" he says.

Despite the positive points, customers would need to tolerate the pain. Cli-

ents will feel pain, especially in their first trial, Ms Hung describes.

"People would find the pain worthy as it makes their skin brighter and smoother," says Ms Hung.

Ms Lee says competition is getting stiffer, especially from the contemporary beauty industry and most of her customers in her centre go for progressive techniques.

"They are more all-round, pain-free and trustworthy," says Ms Lee, citing laser hair removal treatment as an example.

Ms Wong Sze-ting, 19, is a supporter of laser hair removal treatment. She is satisfied with the outcome after four treatment sessions. "I believed the modern treatment is more hygienic than threading," says Ms Wong.

Contemporary treatment costs over \$200 each time, about seven times of the traditional threading. Kit thinks threading is more convenient too. "It is really handy. It takes only 15 minutes for threading but an hour for a treatment in beauty salon," he says.

For the prospect of threading, it may be difficult for small vendors to turn their stalls into a beauty centre due to a lack of capital. "It is enough for me to earn a living by street vending," says Ms Hung.

Ms Hung hopes threading won't be overtaken by modern technique in the future.

"This Chinese traditional culture should be well-protected and I will keep the unique way of threading in my lifetime," says Ms Hung.



Ms Hung is preparing for threading.



Shorter working hours: the next battle

While the public has focused on the introduction of a statutory minimum wage in May, unionists have shifted their attention to improving other labor conditions. TYR takes a look at these issues.

BY ADA YEUNG, ALAN WONG, KRISTINE BASILIO, MELODY CHAN



Photo by Simon Yuen

efield

imum wage our benefits.

While various problems about implementing the minimum wage legislation, which came into effect in May, remain unresolved, capping working hours has emerged as the next issue that labour activists want the community to address.

Mr Wong Ying-yiu, a committee member of Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), said the passage of minimum wage legislation showed that society has reached a consensus over the need for more labour protection.

“Standardized working hours will be the next step,” he said.

Introducing a law to regulate working hours has long been a key demand of HKCTU, which routinely presses the issue at annual rallies held on Labour Day.

Many workers in the service industries, particularly those who have to work very long hours on weekends and public holidays, support the introduction of standard working hours. But most employers are opposed for fear it would reduce their flexibility in staff deployment.

Ms Lee, a full-time cashier at the supermarket section of a Japanese department store, supports capping working hours as it would enable her to spend more time with her children.

She refused to give her full name, because she was afraid she might lose her job for airing her views to the media.

Her contract requires her to work for no less than 240 hours each month. In fact, she usually works more than 280 hours a month.

She feels guilty for not fulfilling her role of being a mother. By the time she gets home after work, her children are already asleep. She could hardly hug them in bed, let alone talking to them.

Ms Lee said she was especially stressed out during the store’s so-called mega sales periods, in which large numbers of customers thronged the store and its business hours were extended.

“The queues are always there, so you just can’t stop. You just can’t call it a day at the end of a shift,” Ms. Lee said.

She explained that she had thought about working part-time, but gave up the idea as she would earn less and lose job security.

Ms. Cheryl Kan, 25, an usher at a cinema, said having standard working hours would allow her to have more breaks.

During the Lunar New Year period last year, she had to work from 1pm to 4am the next morning because additional midnight shows were put on.

Ms Kan said she was still haunted by the experience of manning a concession counter for 10 hours without a break.

But her manager, Mr Angus Wan, felt that introducing standard working hours would not be feasible for a cinema as it would affect staff deployment.

“It would be difficult to deploy manpower efficiently as we really need to count on full-time staff to tackle a considerable number of customers during the peak periods,” Mr. Wan said.

He also pointed out that some people were willing to take up several jobs at the same time. Introducing laws to limit working hours would stop these people from doing what they wanted to do, he said.

“Don’t forget that some people may want to put money before leisure,” he said.

“A minimum wage is a much better and more pragmatic protection for workers. At least they can get a reasonable amount of money that they deserve.

“I guess this explains why standard working hours still remains an issue under preliminary discussion only,” he added.

Workers want more annual holidays

Unions say blue collar workers should get 17 days off a year too

Blue collar workers are calling for more annual holidays, following the recent introduction of minimum wage legislation.

According to the Employment Ordinance, blue collar workers are currently entitled—and limited to—12 annual statutory holidays, while white collar workers enjoy 17 annual general holidays.

This is despite the fact that in Hong Kong most blue collar workers work six days a week while white collar ones have a five-day week.

“Merely 12 statutory holidays are not enough for us. We are already exhausted after working for five days a week,” said a Filipino construction worker Menemen Rivera, 49.

“We have to work nine hours a day but that does not include overtime and meal time,” said Rivera.

To make both ends meet, workers sometimes have to give up the time spent with families. Chan Kwok-keung, a 58-year-old security guard, is one such worker.

“I have two kids who are still studying in primary school. The school fees and other miscellaneous expenses are high. My wife and I are earning a total of

\$8,500 a month, but that’s not enough. Sometimes I take mid-night shifts so as to earn more. We even have to work on Saturdays. It means less time can be spent with my family,” he said.

The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions urges the government to increase labour holidays to 17 days a year, on par with the entitlements of office workers. The Union proposes the inclusion of Good Friday, the day following Good Friday, Easter Monday, Buddha’s Birthday, and the first weekday after Christmas Day as labour holidays.

However, most employers are opposed to the proposal. For a profit-making company, cost is the utmost concern.

“Too many holidays mean too little time to work. It will greatly reduce the productivity and competitiveness of a company,” said Mr Chung, an employer of a mid-sized trading company. “Cost will increase and profit will plunge. Therefore I do not support increasing labour holidays.”

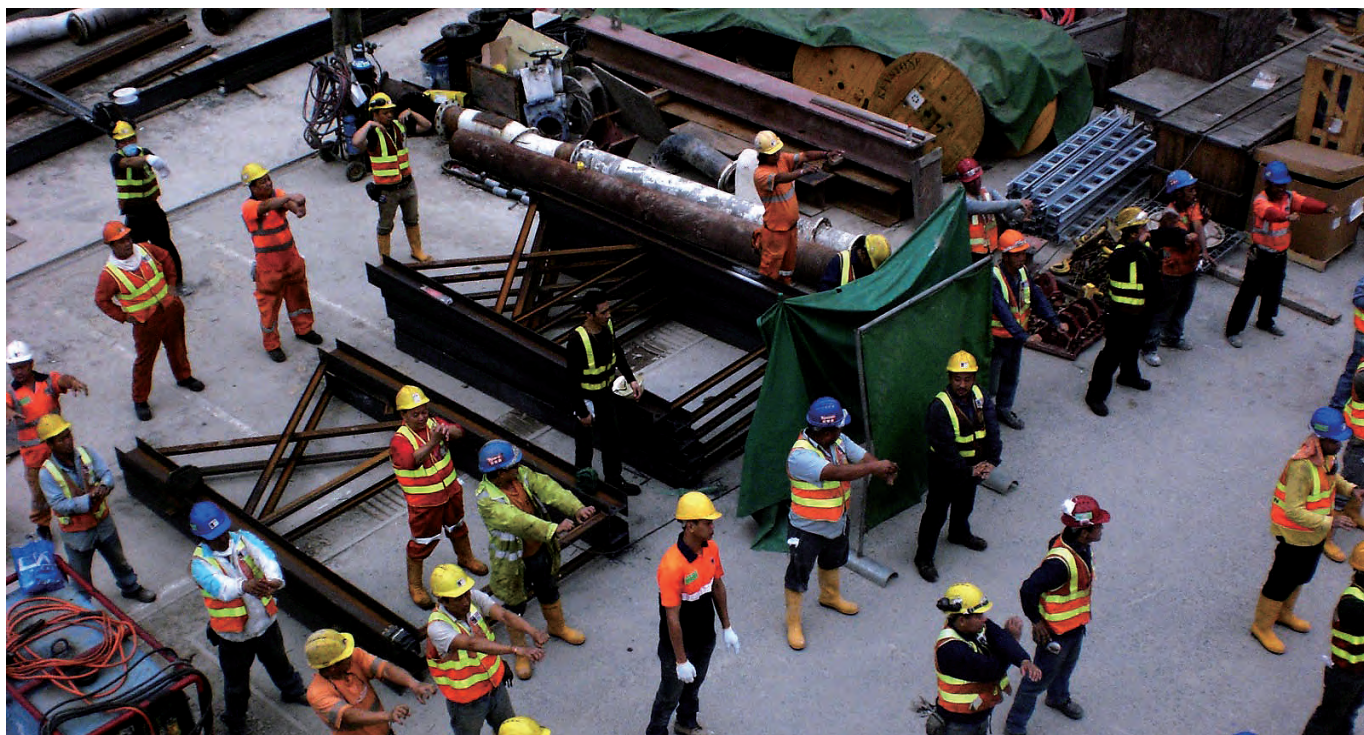
“Though increasing holidays may boost workers’ morale, the overall outcome remains unknown. With the same workload, there would be less time for

workers to do their work. It would impose pressure on them and thus reduce the overall efficiency,” said an employer of a physiotherapy clinic, Mrs Tam.

“Operating costs would surely surge if there were more holidays, because with the same workload the problem of labour shortage would intensify. We would have to hire more workers. Besides, workers’ income would reduce as well because they depend on commission and bonus,” she added.

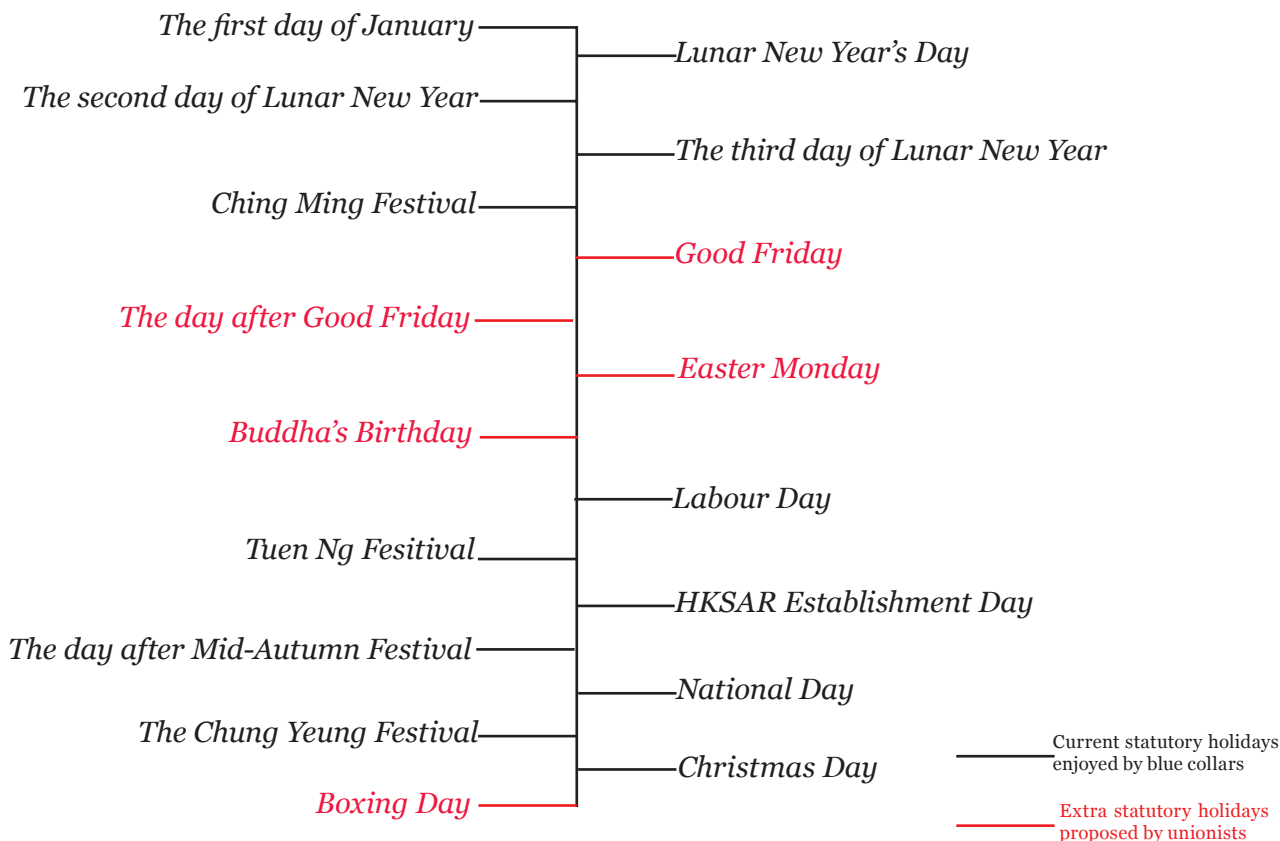
The number of labour holidays Hong Kong workers enjoy is far less than other countries, according to a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO). In South Korea, for example, workers are entitled to 32 annual statutory holidays.

“Businesses often stress that increasing labour holidays will lead to a rise in cost. However, it may not be true. In India, workers enjoy 60 statutory holidays, but this has not affected the flow of foreign investment into the country. Hong Kong employers seem to be oversensitive about this issue,” said legislator Wong Kwok-hing in an interview with Hong Kong Commercial Daily.



Many workers are calling for shorter working hours and more holidays.

Hong Kong Statutory Holidays



Fathers want maternity leave too

Business is opposed for fear of higher costs and lower output

While working mothers-to-be are entitled to six weeks of maternity leave, the issue of fathers-to-be given time off to look after their pregnant wife and new-born child has only recently been brought up for discussion in the Legislative Council.

As paternity leave is not a legal right, Hong Kong fathers rarely have the chance to take care of their wives after childbirth.

Susie Tse, 31, confirmed her pregnancy three months ago, but does not expect her husband to be by her side when their child is born.

"His work has a tight schedule and there is no policy that grants him leave at the birth of our baby," she said.

Ms Au Yeung Po-chun, vice-chairlady of the Hong Kong Women Development Association (HKWDA), said the provision of paternity leave would help relieve a new mother's stress and pro-

mote family harmony.

This would be in line with what the Chief Executive earlier stated in his policy address- to launch relevant schemes to encourage the business sector to promote family core values.

"Most fathers want to spend time with their newborns but can't because of work," Ms Au Yeung said.

A survey conducted by the HKWDA found that 80 per cent of respondents supported the introduction of paternity leave by way of legislation.

By comparison, a Labour Department survey has found that 80 per cent of employers do not offer such leaves for their employees.

The business sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, is strongly opposed to the introduction of paternity leave, fearing that it would increase business costs and lower productivity.

"If the government were to legislate

[paternity leave], it would be important to consider the actual difficulties the employees face, such as whether an employee is the only breadwinner for his family and the health condition of his wife, as confirmed by doctor," a spokesman of Hong Kong Small and Medium Enterprise Development Association (HKSMDA) said.

He said paternity leave legislation might disrupt the operations of SMEs. It would also be unnecessary for people rich enough to hire domestic workers to get paternity leave, he said.

In answer to a question by legislator Wong Sing-chi in LegCo, Labour and Welfare Secretary Matthew Cheung Kin-chung said the government was doing further research on the subject by considering the duration of paternity leave, eligibility, mode of taking leave and pay during the leave period.

Beat your worries away

Percussionist brings people together through drumming



BY PEYTON GUAN

About a hundred people are sitting in a circle and beating African drums. In the centre is a middle-aged, small and thin woman dancing and bouncing to the drumbeats. She claps her hands and shouts commands to the people around her, making them even more excited.

It was at the Fringe Club in Central. People from different backgrounds and different ages came and threw themselves into the “jungle of drumming world” to relieve their worries by jamming drums with Ms Kumi Masunaga, a Japanese professional percussionist.

Ms Masunaga, a drum circle facilitator and tutor, started Drum-Jam after being inspired by the socially interactive and happy life of African people.

She is passionate about drums and visits Africa regularly to learn music from drum masters there since the 1980s. She often stays in African villages for two to three months to learn about music and culture.

“It [Africa] is not like Hong Kong, which is rich in material and money. It is so rich in social interaction that everybody knows and cares for each other,” she said.

Ms Masunaga used to teach African drumming at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts in the 1990s. Later, she went to Hawaii to learn American drumming from Arthur Hull, father of the modern drum circle movement.

Afterwards, she started Drum-Jam in the late 1990s. This Hong Kong-based

Ms Kumi Masunaga wants people to know that everyone can play music. Photo: Sylvia Midgett

African drum company organizes community drumming circles, delivers corporate drumming workshops and performs at different ceremonies in Hong Kong and Asia.

“I want people to know that everyone can play music,” said Ms Masunaga. “It [drum] is easy to make sounds and it creates music very well. You don’t need any music training or music knowledge,” she said.

Ms Masunaga said that group drumming was a good tool for uniting people and bringing all walks of life together. “No matter if you are a toilet cleaner, a school teacher, a policeman or an executive worker, you all can come and drum with us,” she said.

“We want to empower the community through drum beats.”

*- Kumi Masunaga,
professional percussionist*

Yang Siqui, a student from Hong Kong Baptist University, said that she felt relaxed and happy when playing African drum. “Kumi is so inspiring and full of energy. She can get everyone deeply involved into the happy atmosphere even though they don’t know how to play drums,” Siqui said.

But Ms Masunaga said that all of this

comes to her naturally. “I just like it. It comes very natural for me,” she said.

Ms Masunaga started drumming when she was nine. Although she played different instruments like piano, guitar and keyboard before, she is most passionate about drums. Recognizing the unitary and motivating power of drums, she became a percussionist.

“I am naturally very energetic and optimistic, and the drum is a tool for me to express that and share with others,” she said.

Ms Masunaga is developing a community service programme called Drum Power. She targets Tin Shui Wai as the starting point. She hopes that drum circles will bring people together and boost their confidence. “We want to empower the community through drum beats,” she said.

“She flows in life and music,” said Linda Fancy, a good friend of Ms Masunaga. “Some people rise and fall all the time. She is always in the middle,” she added.

Ms Fancy said that Ms Masunaga remained peaceful when dealing with all circumstances in life.

Ms Masunaga believes that sharing can motivate and energize people to be happy through drumming.

“I just want to do something meaningful,” she said with satisfaction.

EDITED BY SAI AUNG THEIN

Not the usual rapper

MastaMic vents his anger about social ills through his songs

BY BETH LIU

Wearing his typical black hat and big glasses, the 24-year-old boy looks so bookish and gentle. But if you pass him a microphone, you will be surprised. Like a machine gun, he starts rapping out words about social ills and injustices to the sharp tone and rhythm of heavy music.

He raps about the unacceptable wealth gap, unbearable tobacco tax, “small-circle” functional constituencies and absurd entertainment news.

He is MastaMic Yuen Shuen-ching, one of a few Hong Kong rappers well known for his freestyle and songs about social problems.

MastaMic’s dream of becoming a rapper began ten years ago. Influenced by LMF, the earliest well-known hip-hop group in Hong Kong, he developed a strong interest in the art form.

“I wore 6XL T-shirt and size-48 jeans, and I thought I was so hip-hop at that time,” he said.

Jayson Chow Hin-Pong, a friend of MastaMic, met him when he just started his hip-hop journey. “He is so familiar with the history of hip-hop in America. He told me that opening up your heart to hip-hop was important, but knowledge was also a key,” he said.

However, MastaMic never thought about making music by himself until a friend showed him his own CD demo. “By that time, I realized I could also do it,” he said.

So he searched all the people who were interested in hip-hop on ICQ and chatted with every one of them. There, he met “BIG \$ammy” Mr Chau Lap-keung, who became his music partner.

They talked all about hip-hop: culture, music, dressing, and even gossip news. “I thought he was quite interested in hip-hop,” Mr Chau said.

“Actually, he was quite arrogant,

maybe confident, but that’s what a rapper needs.”

Mr Chau accompanied MastaMic from the very beginning. The two hip-hop passionates formed Justice League.

However, playing hip-hop music is never a way for earning money in Hong Kong, nor could one depend on it to make ends meet.

While all of his friends has a career besides hip-hop, MastaMic is the only one who has been doing hip-hop full-time. “He devotes himself to the music. He is so determined and firm about it. I really appreciate he can go this far,” said Mr Chau.

Like other fellow yung people born in the 1980s, commonly referred to as the post-80s, MastaMic shares their anger about social ills.

Appearing on television in the RTHK show “Headliners”, he vents his vitriol at the heartless billionaires who, in his opinion, exploit the poor.

“Dreams are cruel and ugly. That’s why they’re worth pursuing.”

- MastaMic

In his hit song “Death of the Government”, he rails against the lack of democracy in Hong Kong and says the incompetent government should die.

When the media say the post-80s are too radical, he rejects the accusation. “I am only telling the truth,” he said.

The stalemate in Hong Kong, he said, was caused by everyone’s preoccupation with money.

“All of them are talking about num-

bers: balance in bank accounts, numbers of stocks, salary... but never a word about their dreams,” he said. “How would a society improve if people have no dreams?”

MastaMic used to study law, but he chose to devote to hip-hop in the end. He has just published his first CD – “The New Hope Mixtape”.

“By this mixtape, I hope people can get their dreams back. That’s what I insist on,” he said. “But dreams are never as beautiful as they are scripted in story books. Dreams are cruel and ugly. That’s why they are worth pursuing.”

To spread his message, he has used his own money to publish the mixtape and gone to every music store to ask if he could put his CDs there to let his fans take them free.

“Just like Lu Xun who said pen could save people from suffering, I also want to use my pen and my music to influence others,” he said.

In a city all about trends, MastaMic feels threatened about his future. He said that while hard work was the key factor to succeed, luck was also vital.

“You cannot do anything about luck, but if you want to increase the probability of success, all you can do is to try much harder to do things well,” he said.

About hip-hop, he will never give in. He feels it is not about criticizing only. He said: “It’s music, an art done by heart. If it’s real, it’s hip-hop.”

MastaMic insists on doing his music, although he knows it will not be an easy task. “Never fear, never give up”. This line in ‘Never’, the last song in his mixtape that is dedicated to his respected musician, Danny Summer, is also a promise he has made to himself.



Unlike other rappers, MastaMic raps about the government’s failings and social ills.

EDITED BY JASMIN YIU

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Reliving childhood memories

Pixar showcases production archives

BY ROY CHAN

When I was five, my parents took me to the cinema for a cartoon so remarkable that it has become a much cherished part of my childhood memories. On the screen was an envious cowboy fighting with a bumptious spaceman.

Over the years, a series of other animation classics has been released. From ants that team up to defeat intruders and a family of superpowers to a fatherly clown fish that travels half the earth, every Pixar film has impacted me in a way that no other movies do.

Judging by the size of the crowds that have thronged the Hong Kong Heritage Museum for the exhibition 'Pixar: 25 Years of Animation', I am surely not the only loyal Pixar fan.

Staged to mark the anniversary of Pixar Animation Studios, it showcases the behind-the-screen secrets of the best computer-animated feature films that the studio has produced.

The festivity is organized by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department with the support of The Walt Disney Company (Asia Pacific).

Visitors to the museum are greeted

by a flurry figure of Sullivan, the blue loving monster, and his one-eyed partner, Mike. A joyful and reminiscent journey with the everlasting characters in "Monster, Inc." thus begins.

The exhibition attracts people of all ages. Devoted lovers of the "Toy Story" series form a long queue, just to take a picture with the huge models of the characters Woody and Buzz Lightyear.

The valuable exhibits trace the history of Pixar. They include original sketches of Luxo, Pixar's bouncy table lamp logo, drafts of the monsters, toys, racecars and many other popular characters, to models of the fish in "Finding Nemo".

Numerous exhibits of storyboards, colour scripts, animation thumbnails and cast urethane resins (white plastic moulds used for character casting) were shown in two thematic galleries. They demonstrate the long and revolutionary production process of producing an animation film.

One of the striking attractions in the two galleries is the Toy Story Zoetrope,

an animated cylinder that shows continuous movements when rotating, on which stands the "Toy Story" crew. Designed in 2005, the carousel has pleased countless audience with Woody and his iconic toy friends on the run.

Entering another thematic showroom you will be welcomed by numerous doors resembling those in "Monster Inc." Behind them, every fantasy Pixar Animation Studio has ever had is visualized to amaze their visitors.

Apart from a video of hilarious glossary that shows behind-the-scene stories, you can also watch all the Pixar short films, including Oscar nominee "Day and Night" that debuted at the beginning of "Toy Story 3" last year.

So far, Pixar has produced nine feature movies. Whether you are a student who first watched Pixar at a young age and has become a diehard fan ever since, or a parent whose kid is expecting "Cars 2" this August, you can have a fruitful and enjoyable day coming to the exhibition, which will be held until 11 July.

EDITED BY CLAIRE CHU
PHOTO BY SIMON YUEN

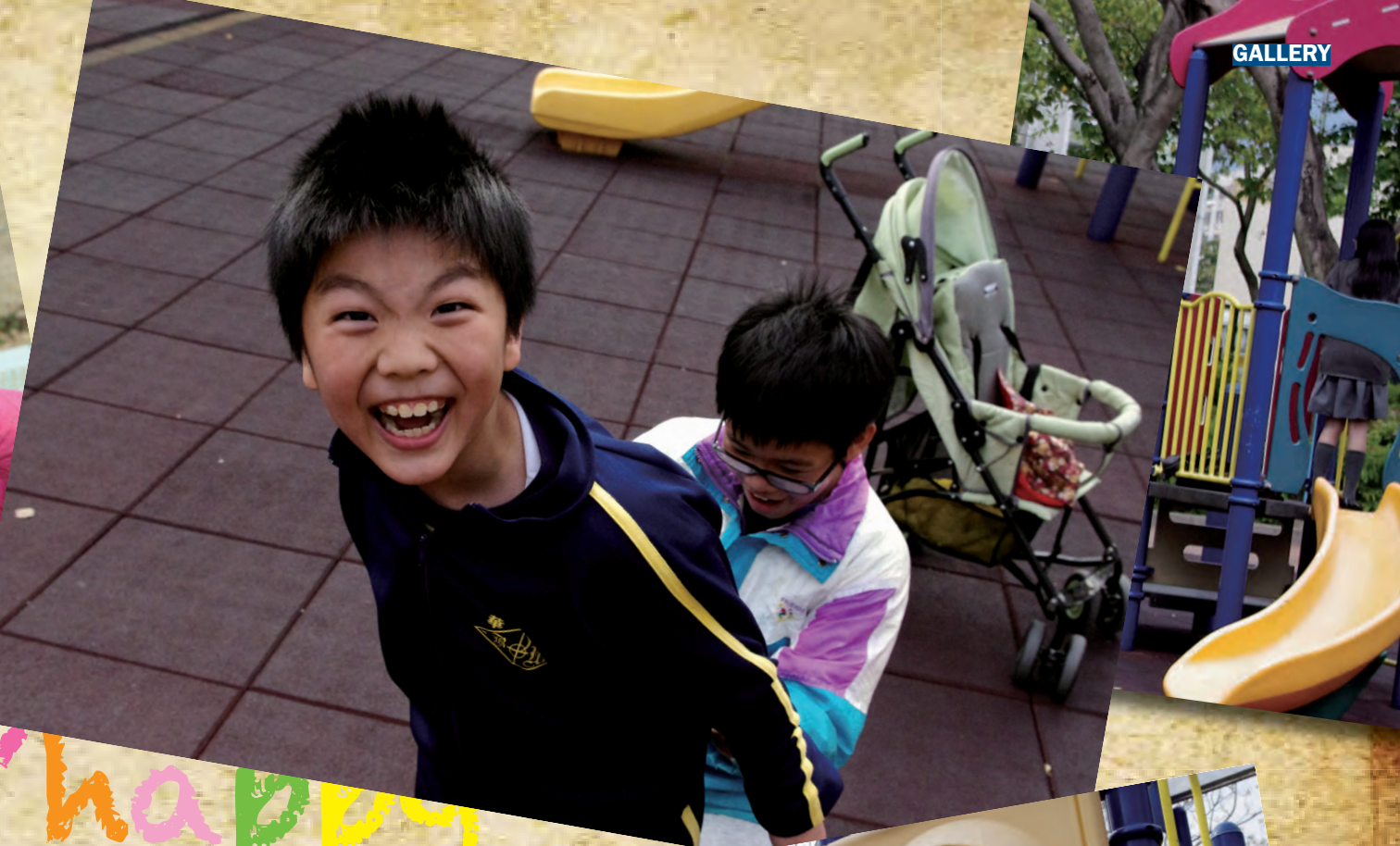


Be

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**PHOTOS AND TEXT BY JIM WONG
EDITED BY JUDITH KI**

Nowadays, it is common to see people burying their heads in smartphones or high-tech devices everywhere – buses, MTR, shopping malls or even restaurants. Studies have found that people say they find confidence and thus happiness in these gadgets.



happy

But if you walk into a park, you will find children enjoying themselves without all those devices in their hands. Seeing their smiles and hearing their genuine laughters, one may envy the joy they feel indulging in the simplest games and the most ordinary rides.





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- / 掣面設於機蓋 掃描厚書或大型文件容易就手
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