

P4 RICH CITY, POOR CHILDREN **P14** Tough re-entry into the workforce
P16 NOT FOR PROFITS ON THE BOOK **P17** SUSPENDED MEALS, DOWN-TO-EARTH CARE
P18 ROUGH ROAD AHEAD **P20** LAW WIPES OUT GRAFFITI “INVADERS” **P22** NO SEX IN THE DORMS?

magazine

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Cover With one in five children being officially recognised as living below the poverty line, the city's government is facing mounting pressure from lawmakers to address the issue of child poverty.

In This Issue

FRONT

4 Feature

Among the world's most affluent societies, Hong Kong still struggle to alleviate child poverty.

6 Feature

Nightclubs are paying foreign exchange students for bringing in customers of the like

14 Tough re-entry into the workforce

Doubt arises on the government's efforts to bring housewives back to the workforce

NEWS

NEWS

16 Octopus mapped out its online payment business

Octopus' alliance with Taobao unveiled its interest in online payment business

17 Suspended meals, down-to-earth care

Restaurants allow people to pay in advance for meals later served to the needy

18 Rough road ahead

A lack of barrier-free facilities stands in the way of patients with physical disabilities

NEWS

20 Law wipes out graffiti "invaders"

The removal of a graffiti has led to the old "art versus vandalism" discussion.

22 No sex in the dorms?

Debates get vibrant over the legitimacy of having sex in HKBU dorms.

24 Be playful and make mistakes

BU alumnus Mr Lawrence Cheng Tan-shui calls for playfulness among the youth.

In the March issue, we delved into the growing phenomenon of the city's young bachelors frequenting sex workers for sexual gratification as an economical alternative to dating.



Letter from the Editor

In the April issue, we shed light on the long-neglected issue of child poverty that has seen one in five children fall below the city's poverty line in recent years.

With the proposed plan to launch 15 years of free education still in its infancy, the government has continued to overlook the plight of our city's underprivileged children by dragging its feet on the establishment of a child commission championed by lawmakers.

We also give you an inside look at what's behind the scenes of brightly-lit nightclubs across

town, as our reporters have discovered the burgeoning practice of recruiting foreign exchange students as facilitators, who are secretly paid for bringing in other young overseas customers.

On the business front, we offer a glimpse into the emergence of the octopus card as a means of payment for online shopping, made possible by the partnership between the city's Octopus Cards Limited and China's online shopping giant Taobao, and whether it would pose a potential threat to local banks.

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magazine

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Rich city, poor children

With one of the world's most advanced education and welfare systems, Hong Kong still struggles to alleviate child poverty.





Four-year-old Amy Li loves drawing but her choices of extra-curricular activities are limited to ones that can be afforded by her parents.



Mrs Priscilla Lui Tsang Sun-kai, vice-chairperson of the Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights, said there is a pressing need for the government to set up a child commission.



Amy's parents are currently unemployed and often struggle to afford school uniforms and textbooks for her and her older brother.

Amy Li, 4, is too young to know what is happening in the interview, not to mention her future. Her mother, Mrs Li, does know, especially the latter that can be mirrored from her 15-year-old son. Living with her family in a 200 sq ft subdivided flat in Prince Edward, Amy and her brother are the lucky ones among the other underprivileged for having a more spacious home. But that's all. Compared with their counterparts, these two siblings live a life of disadvantages, which may bind them in the vicious cycle otherwise called poverty.

Living with his parents and four-year-old sister Amy in a 200 square-foot subdivided flat in Prince Edward, Leo does not get to attend after-school

tutorials as it is too expensive for his mother to enroll him in one.

As a result, he is falling behind in school with lower grades than his peers who go to tutorial schools and participate in extra-curricular activities.

Hong Kong has always had a largely hidden underclass. But in the 14 years since the former British colony was handed back to China, the number of people in poverty has increased by a staggering 50 per cent to 1.3 million.

Children are particularly vulnerable, as one in five currently falls below the poverty line, according to a report released by the Census and Statistics Department last year.

More than 35,000 children in Hong Kong – 20 per cent of all children – live in families with incomes below half of the median household income, which

stands at HK\$14,300 a month for a family of four.

As a highly-developed city with one of the world's most advanced education and welfare systems, the special administrative region of China still grapples with the issue of poverty.

On September 28 last year, Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying announced that about 1.3 million people – roughly 19.6 per cent of the city's population – are officially poor. The number would recede to 15.2 per cent if welfare payments are included, but even then it remains stubbornly high.

According to Ms Lam Man-wa, a community organiser for the Concerning CSSA and Low Income Alliance, material hardship is one key component of poverty facing low-income families in Hong Kong.

“It is hard for children from low-income families to even complete their regular studies.”

- Ms Lam Man-wa, a community organiser for the Concerning CSSA and Low Income Alliance

“They [children] practically spend their childhood on their [bunk] beds; they work and play there,” said Ms Lam.

Some landlords would even carve out the stairwell and hallways in buildings for living space to rent to needy families. These cubicles are often clogged up with garbage that block emergency fire exits.

The typical subdivided home would be a single privately owned flat carved into five 80 to 100 square-foot units that are then rented out to a family of three or four. For the children, these homes can only give room to a bunk bed and occasionally a makeshift desk.

“To achieve a minimum but decent standard of living, families need more than material resources; they also need ‘human and social capital,’” added Ms Lam.

Human and social capital refers to education, basic life skills, and employment experience, as well as less tangible resources such as social networks and access to civic institutions.

Education, in particular, remains a hurdle for underprivileged children.

“Schools and teachers expect kids to be a jack of all trades. But in reality, it is hard for children from low-income families to even complete their regular studies,” said Ms Lam.

“The government is patching up holes in the wall; we want to see radical change because end-of-pipe treatments just won’t cut it in the long run,” she added.

Have we forgotten the children?

Last year, lawmakers unanimously passed Labour Party Vice Chairman Mr Fernando Cheung Chiu-hung’s motion proposing the establishment of an independent children’s commission for a second time since 2007.

But the government has yet to take any action.

Children’s commissions are already functioning effectively in about 200 countries, such as Australia, Britain, Canada and Germany, according to Mrs Priscilla Lui Tsang Sun-kai, vice-chairperson of the Hong Kong Committee on Children’s Rights.

Hong Kong has already established the Commission on Youth, the Equal Opportunities Commission; the Women’s Commission and the Elderly Commission.

But Mrs Lui said these commissions

targeted all family members.

“Why does the government see no pressing need to set up a child commission since they think children are also part of a family unit?”

The Family Council is one of the advisory bodies that the government consults when formulating and implementing measures and policies related to children.

However, as Mrs Lui points out, most non-governmental organisations think that the Family Council focuses solely on the impact of poverty on families and not on children.

Mr Fernando Cheung Chiu-hung said that policymakers – now and then – only paid attention to anything that help with economic development.

“Children have no status here except that they will become members of our future workforce and continue contributing to the economy. Other than that, their existence has no special meaning.”

Dr Chou Kee-lee, head of the Department of Asian and Policy Studies at Hong Kong Institute of Education who once conducted a study on child poverty, said there was no need to set up a separate commission to protect children’s rights.

He believes the commission would only be another consultative body with little influence on policy-making towards children’s rights.

The Children’s Rights Forum, which was set up in 2005 by the Home Affairs Bureau, aims to provide a platform for the exchange of views among non-governmental organisations, children’s representatives and the government on matters concerning children’s rights.

But Mr Cheung sees no transparency in the forum as participants are not publicly invited and its agenda is often set by officials.

“A child commission is definitely needed,” said Mrs Lui.

“But without the government’s support, nothing can be achieved,” said Mr Cheung.

Breaking out of the poverty cycle

Most children will tell you what they want to be when they grow up with great fervour and optimism.

For the children from the 16 low-income families followed by the



Concerning CSSA and Low Income Alliance however, future prospects are not so promising.

Despite this, they do not seem to be pessimistic, said Ms Lam Man-wa, community organiser of the Concerning



Abundant resources and a proper way of parenting are equally significant for the well-being of children.

CSSA and Low Income Alliance who observes these children from a young age until they mature into adolescents.

“They are getting used to giving up and accepting the reality. I am not sure whether this is a good thing or

not,” said Ms Lam.

Nearly all the parents from the underprivileged families Ms Lam has had contact with told her their children independently select “not participate” for extracurricular activities designed by

their schools. They do this simply to reduce family burdens, she said.

Comparisons between the rich and poor cause psychological distress to the underprivileged but are unavoidable, especially when they are enrolled in the same schools.

To address the psychological impact of poverty on children, both resources and proper parenting are equally important, said Hong Kong Institute of Education Professor Chou Kee-lee, who conducted a study on child poverty in 2012.

The main concern Professor Chou has is on the brain development of children living in poverty. This impacts their performance in schools and ultimately their future.

Prof Chou said many studies indicate that children who grow up living in poverty tend to have poorer brain development, including selective attention and executive functioning – both of which are essential for learning.

Another important aspect is applying correct nurturing to children to alleviate the negative impact of poverty.

Professor Chou suggested that the government introduce “elderly intervention”, a program in which professionals such as social workers or nurses pay regular visits to expecting mothers from low-income families in order to enhance their parenting skills before and after their baby is born.

According to Mrs Priscilla Lui Tsang Sun-kai, the vice chairperson of the Hong Kong Committee on Children’s Rights, similar programmes have been introduced by non-governmental organisations.

In these programmes, trained volunteers visit low-income families with newborn babies and educate parents on how to rear their children.

By strengthening communication between parents, programmes like these can provide the children with a head start towards breaking the poverty cycle, said Mrs Lui.

By **Tsau Jin Cheng, Karen Leung & Natalie Leung**
Edited by **Natasha Chan & Brian Yap**



Paid party-goers

A nightclub “facilitator” reveals how the nightlife industry pays foreign exchange students for bringing in customers of the like.



Lan Kwai Fong is where western club crawls gather and socialize.



A “facilitator” who makes money by bringing customers to nightclubs, says the city’s nightlife industry sees international students a big market.

Mr A invites friends to nightclub parties four times a week. He is known for his gregariousness, but not all know he makes money out of the invitations.

Hired by nightclubs as what they call a “facilitator”, Mr A, who declined to be named, says he receives kickbacks for bringing foreign exchange students to his employers’ places.

The 24-year-old got the job six months ago through his contacts in Lan Kwai Fong, the city’s haunt for clubbing. As a foreign exchange student himself, he is not allowed to take up jobs during his study here under Hong Kong law -- Mr A is aware of this.

But he told The Young Reporter nightclubs and nightclub

event-planning companies now saw international students a big market and many of them were working closely with foreign exchange students to boost party turnout.

Under the Immigration Ordinance, Mr A’s part-time job could throw him into jail.

Exchange students who study in Hong Kong for less than one year could face up to two years in prison and a maximum fine of \$50,000 if they take any employment, whether paid or unpaid, according to the Ordinance.

The penalty for offending employers is even heavier, with a maximum fine of \$250,000 and up to three years of imprisonment.

Mr A said the irreplaceably great access to foreign students,



“I don’t have to pay for parties but get paid, and my friends will have a good time partying.”

- Mr A, 24-year-old exchange student in Baptist University who got the job six months ago in Lan Kwai Fong

out of each customer he brings in, he mentioned a facilitator he knew who made \$10,000 one night.

Mr Dustin Ciarla, director of nightclub event planner Destroyed Hong Kong, said his company had been targeting foreign students, since locals were “hard nuts to crack” in terms of night-outing.

“Locals are more conservative,” he said.

Mr Matty Poon, a bartender at a bar in Kowloon Tong, also said 70 per cent of his sales came from foreign students.

Some exchange students say they are unaware some of them are working as facilitators.

Joyce Ong, a Singaporean exchange student at Baptist University, said she had heard of this kind of job but did not know whether some of her fellow students were facilitators. She said she would be upset if she found out a friend invited her to parties just for money.

“In that case, I’d refuse to go,” she said.

“It’s hard to tell whether a friend is a facilitator -- it’s weird if you just ask. But I feel these people are taking advantage of their friends. They are basically shills,” Ms Ong told TYR.

Ms Elly Au Yeung, information officer for the Hong Kong Immigration Department, said in an email to The Young Reporter that non-local students whose study period was longer than one year were allowed to work as interns on the condition that the internship was curriculum-related and endorsed by the host institution.

Other regions in Asia, however, have fewer restrictions on the employment of foreign students.

Japan only requires international students to get an official permission from regional immigration bureaus before getting employed. In Japan, eight out of ten foreign students worked part-time in 2009, figures from the Japan Student Services Organisation showed.

Knowing the legal consequences, Mr A has no hesitation continuing with his part-time job.

“There are no set rules in LKF,” he said. “It’s LKF, you know.”

who tended to be bigger fans of clubbing compared with locals, was what made exchange students like him ideal facilitators.

Mr Yau Tsz-chun, a hall tutor at Hong Kong Baptist University, echoed Mr A and said his international floor-mates drank about three nights per week on average while most local students went clubbing only occasionally.

Mr A said his job did no harm and had created a “win-win situation.”

“If you are a facilitator, both you and your friends benefit,” he said. “I don’t have to pay for parties but get paid, and my friends will have a good time partying.”

Mr A said he had to make sure customers stayed for a few hours and spent at least \$5,000 in total to secure his commission.

While declining to reveal the amount of money he makes



Women homemakers pick up their children from the kindergarten after school.

POLITICS

Tough re-entry into the workforce

LAWMAKERS HAVE CAST DOUBT ON THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ATTRACT HOUSEWIVES BACK TO THE WORKFORCE AMIDST CALLS FOR GREATER

CHIEF Executive Mr Leung Chun-yin said in his latest policy address this year that the city's housewives could potentially help alleviate the tight manpower situation by rejoining the workforce.

But legislators have pointed to the lack of government support and legal protection for women in the workforce, making it difficult for housewives to return to the labour market.

According to the latest population policy paper, despite higher education attainment compared to their male counterparts, women's participation rate in the labour force has increased by only one per cent in the last decade.

The paper also found that women are more likely to give up their career to care for their families.

The government has decided to help the city's working parents by extending the Neighborhood Support Child Care Project this year, thereby enabling them to send their children aged nine or under to nearby subsidised child-care centers.

However, the social welfare functional constituency found that there are only 700 subsidised childcare service centers in the city, while there are more than 100,000 children in the relevant age group.

Ms Alice Mak Mei-kuen, a legislative councillor from the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, said the opening hours of these child-care centers, which exclude evenings, weekends or public holidays, could not meet the parents' actual needs.

"Some parents have to work shifts during public holidays or on Sundays, and their children," added Ms Mak.

“They want to work, but at first it has to be possible for them to work.”

- Mr Freddie Hung Pak-cheung, council affairs and organizing affairs officer from the social welfare functional constituency

She urges the government to enhance subsidised child-care services in order to boost the city's female working population.

In its 2012/13 Fact Sheet, the Equal Opportunities Commission highlighted other risks facing women in the workplace, such as pregnancy and sex discrimination, which together accounted for 83 per cent of the 309 complaints filed with the Commission last year.

According to the equal opportunity Ordinance, it is unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of sex, marital status, pregnancy and sexual harassment.

But Ms Mariana Law Po-chu, the spokesperson for the commission, said that – despite legal protection from the law – women encountered problems such as unequal pay and sexual harassment at the workplace all the time.

In January 2004, the Government set up a “25 per cent gender benchmark” to encourage female participation in public affairs by mandating that at least 25 per cent of appointed non-official members of advisory and statutory bodies be of male or female.

As a result, women's participation rate in advisory and statutory bodies increased from 22.3 per cent in 2004 to 32.2 per cent in 2013.

But Mr Hung said the scheme should be further applied to different sectors of society.

“The ultimate goal is to make everyone consider from women's perspective,” he added, “they want to work, but at first it has to be possible for them to work.”

By **Tiffany Lee**
Edited by **Coco Zheng**

BUSINESS

Octopus maps out its online payment business

OCTOPUS' ALLIANCE WITH ONLINE SHOPPING GIANT TAobao HAS REVEALED ITS AMBITION IN DEVELOPING ONLINE PAYMENT BUSINESS DESPITE CREDIT CARD PAYMENT BEING THE PREFERRED OPTION

ON the afternoon when the news came that Octopus had mapped out its online payment service with Taobao, Mr Roy Zhang Yatao, a digital savvy and a Taobao addict, downloaded the newly-released Octopus APP 3.0.0 from Google Play and kicked off his trial.

But the outcome, Mr Zhang said, had missed his expectation. "I would still pay by computer rather than Octopus, considering the latter's inconvenience and insecurity," he told The Young Reporter (TYR).

Joining Octopus's new bid are Alipay, China's leading third-party online payment solution, and Taobao, a China's equivalent of Ebay. Alibaba, which runs Alipay and Taobao, said it had 140,000 registered users - about one fifth of the city's population by the end of December 2012..

To activate the service, the user must have a near-filed communication-enabled(NFC) mobile device and an Octopus card registered on an Android application called Octopus App 3.0.0.. Users of the iPhone, which does not feature NFC, are yet able to have a taste of the new service.

After picking up his desired product on Taobao and ticking Octopus as the means of payment, Mr Zhang scanned the QR code shown on the screen, and placed his Octopus at the back of his HTC. Then a window popped up saying that the payment was done. The whole process took a few minutes.

While it did not take Mr Zhang extra efforts to try out the new method, his said his top concern was the considerable risk hidden behind the current forms of smartphone payment, which he described to be less mature than that of the credit card.

China's central bank has temporarily suspended online payments using QR codes and virtual credit cards



Taobao has recorded 140,000 registered users - nearly one-fifth of the city's population by the end of December 2012.

in smartphone payment systems on mainland, citing security loopholes under scrutiny.

But with the vast majority of business in the Special Administrative Region, Octopus told the South China Morning Post(SCMP) that its Octopus App had been downloaded about 500,000 times, with 120,000 users having already upgraded to the latest version.

"Octopus says we will pay lower service fees by using their service, which is arguable," Mr Zhang said, adding that the 1.5 per cent commission rate set by his credit card issuer Bank of East Asia was the same as that by Octopus.

The Hong Kong-based company, which has transformed how citizens pay for things since the store-valued smartcard was brought to life in 1997, is stepping up efforts to maintain its pioneering stance facing intense competition from local banks, the SCMP reported.

Mr Zhang also told TYR that people like him would not be inclined to turn to Octopus, even if Octopus charged less than did many other credit cards. "Given that the daily payment limit is capped at only \$1,000, I do not think saving a maximum of \$15 would be a really big deal," he said.

What Mr Zhang perceives as Octopus' fault is taken by Dr Billy

Mak Sui-choi, a finance associate professor at Baptist University, as one of its merits. "Using the card will keep you from over-spending. Moreover, if it gets stolen, the loss will be up to \$1,000. But losing a credit card will be a different story," he said.

"This new payment method is good for habitual over-spenders like me," said Ms Helen Yu Sum-ye, a Baptist University student. She said she felt more comfortable paying by Octopus online as the steps were fairly easy to follow.

Dr Mak predicted that this new service would certainly seize the market share of credit card business, but only to a slight extent. He explained that with the daily transaction limit of \$1,000, Octopus lost its shine when big orders came up.

"We are feeling the challenge posted by Octopus. If its online business continues to prosper, local banks' credit card divisions will likely be in hard times," a bank clerk, who declined to be named as she was not authorized to speak to media, told TYR.

While admitting that Octopus' entry did cast some shadow, the bank clerk said it was not the high time for banks to counteract with a cut in commission rates. "We have our own advantages, such as maturer systems and a higher level of security," she said.

Many also point out the new service's over-reliance on NFC has shut its door to all iPhone users, the number of whom is hard to ignore.

"I suppose Octopus' collaboration with Taobao is not purely for making profits on the book," Dr Mak said. He believes it is more of a marketing strategy to show off convenience and simplicity of the electronic payment method.

By the way, it could also be used to test waters before Octopus formally introduced its electronic wallet to the public, Dr Mak told TYR.

SOCIETY

Suspended meals, down-to-earth care

SOME LOCAL RESTAURANTS HAVE JOINED A CHARITY PROGRAMME IN WHICH CUSTOMERS PAY FOR MORE MEALS THAN THEY HAVE, WHICH CAN LATER BE SERVED TO

A 66-year-old man takes a slip of paper and stuffs it into the inner pocket of his threadbare jacket in joy. The slip of paper is a voucher for a free hot meal, which has been paid for in advance by a well-wisher the man never comes to know.

“I no longer need to compete with other street sleepers for leftovers,” said Mr Au Kin-leung, who is one of the around 35 homeless people who sleep in front of the Jade Market in Sham Shui Po.

Inspired by the “suspended coffee” programme originated in Italy, in which coffee shop customers pay for more cups of coffee than they receive so that the poor can later be offered coffee at the shop for free, dozens of local restaurants are providing “suspended meals” for the city’s needy – Mr Au is one of the benefited.

Volunteers for Christian non-governmental charity the Society for Community Organisation, which founded the Suspended Meal Programme in 2012 together with a restaurant owner, distribute around 2,000 suspended meal boxes and vouchers to the homeless per month on average, according to the restaurant owner Mr Chan Cheuk-ming.

The programme now has 30 partner restaurants across the territory. A Facebook Page named “Every district can enjoy meals”, which provides information on the partner restaurants, has amassed more than 3,000 followers.

Mr Chan, whose restaurant is located in one of the city’s poorest neighbourhood Sham Shui Po, delivers meal vouchers which can be redeemed for a \$22 lunch each at his restaurant to the homeless with other volunteers every Saturday.

“We once sent out 2,000 meal boxes and vouchers and visited the needy six times over one week,” said Mr Chan.

Donors can choose to deliver the vouchers to people in need by themselves, or volunteers will do it on their behalf. Some partner restaurants opt for providing suspended meals

“We will not judge people who redeem such vouchers by their appearances.”

- Ms Lienna Lau Lai-na, owner of a partner restaurant in Kowloon City



With a slip of paper, the city’s needy can enjoy a free hot meal, which has been paid for in advance by a well-wisher they never come to know.

directly to the poor who pop in.

Ms Lienna Lau Lai-na, owner of a partner restaurant in Kowloon City, updates the number of available suspended meal boxes on a writing board at the entrance of her restaurant.

“The poor can just come in and ask for the meals,” she said.

Ms Lau stresses voucher-holders will enjoy the same service as other customers.

“We will not judge people who redeem such vouchers by their appearances,” she said. “That is what ‘equal sharing’ really means.”

But in order to prevent abuse of the scheme, the restaurant allows one person to redeem only one voucher per day.

Ms Lau says the programme has no negative effect on her business and calls for more assistance for the working poor, whose plight she thinks is too often overlooked, as well as street sleepers.

“We only provide a platform to serve the needy,” she said.

“It is a community activity. I just hope it can create a harmonious society with more love.”



City official says areas near major hospitals should take priority for the establishment of barrier-free facilities.

ENVIRONMENT

Rough road ahead

PATIENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES FACE OBSTACLES ON THEIR WAY TO HOSPITAL DUE TO THE CITY'S LACK OF BARRIER-

ONCE Mr Wong Tai-shan, 82, steps out of his home, the nightmare begins. Trudging down the narrow road towards the hospital for a regular body check, he has to press through the throng of pedestrians queuing for buses while bearing the pain of his crippled left leg.

“Even climbing up a few stairs can be a tremendous task for me,” said Mr Wong, who lost his ability to walk with ease due to severe injuries sustained more than 70 years ago. Since then, a crutch has become his inseparable companion.

Amid rising public demand for barrier-free facilities for the disabled, Chief Executive Mr Leung Chun-ying pledged to create “an environment free of barriers” for the city when he took office in 2012.

Financial Secretary Mr John Tsang Chun-wah announced in his latest budget speech that footbridges, elevated walkways and subways would be built to enhance accessibility for the

disabled.

But Legislative Councillor Dr Fernando Cheung Chiu-hung said that areas near major hospitals should take priority for the establishment of barrier-free facilities.

Among the 3.6 million disabled people in Hong Kong, nearly 46.2 per cent of them require physical assistance in transportation for medical treatment, according to the Census and Statistics Department.

Hospitals providing medical services in prosthetics, orthotics and rehabilitation – such as Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Queen Mary Hospital – receive most patients with physical disabilities.

Yet most of these hospitals are located uphill where patients have difficulty reaching, according to Mr Wong.

Although wheelchair riders enjoy Rebus and Diamond Cab, both of which serve to transport patients from their

homes to hospitals, Dr Cheung said not everyone can bear the costly service in the long run, as poverty often co-occurs in cases of physical disabilities.

According to a survey conducted by the Centre on Research and Advocacy of the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation in 2013, 51.5 per cent of the disabled suffer from unemployment and over 50 per cent of families with disabled members are living below the poverty line.

Transportation by Diamond Cab and Rehabus charges at least \$115 and \$24 per person per trip. Rehabus only runs for four designated routes which cannot reach all hospitals. Patients can also request for Dial-a-Ride service but more than 7,000 applications have been rejected last year, Dr Cheung said.

“Transportation services such as rehabilitation buses are launched to make up for the lack of barrier-free facilities for elderly patients on their way to the hospital,” said Mr Rex Luk, director of transport and travel from the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation.

He added that barrier-free facilities and point-to-point transportation from home to hospitals were what the disabled in Hong Kong needed the most.

“Difficulties occur on a patient’s way to the hospital, not at the hospital,” said Mr Luk. He added that most hospitals have followed the “Design Manual – Barrier Free Access 2008”, which ensured easy accessibility for patients.

Dr Cheung said that nearby environment of hospitals had to be improved as he cited Kowloon Hospital, where many disabled patients frequent.

Suggested designs include tactile guide paths for visually impaired patients, ramps that liberate patients from stairs and dropped curbs to accommodate patients concerned with the differences in levels between the pavement and road.

Dr Cheung also urges the government to increase connective facilities such as elevators at footbridges near bus stops.

According to Ms Amy Wang Su-qin, President of the People of Fortitude International Mutual-aid Association, an organisation that reintroduces disabled people to the labour market, the government has been facing difficulties in building barrier-free facilities near hospital over the years.

“Slow progress is inevitable. Noises from construction may disturb nearby hospitals, which mostly operate for 24 hours,” she added.

But Dr Cheung hopes that a government bureau tasked with helping disabled people will be established.

“Everywhere you look, there’s demand for barrier-free facilities. We have the resources. What we lack is a head that bring things together,” said Dr Cheung.

By **Alpha Chan**
Edited by **Coco Zheng**

“Difficulties occur on a patient’s way to the hospital, not at the hospital.”

- Mr Rex Luk, director of transport and travel from the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation

Barrier-free facilities and point-to-point transportation are what the disabled in Hong Kong need most.





Hong Kong law considers artwork installed on private properties vandalism, which means most of the city's graffiti is illegal.

ARTS & CULTURE

Law wipes out graffiti 'invaders'

THE REMOVAL OF A FRENCH GRAFFITI ARTIST'S WORK HAS ADDED FUEL TO THE OLD "ART VERSUS VANDALISM" ROW



“Most Hongkongers are also too busy to enjoy art.”

- PANTONE C, a local urban artist who prefers to be referred to by his alias

NO one is bothered to take a glance at King’s Road’s bare cement wall, which was internationally eye-riveting merely two months ago – it used to be covered with the arcade-game-inspired graffiti mosaic work installed over the Lunar New Year holiday by renowned French street artist known as “Invader”.

The Hong Kong Highways Department in February ordered to wipe off every tile of the work, along with several other the artist unexpectedly left on streets as what he calls “gifts” for Hong Kong and its citizens during his third visit to the city.

The government’s decision, which is in observance of Hong Kong law, has unleashed an outcry from a bear pit of art lovers while art professionals call for mutual respect between artists and property owners.

Hong Kong law considers artwork installed on private properties vandalism, which means most of the city’s graffiti is illegal. Invader’s graffiti followed the fate of much of the late “King of Kowloon” Tsang Tsou-choi’s calligraphy left in public places, which was constantly removed by the government in the 2000s.

Senior Lecturer at the Hong Kong Art School Olive Leung Ching-man slams the removal.

“The government is immature when dealing with artwork that is controversial,” he said. “It tries to simplify the issue instead of taking the time to find a plausible solution.”

But Connie Lam Suk-ye, Executive Director of Hong Kong Arts Centre, argues street artists should not assume they are entitled to everything in the name of art.

“Art is not a privilege. You should not do as you please and call it art,” said Ms Lam.

“Otherwise, art would be hegemonic.”

She said it was difficult to strike a balance between protecting street artists’ artistic properties and the rights of property owners, but mutual respect was vital.

PANTONE C, a local urban artist who prefers to be referred to by his alias, thinks the removal of Invader’s artwork is a shame but points to the difficulty of judging the value of street artwork.

“Should art pieces drawn by famous artists be the only ones worth retaining? There is no clear guideline,” he said.

While Hong Kong sees graffiti as outright vandalism, Australians have installed transparent screens to protect some graffiti works on the wall along iconic street art laneway Hosier Lane in Melbourne.

In Taiwan, although street art on private properties is also illegal, the law specifies that unless property owners file a complaint, law enforcing bodies are not to intervene.

PANTONE C thinks the more urban spaces available in some foreign countries compared with Hong Kong and better education in art are what have made people in those countries more open-minded towards different forms of art.

Cultural differences had also contributed to the polarizing attitudes towards graffiti, he said.

“Hong Kong people abide by rules. Graffiti is illegal, and people tend to think it produces a negative image. So we are less accepting of it.”

“Most Hongkongers are also too busy to enjoy art,” he added.

Ms Lam has suggested the government provide more wholesome art education to help people come out of their rigid shells.

“The atmosphere in Hong Kong is too academic. Most young people do not choose to study art because they cannot see a good outlook on this subject,” she said.

PANTONE C, now an art teacher, says art should not be confined to certain forms.

“Art is limitless,” he said.

By **Shirley Chan**
Edited by **Liu Ching**

CAMPUS NEWS

Be playful and make mistakes

TRADITIONAL CHINESE-STYLE PARENTING TELLS US TO OBEY THE RULES AND BEHAVE, BUT MR LAWRENCE CHENG TAN-SHUI URGED THE CITY'S YOUTH TO "BE PLAYFUL" IN A COMMENCEMENT TALK AT THE EDUCATION



A Baptist College graduate, Mr Cheng landed his career in the entertainment industry since 1978. Described by the host as “a man with a young heart”, Mr Cheng walked into the lecture hall with a crutch due to leg injury.

As the principal of the TVB’s artiste training programme, Mr Cheng said he always reiterated to his trainees the substantial value of making mistakes in early years. “It is my last advice to those who are about to graduate,” he said.

“Not being wrong does not mean you are right,” said Mr Cheng. “Make more mistakes. Then you’ll know more, and know better.”

He encouraged students to raise more questions, instead of passively receiving information from lecturers, authorities, among others in the outside world.

When asked about his views on the current situation of Hong Kong, Mr Cheng first responded with a compliment to the student who had thrown him that question. “This may be a critical moment. Overall it does not look good. But let us take it as an opportunity,” he said.

Throughout the talk, Mr Cheng neglected addressing his own achievements, but kept reminding students that, “This is your era. And you should live your life on your own terms.”

By **Amie Cheng**
Edited by **Jessica Lee**

Baptist College graduate Mr Lawrence Cheng Tan-shui told the city's youth to “make more mistakes” and live their life on their own terms.

CAMPUS NEWS

No sex in the dorms?

WESTERN ATTITUDES ADD FUEL TO THE CONTROVERSY OF WHETHER SEX SHOULD BE ALLOWED IN HKBU RESIDENCE

THE absence of regulations concerning sexual intercourse in Western university dormitories may be a culture shock when compared to what many students in Hong Kong universities are accustomed to.

Mixed-gender dormitory rooms and allowing students to enter rooms of the opposite sex at any time are considered an “exotic” privilege, according to Hong Kong Baptist University student, Mr Tray Chan Cheuk-hei, who went on an exchange to Austria.

Recalling dormitory life at HKBU, Mr Chan said there were strict guidelines that emphasised the separation of the two sexes. He was shocked when he noticed there were no such rules in the Austrian university dorms he stayed in.

In October 2013, a debate was sparked as to whether university students should be allowed to have sex in their dorm rooms when a girl challenged the related ban through performing arts outside the HKBU student residence halls.

“I further enquired into the Austrian university’s policy towards sexual behavior and there was none,” said Mr Chan.

“It seems that Hong Kong is the only place having stern regulations over university students’ sexual behaviour in dormitories,” he added.

In the existing HKBU hall regulations, rule number 12 states “any indecent behaviour or any behaviour which is deemed as causing undue uneasiness to others in the Hall is prohibited.”

However, there is no single clause clearly stating sex is not allowed in halls.

“It is just understood that way,” said Hall Tutor Ms Yuki Lai Hoi-ching.

“Everyone knows they are not allowed to have sex in the halls and no one has been caught in practice,” she said.

Ms Lai added that she would report to the office to penalise students if there were such cases.

Her views were echoed by Ms Mario Leung Yuen-yuen, a resident at the HKBU C.N. Yang Hall. “I don’t think it should



Ms Stephanie Yuen Kiu-yan, a social worker of Hong Kong Christian Service, said sexual needs are a basic need of adolescents.

be allowed,” she said. “We have at least one roommate in every HKBU dorm room. Having sex in the dorms can really cause embarrassment and unease to other roommates.”

While the authority emphasised “the undue uneasiness to others” in the rules, other professionals in the field speak of the universality of sexual needs among teenagers.

“It is undeniable that sexual needs are a basic need of adolescents,” said Ms Stephanie Yuen Kiu-yan, a social worker of Hong Kong Christian Service who majors in teen service.

“If we over-suppress it, the adolescents may be badly affected in the long-run,” she said.

With less and less time left on his exchange abroad, Mr Chan said he is increasingly treasuring the freedom he has in Austria. “I really feel comfortable and liberal here,” he said.

“When I get back to Hong Kong, I think the debate over the legitimacy of sexual behaviour in student dormitories will remain feverish. It won’t be settled until there is a change in the rules concerning sex,” he added.

By **Nathaniel Suen**
Edited by **Andrew Wan**

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