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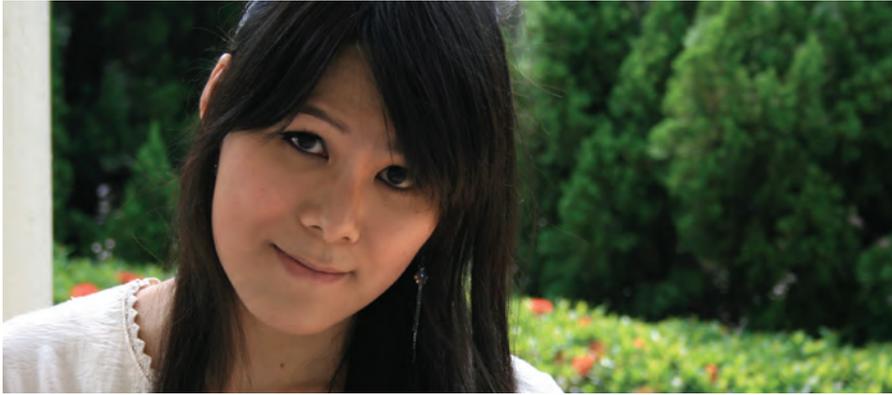
Other Stories:

From he to she--
a transsexual in HK

The world's freest press--
Nury Vittachi

CHANGING FACE OF JOURNALISM

INDEX



From he to she Fion reveals her struggle to become a real woman *Page 16*



(Courtesy photo)

VolunTourism A fun way to help and travel *Page 11*

Editor's Note

It is the best of times, it is the worst of times.

As a university graduate-to-be, I am glad I am still sheltered from the credit crunch crisis; but as a journalism graduate-to-be, my career prospect looks unprecedentedly hazy with the uncertainty of the newspaper industry.

We are all born in the age of information boom. It has never been that easy to obtain pieces of information – so easy that we do not actually need to pay for it. In the generation that every second counts, all we need is the gist of news with the aid of visual elements.

The traditional media industry is facing the worst time ever – several papers in the United States closed down, a couple of American cities do not have any local daily paper now. People keep turning to free newspapers, news aggregation websites or live news feeds.

But when we seem to be entering a new era, some recent news drag us back. When most of us think that free newspaper is the way out, London Post bid farewell to its readers. As we are getting used to reading news online, some media giants start urging news aggregation websites to charge their users fee.

Back in Hong Kong, the industry is also searching for possible pathways. No one knows the fate of newspaper. A series of assaults on local and expatriate journalists by mainland government officials further pose threat to freedom of the press. As journalism students, the only thing we can do is to equip ourselves with different skills and knowledge, as well as to help defending the truth and core values for the society.

In the new semester, The Young Reporter has also geared up with a brand new look. We turn into a magazine and introduce global news to our readers. All members work extremely hard for the revamped version. I cannot say it is the best TYR ever, but it certainly shows our devotion and effort.

Heroes make good in bad times. The future of the society lies in our hands. Let's strive and may the Force be with you!

Simpson Cheung Wai-ming
Chief Editor

News 3-10

Feature 11

Cover Stories 12-15

Interviews 16-17

Reviews 18-19

Opinion 20

Editorial 21

Gallery 22-23

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HEALTH

Doctors doubt the first Chinese-grown H1N1 vaccine

BY CANDICE WONG

Hong Kong infectious disease specialists expressed skepticism about the first Chinese-grown swine flu vaccine because of its lack of concrete information and the credibility of the mainland's health authority.

The concern came after Sinovac Biotech, a Beijing-based drug firm, had been granted approval by the mainland's State Food and Drug Administration to produce the world's first swine flu vaccine – PANFLU.1.

The technology on vaccine production has been developing for over 30 years but China is no senior in this field. "For years, the international supply of flu vaccines mainly came from four to five foreign drug firms. We know little about this Chinese-grown vaccine regarding its competency, quantity and clinical trials' results," said Doctor Ho Pak-leung, the president of the Centre of Infection at the University of Hong Kong.

Even though Sinovac Biotech announced its positive results of clinical trials on H1N1 vaccine in August saying the medicine "induces good immunogenicity and offers protection after one dose", doctors said the information provided is inadequate and "unrealistic".

"We need comprehensive and in-depth data on the vaccine, such as the procedures, the information of the participants and so forth," said Doctor Lo Wing-lok, a microbiologist.

"It's also good to publish these data to the general public in Hong Kong," he added.

Unlike US citizens who can access to detailed drug reports posted on the Food and Drug Administration's website, Hong Kong citizens have limited ways to learn more about the reasons behind a drug approval.

"We just publicize the outcome of drugs' approval no matter it is permitted or not. For the detailed information of the approval, like clinical trials' results, only responsible doctors and consultants on the scientific committee will know," Mr Tam, Senior Pharmacist of the Procurement & Manufacturing Section of the Department of Health, said.

The tender for the swine flu vaccine has re-opened as no application could meet the requirements last time.

Asked whether PANFLU.1 would be imported to Hong Kong, the spokesman for the Department of Health replied, "The tender



The delegation from Hong Kong visited the production line of Sinovac Biotech.

call for vaccines poses no deadlines and we are always considering every prospective company."

But some doctors expressed their concerns about using this vaccine because of the mainland health authority's low credibility.

Quoting the melamine milk scandal that happened one year ago, Dr Ho said, "The contaminated milk was also approved by the Chinese government... therefore the only question is whether you have trust (in drugs produced in the mainland), especially when Hong Kong people have no previous experience in using any Chinese-made vaccines."

Dr Lo also echoed this view. "We don't have much information on the Chinese-grown vaccine, but what Hong Kong citizens and I am certain about (Chinese health issues) are the mainland's food and drug scandals," he said.

He added he would not personally take the vaccine and would not recommend his patients to do so.

Mrs Margaret Chan Fung Fu-chun, Director-general of World Health Organisation said in the Regional Meeting of the Western Pacific that the second wave of swine flu was coming in the winter and some medical professionals estimated that Hong Kong would reach the swine flu peak between January and February next year.

Though the Hong Kong government has yet to decide on the vaccines' original-

ity, senior pharmacists of the Department of Health said it is very likely that a swine flu vaccine injection plan for about two million HK people in high-risk groups will be implemented by December to prepare for the peak.

On the list of the high-risk groups are health workers, children aged between six months to six years old, seniors aged 65 and above, and people at higher risk of death and complications from swine flu due to pre-existing medical conditions.

Having the privilege to take the shot, Mrs Lei, a pregnant housewife who is expected to give birth early next year, rejected the invitation from the government. "If I know it's a Chinese product, I really have no trust in it."

But Mrs Tang, a nursing officer in the Fung Yiu King Hospital has confidence in the drugs' approval system. "The quality control of medicines coming into Hong Kong actually has high trust-worthiness. So if the experts granted approval to the Chinese swine flu vaccine after they thoroughly looked into the matter, it is quite reliable."

By late September, swine flu cases have reached over 24,500 and claimed 20 lives.

EDITED BY KELVIN CHAN

Self-employed works with no legal protection

BY EDWARD MA

Employees can be misled or coerced to sign self-employment contracts with their employers, which offers no legal protection for them under the current legislative framework.

There are around 360 thousand self-employed workers in Hong Kong. Most of them are voluntarily being self-employed while some signed the contracts without being guided properly by their employers.

Self-employment arrangement refers to a person who provides efforts to his or her working partner and works according to the mutually agreed terms. This working relationship is not considered employment under the current legislative framework, thus not under the protection of two major labour laws: "Employment Ordinance" and "Employees' Compensation Ordinance".

Self-employed employees are entitled to certain legally bound benefits for regular employees such as holidays with pay, installments for Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) of the employees and long service payments.

Ah Lin (Nickname), a Thai-Chinese Hong Kong resident who has worked as a cleaning worker for a residential building for 16 years, failed to get her long service payment as well as statutory holidays.

The employer of Ah Lin, the management company of the building, offered her a contract written in Chinese in early 1990s. She signed the contract disregarding the fact that she could not read Chinese characters. Not until only recently was it discovered that the contract she signed was in fact a self-employment agreement.

"Sometimes, illiterate workers are misled by their employers because they are not able to read the contract word by word on their own," Miss Hannah So Chun-Na, the deputy chief executive of the Labour Services Centre of the Federation of Trade Unions said.

"It's crucial for employees to gather evidence showing that they worked for the companies, which makes them eligible for getting compensations from their employers when disputes emerged," Mr Alan Wong Hok-Ming, a solicitor from Yip, Tse and Tang, Solicitors and Notaries said.

Mr Alan Wong said that there are no clear rules and definitions to define whether an employment relationship exists under the current legislative framework. Judgments



Job seekers should pay attention to the terms and conditions while signing contracts with their potential employers.

have to be made by the court on a case-by-case basis in the way of referring to legal precedents and some judging factors.

The judging factors are based on legal precedents but not codified law. The factors include the ownership of working capitals, risk bearer of the business activities, working hours and venues and rights of dismissal etc.

"It is advisable for the self-employed to purchase life, accident and medical insurance in order to get sufficient protection," Miss So said.

Also, self-employed labours should be very careful about the terms and conditions on the contracts they signed with their employers.

"Signing contracts to certify the employment relationship is a good way for the labours to protect themselves. They should also be careful about the terms on the contracts they sign with the employers," Mr

Wong Kwok-Kin, the vice-president of The Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions and member of the Legislative Council said.

The legislator and the solicitor both agreed that the current legislations are not comprehensive enough to protect the self-employed.

Mr Wong Kwok-Kin suggested that the government should co-operate with trade unions to clarify the definitions of "self-employment" in order to cut down on the number of labour disputes and provide the self-employed with full protection.

Mr Alan Wong said the government should make business registration of the self-employed labours compulsory.

EDITED BY SYBIL KOT

POLICY

New ambulance system advanced but risky, critics say



Emergency ambulance calls will be prioritised under the new system.
Photo: Huang Yixia

BY VIVIAN CHUI

The public consultation of Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) touches off a controversy among critics as well as social groups doubting its effects to enhance the existing ambulance service.

Under the new system proposed by the government in July, the emergency ambulance calls will be categorized into three levels in accordance with the degree of urgency – Response One for critical or life-threatening cases, Response Two for serious but non-life-threatening cases and Response Three for non-acute cases. The target response times are nine minutes, 12 minutes and 20 minutes respectively.

At present, all call-outs are treated with the same priority with a response time target of 12 minutes on a next-in-queue basis.

According to Mr Paul Yeung, the Acting Superintendent of the Ambulance Command, a questioning protocol was designed to identify the ambulance callers' situation readily under the MPDS.

"When a call is received, the operator will ask some pre-set questions and then input the information given by the caller for a qualified computer system to analyze the urgency," Mr Yeung said. "Afterwards, a corresponding response level will be assigned." Calls justified as a higher response mode will be given priority over calls otherwise.

He believed that the new dispatch system can help a better allocation of resources.

However, some ambulance staff members voiced worries over the new system. Vice-chairman of Hong Kong Fire Services Department Ambulancemen's Union Mr Wat Ki-on said the response time suggested by the government in the system is not satisfactory enough to improve the existing services.

"The target response time of call-outs has been unchanged for years," Mr Wat said, "Ambulance service is a pre-hospital service. Nine minutes cannot help much for life-threatening cases. It is important not only to save their lives, but also to increase the chances of recovery."

The Union suggested that a six-minute response time would be the best for Response One calls. Meanwhile, the time for Response Two calls can be reduced to 11 minutes, including an one-minute navigation time and a ten-minute travelling time.

Mr Wat added that with the current Third Generation Mobilising System, a system used to deploy ambulances, the time needed for navigation is about 25 seconds only, which means an 11-minute response time is possible.

In addition to the time concern, Mr Wat also worried that the operator in the control room may not have professional knowledge essential for providing post-dispatch advice.

In the proposal, operators are encouraged to give basic first-aid advice. But Wat pointed out that most operators in Hong Kong do not have prior medical trainings.

"The training is crucial to help enhancing pre-hospital care service without which they could only simply follow the question-

ing protocol," he said.

In a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood on MPDS, 46% of the 400 polled showed worries about whether the callers could express the patients' condition effectively via phone.

Mr Sze Tak-loy, who conducted the survey, said it is difficult for people, especially elderlies, to tell the signs and symptom of the patient clearly in an urgent situation.

"In such urgent situation, people may not be that clear-minded. They may answer questions inaccurately. As a result, their calls might be categorised as Response Three calls [that ambulance will arrive in 20 minutes]. This could be fatal to the patient."

However, as mentioned in the proposal, the system will adopt the principle "if in doubt, dispatch immediately". All the uncertain calls will be classified as Response One calls for safety concern.

To improve the ambulance services, Mr Sze believed that the government should use the resources to upgrade the ambulances and increase the number of ambulancemen and ambulance stations instead of putting emphasis on categorisation.

The public consultation will last until November 3. The Ambulance Union urged the government to examine the possible risk of the system.

"The government should seriously consider whether it is really improving the existing service, or rather putting Hong Kong people's life at risk," Mr Wat said.

Questioning Protocol Under the Proposed MPDS

Ambulance calls entry questions:

1. What's the address of the emergency?
2. What's the phone number you're calling from?
3. What's the problem? Tell me exactly what happened.
4. How old is the patient/injured?
5. Is the patient conscious?
6. Is the patient breathing?

Depending on the nature of sickness or injury, additional specific questions may be asked by the operator, for example:

- a. Which part of the body is injured?
- b. Is there any serious bleeding?
- c. Is the patient able to talk?

EDITED BY HUANG YIXIA



The barrel room in the 8th Estate Winery. (Courtesy photo)

BUSINESS

HK foresees to be new wine hub

BY STANLEY SUM

Hong Kong takes off to develop into a wine hub with the opening of the city's first winery and more international wine fairs.

Local people no longer have to arrange a long weekend trip and fly 12 hours to France for fine wine since the first and only winery in the town opened in late 2008. And the business is expanding.

"If one were to taste wine at its absolute best, one must go to the producing winery. Wine bruises in travel," as the 8th Estate Winery stated on its website, "by bringing people to the wine rather than wine to the people, we are offering the opportunity to taste wine at its optimum. Because Hong Kong demands and deserves the best".

The 8th Estate Winery selects the best grapes from around the world, harvest, flash freeze them and ship them to Hong Kong. Upon arrival, they thaw and the process is the exact same as it is in any winery in the world – fermenting, pressing, aging etc.

"It's nice to be able to offer this since there is no winery anywhere close by, and this way the customer is able to get a high quality wine with easy access," Lysanne Tusasr, the director and chief marketing officer of the 8th Estate Winery, said.

"Wine has become a daily beverage in Hong Kong and it is great to be able to show the process and art that goes into making a great glass of wine," Tusasr added, "the market is really blooming here and the



Shariz 2007, product of Hong Kong. (Courtesy photo)

palate is becoming quite refined."

According to the Census and Statistics Department, the total import of wine was worth \$2.7 billion in 2008, a 96% increase compared to the previous year.

The demand for wine rapidly increased since the Government abolished the wine duty last year. "Never has any part of this world do we have zero tax in wine," Tommy Cheung, the chairman of Hong Kong Wine & Spirits Industry Coalition, said. Proposed the zero wine-tax to the Financial Secretary and finally seeing it come true, Cheung

added, "HK eventually becomes the Asian hub (of wine industry)."

Insiders estimate the wine consumed locally will boost up to 33 million bottles by year 2012, an increase of 32%. Besides local consumption, China is foreseen to be one of the top ten wine consuming countries and Hong Kong is definitely having an advantage in wine investment.

"The latest business indicators all show that Asia, and especially Hong Kong and China, remains one of the most promising markets in the world and that the industry has confidence in its growth," Robert Beynat, the Chief Executive of Vinexpo, said.

Vinexpo Asia-Pacific, the International Wine and Spirits Exhibition for Asia-Pacific will be held in Hong Kong again from 25th to 27th May 2010. In 2008, there were 692 exhibitors from 32 countries representing all five continents. This attracted 8,868 visitors in which 55% were from 19 other Asia-Pacific countries including Korea, Japan, Singapore, Australia etc.

At the same time, Hong Kong Trade Development Council also organized the Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair last year. It successfully brought 8,758 trade buyers from 55 countries and regions, and attracted 10,096 public visitors in total. It showcased 240 exhibitors from 25 countries and regions around the world.

"Some other countries follow Hong Kong's example by reducing tax on wine, but few is strategically located," Beynat commented.

"Hong Kong is at the geographical centre of a rapidly expanding market and represents an impressive gateway to Asia, however Hong Kong has other attractions, * stability, economic growth, exceptional infrastructures, a huge and dynamic harbour that meet the requirements of a wine hub," he said.

To boost Hong Kong to be the Asian hub of wine industry, HKTDC will hold the fair this year from 4th to 6th November.

Hong Kong Tourism Board will also launch a series of events to promote HK's wine and dining. Hong Kong Food & Wine Festival starts on 30th October and ends on 8th November.

"The absence of the wine tax has really propelled HK to become a leader in the global wine market," Tsuasr said.

"It's a great business to be in, but competitive as any other. If you have passion for what you do and you believe in your product, the sky is the limit," he added.

EDITED BY DODO YIN



(Above) Some HKBU students seek personal assistance from Academic Registry as online subject registration system fails to work.
(Right) The log-in page of the University Information System of HKBU.



CAMPUS

Down online subject registration system remains

BY JOHN A. L. NICOLAS

It is another daunting start of a new semester at the Hong Kong Baptist University this year with network breakdown continues to plague its subject registration system - worse still, the university has said a trouble-free system is unlikely.

Every August, in the run-up to a new semester, newly admitted students to HKBU vie online for vacancies of their desired subjects. This year, like it has been in the past, students were caught in trouble as the university's network again became overloaded.

This gave a bad impression of the school, particularly to the year 1 students. "It showed 'Page Not Found' (a server problem) on my web browser," Mr Alex Seto Yu-chun, a year 1 chemistry student, said, "I've repeatedly tried to login in for the entire hour, but finally I gave up and waited for the next timeslot."

Year 3 students were not immune to the problem. Mr Lester Ng, a Human Resources Management student, said the business subjects were not distributed into separate timeslots to avoid network clashes.

The subject registration system, named University Information System (UIS), is found overloaded when exceeding its login limit - 300 to 500 students per minute.

The problem became more of a hindrance since students can only register, 'add' or 'drop' important subjects within a given time period on the first-come-first-serve basis.

With the problem existing for some years, Information Technology Services Centre merely said it is hard to avoid network blockages. "It is difficult to create a perfect 'add/drop' system," Director of HKBU ITSC Ms Jennifer Lau said. Acknowledging the complaints, she said the current capacity was still adequate and would not be expanded in short term.

Academic Registry, the department that handles subject registration, said the school has already made improvement by adding a

new hardware this July to help streaming. "The incident in August was due to malfunctioning of the hardware," Ms Vivien Lam, Assistant Academic Registrar said.

Some universities have other approaches to create greater capacity for registration systems.

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University's 'Student Record System' has annually increased the capacity by three to five per cent since its system was set up in 1990. The Chinese University of Hong Kong's Student Registration and Assessment System shares the network burden by setting up 30-minute timeslots to handle student flow.

HKBU, Poly U, HKU will be upgrading their respective subject registration system to cope with the emerging 3-3-4 education reform. HKBU students may not be able to enjoy the system without jamming until the upgrade.

EDITED BY JAYSON HUI

ENVIRONMENT

More efforts on tree planting, environmentalists urge

BY MINI LI

Despite government's effort in tree planting, environmentalists called for more biodiversity and prevention of hill fire to keep Hong Kong's forests vital.

In Hong Kong, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) is responsible for greening Hong Kong's country parks.

Ms Vivien Chen, project manager at Friends of the Earth, affirmed the work done by the AFCD but called for improvement.

"Trees planted by the AFCD in country parks are enough, but the number of native species planted is not enough," she said.

She said that exotic species were not ideal habitats for local insects and animals, and their fruits did not attract animals, either, which hampered suburban biodiversity.

Figures from an AFCD report indicated that 933,000 seedlings were planted in 2007-08, and native species accounted for 56 per cent of them.

Mr Alan So, information assistant of the AFCD Information Unit responded in an e-mail. "We will give priority to planting native species if the site condition is suitable. However, we also need to consider various factors in selecting tree species."

He explained that fast growing and hardy exotic species such as the Taiwan Acacia and Bristance Box were planted at seriously eroded or infertile sites.

"At locations where the soil is relatively fertile and the condition is suitable, we will plant native species that are relatively slow in growing," he said.

It takes decades for trees to grow, and sustainability issues follow. The AFCD have done its work in these years.

Due to large-scale deforestation for fuel use in the Second World War, the territory suffered from severe soil erosion. Reforestation work started in the late 1940s. Consequently, restoring vegetation remained the key planting goal until the early 1980s.

Later, biodiversity and sustainable use of the forests became major factors because of improved topsoil condition.

By 2000, government statistics showed that the forests cover 17 per cent of the total land area-- a great leap from just three per cent in the 1940s.

But Mr Cheung Ho-lap, an experienced hiker who had sighted a fire in Sai Kung did

not agree.

"I don't think the government has done any tree-planting works," he said.

Hill fires added problems to the situation apart from the concern of biodiversity.

"The burnt places are left alone, grasses grow, then small trees appear successively," Mr Cheung said. He has never seen a forestry field staff planting trees in his journeys.

Ms Chen noted certain Chinese traditions could be potential threats.

"Lands Department will inform and may cooperate with us if the deforested places are near country parks," Mr So said.

Tree planting is not the patent of the government, the public also play an active role. Started in 1998, Hong Kong Tree Planting Day is held annually on the last Sunday of March.

Two thousand people planted 10,000 trees in Ma On Shan Country Park this year.

"Tree planting has been one of the en-



Participants of the Tree Planting Challenge plant seedlings weighing eight kg during the ten km journey. (Courtesy Photo)

"Although the government has announcements, people still have low awareness of hill fires when they are commemorating ancestors at their graves," she said.

Dr Billy C.H. Hau, an assistant professor in Ecology and Biodiversity from HKU agreed. "I do not think the public will object to the values of tree planting. What we need is probably more publicity on fire prevention."

AFCD figures showed that 45 hill fires took place in or around country parks last year, a drastically smaller number compared to the 1,501 vegetation fire cases recorded by the Fire Service Department.

The contrast suggested that a lot of hill fires happened outside country parks, destroying more trees. And the AFCD is not officially in charge of reforestation in those areas.

The department explained that it is Civil Engineering and Development Department's job to afforest abrupt slopes.

environmental protection activities that Hong Kong people liked. However, most of them treated these activities as fun leisure activities and forget the meanings," said Ms Chen from the Friends of the Earth.

In May, the fifth Tree Planting Challenge was organized at Pat Sin Leng Country Park.

Not only did participants raise fund for forest conservation by finishing the ten kilometres journey, but they also experienced the toil of the forestry field staff by planting seedlings weighing eight kilograms in total.

"It is hoped that they would become tree lovers and treasure trees after experiencing the difficulties in tree-planting," Ms Chen said.

EDITED BY ECHO CHEN

GLOBAL

Mainland students liberate their minds but not bodies

BY DAISY ZHONG in JIANGXI

For Mr Yang Wenbo, a year three English major at Jiangxi Normal University, the classroom of “Marxist Philosophy” reminds him of stuffy classroom, empty rhetoric and dull mood.

“What do these political courses have to do with our major and career?” Mr Yang said, wearing a scowl.

“No one believes in those outdated theories but we have to stay in those classes wasting time in order to graduate,” he said.

During the Mao Zedong times, the Communist Party controlled all the media in the country and used it extensively to establish cult of personality. The propaganda system in mainland China succeeded greatly in creating a dissent-free environment in which every Chinese could learn *Quotations from Chairman Mao* thoroughly and sincerely by heart.

Although the country has undergone 30 years of reforms, the impression that mainland students are shaped by ideological and political education still remains in many Hong Kong people’s mind.

“They are brainwashed since childhood,” Miss Cheung Wai-wai, a year three Chinese Language and Literature major at Hong Kong Baptist University said.

“They are taught to accept the governance of Communist Party undoubtedly, and believe that the Party is almighty,” she said.

“This is not true.” Mr Yang reacted immediately when he heard this impression.

According to Yang, it is normal that half of the enrolled students are absent in such classes. The remaining half in the classroom is either sleeping or doing other business.

Miss Yin Wen, a year three student who studies music at Jiangxi Normal University shared the same view with Mr Yang.

She said most of her classmates were not committed to these courses and they seldom had assignments.

“In the last few sessions the lecturer will tell us the gist and we can easily get a pass,” she said.

According to a survey conducted by Geng Guojie in Northeastern University in China, mandatory ideological and political courses have long been in an embarrassing status.

Among the interviewed, less than 20 per cent took this kind of courses seriously. Some 90 per cent think the course materials are boring and didactic.

“Hey girl, don’t forget to bring these with you.”



Lecturers are also reluctant to mention their jobs. Nearly 90 per cent of them feel disrespected by the society.

“Higher Education Institution should act as the main channel for ideological and politics education... [and the education] should take priority over other mission”, stated in the document *Some Guidelines from the State Council about Further Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Education of Undergraduates [the Guidelines]* in 2004.

In 2006 Curriculum Reform, the number of subjects of “ideological and political courses” were reduced from seven to four and the total study hour was reduced by one third.

Even after the reform, the courses remained unpopular. This unpopularity has captured education experts’ attention.

“The courses are all mandatory regardless of students’ major or interest,” said Professor Zhong Zhixian, Head of the Institute of Curriculum and Instruction of Jiangxi Normal University.

These courses take up a high percentage of nearly one-tenth to one-sixth of total study time, which is often seen as a waste of time by students.

Take Jiangxi Normal University as an example, each student should spend 256 hours for 16 credits of ideological and political courses in four years of undergraduate program.

Moreover, the political nature of such courses limits lecturers’ way of teaching.

According to *the Guidelines*, the aim of ideological and political education is to “cultivate [students] into constructors and successors of socialism with Chinese characteristics”, and “the consolidation of such education... has profound and momentous strategic importance”.

“They just cannot take the risk of ‘political fault’ if they try to be creative”, Prof Zhong said.

EDITED BY SIMPSON CHEUNG



UN climate forum will be held in the Bella Centre in Copenhagen.

GLOBAL

Massive protests expected in UN climate forum

BY ADA LEE, in COPENHAGEN

Activists from all over the world are organising their own events to voice in the United Nations climate forum, Cop15, in December.

The 12-day forum is the 15th conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the fifth meeting of the parties to the Kyoto Protocol. It will be held in Copenhagen from December 7.

While top government officials around the globe will meet in Bella Centre, organisations are finding ways, both radical and moderate, to express themselves.

One of them is the alternative climate forum Klimafourm09, in which workshops, debates, exhibitions and cultural events relating to climate issues will be held.

Head of press and communication Mr Neils Fastrup said their focus would be on coming up with new insights from the general public rather than technical solutions to climate change.

People from different places can register with the organiser and hand in proposals to it to hold their own workshops. Some environmental organisations, such as Friends of the World, will also participate.

"The meeting in the Bella Centre is reserved for a very small group of elite people, so what we are trying to do is to create an

alternative conference open to everyone, for you and me," Mr Fastrup said.

More than 2,000 registrations have been received from all over the world since June and they were expecting around 10,000 participants each day of the forum.

He said they were not taking a radical step but creating a chance for the powerful nations and the underprivileged ones, which were the actual sufferers of climate change, to communicate.

"Organising a meeting between the nations which are responsible for the climate change and those which are suffering from the consequences of it can be both interesting and difficult, as their concerns are so different," he said.

Klimaforum has received DKK8 million out of the DKK20 million fund from the Danish government to support public participation in Cop15. But Fastrup said they still lacked fund.

He said they were raising fund from private funds and recruiting volunteers to help coordinating the event.

Meanwhile, Climate Justice Action, a climate activist group, said they would mobilise tens of thousands of people from all over the world "to take action" outside Bella Centre, where Cop15 will be held.

They are calling for tackling global warming from its roots, such as leaving fossil fuels in the ground, instead of dealing it with new technologies and negotiations.

Mr Oliver Jessing from the participant group Socialistisk Ungdomsfront, a Danish youth activists network, said they did not have any plan at the moment. They would only follow Climate Justice Action's plan.

He expected about 40 of the 1000 members from his group would protest in Cop15.

While massive protests are expected, Mr Per Larsen, Chief Inspector of the Copenhagen police said special arrangements have been made and the "whole Danish police force" will be ready to deal with protestors.

"This is certainly the biggest and most exciting operation ever," he said.

The police could detain a person for six hours without pressing charges on him. Larsen said the police would only take actions when the protestors "act foolishly".

"We hope to solve problems through dialogue and we don't want to detain anyone. But if they have violated our law, we would have to take actions," he said.

Søren Jakobsen, member of the Cop 15 team, said public participation in the convention was encouraged, and they have invited non-government organisations to be present in the forum "to consult and cooperate with".

"We cannot do it behind closed doors," he said.

EDITED BY SIMPSON CHEUNG



The Indian children taught by Ms Sham during her volunteer trip. (Courtesy photo)

VolunTourism - good time doing good

BY ALAN KWOK

Showing a photo on an Arabic newspaper, Mr Erik Mak Ka-wai, a 26-year-old journalist, shared the experience of his trip to Zarqa with two other workcampers. He talked about his 12-day adventure in Jordan's industrial centre where he went on a volunteer travel this summer.

"The trip provided a chance for me to do volunteer service overseas and to associate with the local community there," he said.

In August, Mr Mak joined an international workcamp through VolTra, the only organisation in Hong Kong arranging international workcamps and voluntary service projects worldwide.

"This is different from an ordinary travel," he said. "This is a great opportunity for [cultural] exchange. I have experienced Ramadan [the Islamic month of fasting], in which I refrained from eating, drinking, smoking, and indulging in anything that is in excess or ill-natured, from dawn until dusk."

During the 12 days in Jordan, Mr Mak served at a children's home. His daily work included teaching the children to make handcrafts, playing with them and assisting

renovation work of the house. He also visited a local volunteer organisation and that was even reported by a local newspaper.

"You have to open yourself for something different from your own culture and get ready to explore the local community," Mr Mak said.

Ms Vera Sham Wing-sze and Mr Eric Lai Ming-chun, the other two workcampers who have visited India and South Korea respectively, shared the same view.

"Just integrate into the local culture. Don't complain," Ms Sham said.

Being an 18-year-old form seven student, she wanted to put a good end to her secondary school life by joining the workcamp. It was her first time to go abroad alone.

She spent 14 days in Kolkata in eastern India, teaching students English and Mathematics in a slum.

"We travelled to the slum by train every day. We brought toothbrushes and toothpaste for the children, taught them how to brush their teeth and how to take care of their oral hygiene," Ms Sham said, while looking at the wrist string given by the local hosting non-governmental organisation, which marked her friendship with the Indian children.

On the other hand, Mr Lai visited the Flower Village in Busan of South Korea for 13 days, assisting a local arts exhibition.

"The trip is unforgettable as I have made unforgettable friends," Mr Lai said.

"I will never forget the interaction between the locals, foreigners and volunteers ourselves."

VolTra is a Hong Kong non-governmental voluntary organisation founded in April 2009. It combines the power of "Volunteerism" and "Travel", providing Hong Kong people with over 3,000 international workcamps. These short-term projects allow volunteers from around the globe to meet, live, work, learn and exchange with local people.

Mr Bird Tang Wai-wing, chairman of VolTra stressed that the core value of workcamps is not only doing services, but to promote world peace and the great unity by helping people to live more harmoniously and rationally together.

"By associating with local people, we have known more about each others' culture. The world has become more beautiful at that particular moment in that particular place," Mr Tang said.

"We aim to become a charity organisation with government funding while our long-term goal is to let everyone in Hong Kong know more about volunteer travel," he said.

EDITED BY EDITH TSANG

COVER STORIES



Changing Face of Journalism

Since the emergence of the Internet, some people foresee that books and newspapers will one day disappear on earth.

Newspapers used to be a daily necessity. But today, people read news via all sorts of digital devices. Free papers sprout. News is no longer a consumer product – they are free.

Newspapers close down one by one in the West. How will local traditional newspapers change in order to survive?

Bonnie Fung, Pearl Liu and Maggie Tam report.



Photo: Edith Tsang

FREE PAPER: IS IT THE WAY OUT?

Circulation of most local traditional newspapers are in recent years on a decline as flourishing free newspapers, as new means of news dissemination, are threatening their survival, thus prompting some established traditional publishers in town to step up their game.

According to the Hong Kong Audit Bureau of Circulations, the circulation of many traditional broadsheets in 2008 had decreased when compared to the number in 2002.

Local English newspaper publisher *South China Morning Post* [SCMP] suffered a drop in circulation by nine per cent while Chinese newspapers such as *Apple Daily* and *Ming Pao* have undergone sales drop respectively by 15 and 13 per cent over these six years.

On the contrary, the circulation of free, tabloid-sized newspapers such as *Metro*, *Headline Daily* and *am730* went up in various degrees. Among those, the circulation of *Headline Daily* showed the greatest increment, by 39 per cent from 2005.

Mr Lo Wing-hung, Chief Executive Officer of Sing Tao News Corporation Limited, started to realize the threat free newspapers and online news websites had been bringing to traditional charged newspapers in the United States and many European countries years ago. For Hong Kong, he foresaw the same challenge was coming soon.

"In view of that, our news group carried out two main reforms about four years ago. We toned up the quality of *Sing Tao Daily* while creating a brand new product - free newspapers," said Mr Lo.

Sing Tao Newspaper Group Limited is the first local news group to publish both charged and free newspapers, with *Sing Tao Daily* being the former, *The Standard* and *Headline Daily* being the latter. They offer free news feed available online to websites such as yahoo.com.hk.

Securing a share of the news market is challenging in hard times. SCMP faced its first deficit in the first half of 2009 since the SARS period in 2003.

Mr Lo explained, "English paper [SCMP] used to dominate the market of English newspapers in Hong Kong. But soon after *The Standard* became a free newspaper in 2007, the situation changed."

Ms Bonnie Chen, a senior reporter at *The Standard*, does not think that SCMP's deficit is directly related to the increasing circulation of *The Standard* as they target different readers.

"Our competitor [SCMP] is a broadsheet while *The Standard* is more like a tabloid," said Ms Chen.

She considered the content of *The Standard* and other free newspapers relatively more reader-friendly and intriguing while traditional broadsheets target professionals, businessmen and also people from the middle class.

"Busy citizens today do not have much time and patience for long and in-depth reading since it is too convenient for them to know about the world by searching information themselves from many other sources. From papers, they just need the essence of news," said Mr Lau Kwok-yip, Assistant Chief Editor of *Headline Daily*.

Perhaps all boils down to a point Lau raised as well - "everyone loves something free."

With such competitions in sight, Mr Lau believed every traditional charged newspaper now also needs a distinctive characteristic to survive. For example, *Sing Tao Daily* specialises in education, financial and property news.

"I'm not worried that the success of *Headline Daily* would swallow up *Sing Tao Daily* because their orientations are different. *Sing Tao Daily* is a quality paper while *Headline Daily* is a mass paper," said Mr Lo.

He added that *Sing Tao Daily* has its way out despite the challenges as the circulation of their charged newspaper has still been increasing in recent years, which is a rare case among all charged newspapers.

COVER STORIES

WEB NEWS LEAVES THE FIELD "IN CHAOS"

With the growing popularity of the Internet, some US newspaper publishers have sought to put their news online as a substitute of traditional newspapers. Yet some Hong Kong's industry insiders believe that traditional newspaper is still the mainstream.

Circulation of newspaper has been decreasing in recent years both in US and in the UK while the number of visitors browsing newspaper website has kept on increasing.

The main cause is that more and more US newspaper companies have put full news content online, which dilutes the circulation of printed copies, making people become less dependent on traditional newspapers.

A survey conducted by Audit Bureau of Circulations in the States this year shows the decline of circulation has been rapid. From September 2008 to March 2009, the figures fell 7.1 per cent to 34.4 million from 37.1 million per year. Five publishers in US sought bankruptcy protection during the period.

While the circulation of newspaper is falling, the picture is totally different for online news. According to Nielsen Online research, there are more than 73 million visitors browsing online newspapers a month in the first quarter of 2009, compared with 41.8 million people in the first quarter of 2004. The number has increased by 75 per cent.

"When you ask people about their entertainment in 1950s or 1960s, reading newspaper was always the answer. People used to read every corner of newspaper all day long. Those days were gone," Dr Cheung Kwai-yeung, the Vice Chairman of Hong Kong Federation of Journalist, said.

Global media mogul Mr Rupert Murdoch pioneered to charge the newspaper online to stop the loss of charged newspapers. This was a big move and followed by many other newspaper publishers.

Most newspapers in Hong Kong, such as *Apple Daily*, *Sing Tao Daily*, *Ming Pao* and *Oriental Daily*, have launched real-time news feed on their websites recently. RTHK and TVB even have set up online newsrooms.

Dr Cheung pointed out that visual aids, which includes the unlimited room for images and video clips, are a big attraction of



Some people still prefer reading newspaper printed on paper. Putting news online would further widen the "information gap".

online news over other media.

"You don't have to write too much to convince the audience. You just show them what actually happened and they will believe," he added.

Dr Cheung once asked his reporter to shoot a video showing the march of 500 thousand citizens on 1st July 2003 and uploaded it on web. He declared that online journalism could be a way out for traditional journalism.

"We got the highest hit ever," he added, "That's the magic of visual aids."

But some newspaper publishers argued the practice in US is different from that in Hong Kong. The CEO of Sing Tao News Group Mr Lo Wing-hung said online journalism in Hong Kong is not prevailing still.

"I believe the reason behind is the high accessibility in Hong Kong. And online advertisement, which is an essential part in online news websites, depends on the popularity of online shopping. But online shopping

is not common in the city because people can go shopping so easily," Mr Lo said.

He said singtao.com serves as a marketing tool. They upload the gist of the news to attract potential buyers. Not more than 10% of the news in *Sing Tao Daily* is uploaded to the website because a full version would lower the purchase desire of readers.

"Both free newspapers and online news do not provide in-depth and full-scale reporting. Readers may read the gist there first and if they find some topics that interest them, they will pay six dollars to buy newspaper for detailed reporting," Mr Kong Po-lung, *Apple Daily* reporter, said.

Mr Lo regarded print newspapers more suitable for Hong Kong people at this stage, but online journalism might be a trend sooner or later.

"No one knows what will happen 10 years later. But I can predict that the media would be in chaos, in view of the exponential growth of technology," Mr Lo said.

CREDIBILITY BUILDS UPON READERSHIP

Among the keen competition of the newspaper industry, free newspapers stand out and are recently rated higher credibility when compared with traditional newspapers. Mass production and neutral political stance are believed to be the underlying causes.

A study conducted by the Centre for Communication Research of Chinese University of Hong Kong shows that credibility of several free newspapers scored the highest among all kinds of newspapers, outstripping some of the reputable charged newspapers.

“People tend to believe a source which they can easily and repeatedly get. We can find this characteristic in free newspapers as we can get them everywhere - on the street, at MTR stations or workplaces,” Ms Scarlet Tso Hung, Associate Vice-President of Hang Seng School of Commerce said.

She said the main reason is that the readers “believe in the majority”.

“Citizens have an impression that a publication should be trustworthy when most people around them are reading it. Then they follow the majority to trust what is told inside,” Ms Tso explained.

According to Mr Lau Kwok-yip, assistant chief editor of *Headline Daily*, the political stance of a paper also has something to do with its credibility.

“Charged newspapers usually attract a particular group of supporters because of their political stance. However free newspapers do not have clear stances so they are more well received by the public,” he said.

“There is indeed no difference [between charged and free newspapers] in terms of the quality of content, journalistic skill and ethics,” he added, “the credibility of free papers, just like charged papers, takes in the quality of reporting truth as grading criteria.”

Mr Kong Po-lung, a reporter from *Apple daily* agreed that the political stance might be one of the reasons contributing to readers’ impression to the credibility of a paper.

“But it may not be applicable to young readers. They concerned less about it,” Mr Kong said.

“It is just a matter of new things replacing the old ones,” he said, “people are more interested in latest and innovative subject, regardless of what’s the difference of free newspaper.”

What’s New?



Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism is which news consumers take up the role as news producer. Readers publish their own reporting, in multiple forms of articles, video and photos through the Internet.

Social networking websites like Facebook and news aggregations platform like Twitter are giving an active energy for citizen journalism. They have soon grabbed young people’s attention.

Some world’s mainstream media have taken up leading roles in action. CNN creates I-report online to encourage audience uploading their own news product. And *The Washington Post* reserves one page of each issue for reporting from its readers.

But the journalistic ethics and professionalism of citizen journalism do raise public’s concern because most citizen journalists do not receive proper training on news reporting.

Hyperlocal News

Hyperlocal news is news covering only a specific and rather small geographic regional community. It focuses information not covered in the traditional news content.

Online platforms are often used for this form of news. And it aims to create or aggregate news down to the neighborhood or block. This has been a proof of the readers’ thirst for “news on the go” and “only selected topics of interest”.

Apple Daily has once launched hyperlocal news website HomeBloc in 2008 which aggregates information on district levels (covered by *The Young Reporter* in issue 3 of Vol 41). But it closed down after running for months.



People can get free newspaper easily on the street during mornings.
Photo: Edith Tsang

EDITED BY LUNA LAU, YVONNE LOU, JADE SHEN

INTERVIEWS

“I know I am meant to be a female”:

Fion’s road from *HE* to *SHE*

“It is just like we all have a pair of arms, when you got an extra one on your back, you will chop it down. The only difference is, ours are not that visible, and then people think we are born well fit, any attempt to change is wrong and sick.”

—Fion

Photo: Sybil Kot

Please go to
tyr.journalism.hkbu.edu.hk
for her exclusive video



BY THOMAS YAU

Wearing a slim-cut shirt, chit-chatting with her students with a soft and girly voice, tidying up her long hair and putting makeup on through a pocket mirror, Fion is no different with any other ladies in town, except for one thing – physically she is a male.

Fion discovered there was a wrong match between her brain-sex and her body gender at childhood. Her friend asked who she wanted to be when they were playing in a playhouse.

“Yeung Po-ling (1987 Miss Hong Kong winner),” she answered without hesitation.

That day marked the beginning of her search for real identity.

When she was in primary six, she spotted the phrase “transsexual surgery” on her dad’s medical book. She knew she found the destination of her journey since then.

“It is not that I am determined to be a female, I know I am meant to be a female,” Fion said.

But her body does not let her achieve the quest easily, she then started to break further apart from her mind.

Her puberty started when she reached seven. Since then, her testis began to secrete male hormones which stimulated the growth of hair, and acne began to appear on her face. “I spent several hours in front of the mirror, clapping beard out of my face one by one. I cried when it’s bleeding. But I couldn’t toler-

ate seeing them on my face,” Fion said.

Besides physical approach, she once struggled to twist her mindset into a male one. But she failed.

She once dated a girl in university. “I felt very jealous when I saw her body. That feeling suppressed all my emotions and logical thinking. I just wanted to exchange my body with her.” From that moment, Fion realized that she could never be a man.

As soon as she got a job as a teaching assistant and became financially capable, she started taking medicines that counterbalance the effects of her male hormones.

But that was just one of the many challenges she has to face in her journey. After she had beaten her endocrine system, she is now facing another obstacle - the recognition from the society.

“I’m confident of my wisdom, talent and knowledge that I don’t need to get recognition by others. But it’s different for appearance,” she said, “It’s others who determine whether you are female or not by your physical characteristics.”

She came to teach in the school as a “sir” three years ago, and then gradually became “madam”. Her students found it weird; some just stayed away from her. One day a student came to ask whether she wanted to be a female. Her “yes” answer spread to the whole school on that day. To many’s surprise, students accepted her, even those who used to keep a distance from her.

“People can understand as long as you make it clear to them. On the whole, I get along very well with my students and my colleagues.” Fion said.

She added, “We are not activists; we don’t want to change or challenge any social value. We just want the society to accept our true gender.”

Though the school sometimes received complaints from parents about her gender clash when she was teaching weekend classes, she said she got words of praise by the principal about her good performance at work.

In her opinion, she is only born with a wrong body just like those who are born with a third arm. She explains, “The only thing is my difference cannot be seen. And then people think I’m born well fit, any attempt to change is wrong and freak.”

Throughout all these years of struggling, her family remains a concern for her.

When her family saw her dressed as a female, they felt upset. Fion’s parents don’t want her child to “suffer from being a transsexual”. She said her parents have always been grumbling about “the ruined life” of her brother and the unsuccessful marriage of her sister already.

Fion knows her families will be very disappointed if she performs the surgery. “If I’m not able to repay my family, then I hope I can do something for the families of transsexuals in Hong Kong.”

She has quitted the job to prepare for the surgery which will take place at the end of this year. It will definitely mark the beginning of another journey teemed with uncertainties.

EDITED BY MILEY LI

INTERVIEWS

Disabled artist wheels her way to success

BY SARAH LAI

Black colour usually represents death and sadness. However, Ms Liu Tung-mui has a different view of it.

"I like black most. It represents strength. Black is indispensable in my paintings. It is the way I express vitality," she is sitting on her wheelchair while her father is translating what she says.

The motor impaired 34-year-old artist, who is restrained by a limitation of function in muscle control or movement, spends minutes to utter a single word and only her family can interpret what her pronunciation means.

Yet she does not consider it as her hindrance to communicate with people, but she shares her thoughts by painting.

The artist has painted more than 1000 works. In 1997, she held her first solo exhibition "Life Rainbow" in Hong Kong.

"A lot of people came to the exhibition and they were moved by my works," she recalls.

Then she took part in other art exhibitions such as the "Large-scale Painting and Calligraphy Exhibition for the Celebration of the 8th Anniversary of the Establishment of HKSAR" in 2005. And she was one of the juried artists for the "2004 VSA Arts Festival - Dare to Imagine" in Washington D.C.

Among her thousands of artworks, a painting named "Nature" is her favorite, that shows various creatures in the world.

"I wanted to paint large-sized pictures but my physical impairment disables me to do so," Ms Liu says. She then spent a whole month to merge small pieces of paintings into a big piece.

The symptoms of motor impairment include shakiness, arthritis, paralysis, and limb loss, among other difficulties. The painter says that she had spent three years on how to hold a pen when she was a child.

In spite of these physical constraints, Ms Liu was still determined to pick up her painting brush because of her elder sister. She says, "As I can't speak clearly, when I first saw my sister painting what she thought in mind, it was amazing!" she says.

Ms Liu then started practice drawing on her own without having related lessons. At the beginning, her inspirations came from her cats kept at home.

She later determined to encourage and inspire people with her painting.

"I want to encourage people to cherish [their] own lives," she says, "In a person's life [he] will meet a lot of difficulties, but if he has confidence, he can overcome them."

For instance, one of her works which named "Persimmon" symbolizes concepts of an unyielding life and unyielding will power. The picture, shown permanently at the platform level of MTR Jordan Station, displays all the seasonal changes of a persimmon tree which bears fruit for harvest year after year.

Ms Liu is now busy with her new mural painting for Hong Kong Physically Handicapped Able-Bodied (PHAB) Association. Her art piece will be hung in PHAB's new building. Its theme is about how disabled can cope with ordinary people happily.

In honour of her spirit and talent, Ms Liu received the Medal of Honor (M.H.) by the HKSAR in 2007. And she received the "2005 Ten Outstanding Young Persons Award" "Outstanding Person with Disability Award 2002" by Hong Kong Council of Social Service.

Last year she was selected as a torch-bearer in Beijing 2008 Paralympics. "I was very happy [to take part in the torch relay]," the Beijing-born painter says, "Beijing is getting younger and more energetic but I am getting older."

Apart from drawing, Ms Liu has been participating in charities. In the Disabled Association Hong Kong (ADA), she was nominated as one of the ADA angels of the Arts, serving as a role model for incoming artists with or without disabilities - to achieve the organization's mission of "Arts are for everyone".

ADA staff Ms Chan Kit-ying says that Ms Liu was selected because she has got great success in visual arts field as a disabled.

Chan describes her as a "very kind, optimistic" artist who likes

to smile, "Sometimes we don't need verbal communication; she can tell her feeling by

her contagious smile."

When the painter is in a bad mood, she expresses it in a special way - by drawing a self-portrait. She recalls one of her paintings was drawn after going out under heavy rain, in which she projects herself under the rain in deep sadness.

Throughout years, Ms Liu has transformed from a person who couldn't hold a pen to an experienced artist who have drawn thousands of pictures.

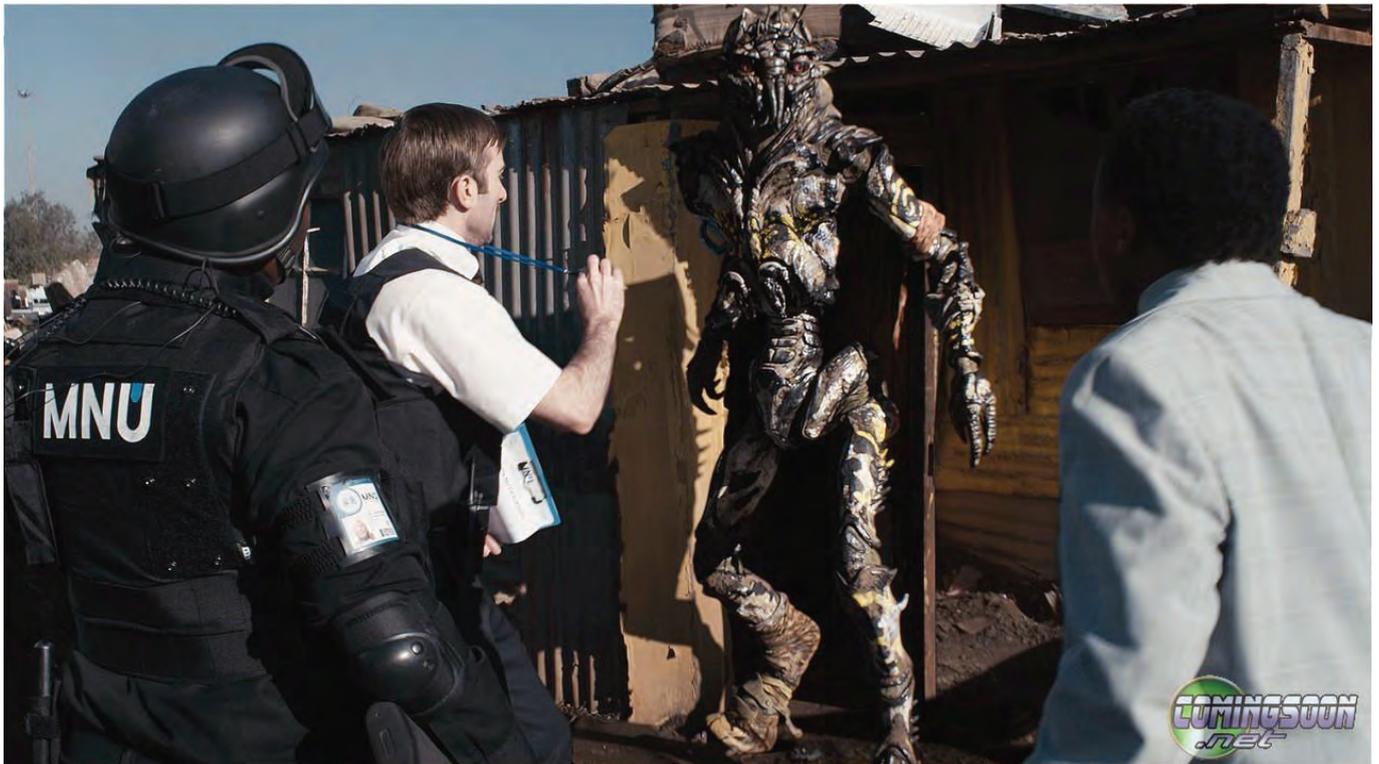
She smiles and nods her head, "After I have made my ways out [of the hard situation since I was born], I realized that I should work harder when being alive."



Liu received the Medal of Honour (M.H.) from Chief Executive Mr Donald Tsang Yam-kuen in 2007. (Courtesy photo)

EDITED BY SAMSON LEE

REVIEWS



(Courtesy: comingsoon.net)

DISTRICT 9 : **A FINE, PIQUANT PRAWN COCKTAIL**

BY INES NARVAEZ

I suppose it is normal to expect *District 9* to be another typical alien invasion flick. After all, how much more exciting can the whole alien vs. human plot get? Surprisingly, though, *District 9* manages to come across as a genuinely stimulating thriller. With its emphasis on state-of-the-art digital effects and unusual faux documentary approach, it might be one of the most memorable films of 2009.

Neill Blomkamp, the director and co-writer of the film, adapted the story from his six minutes short film *Alive in Joburg* (2005) which addresses issues such as the apartheid and racism in South Africa.

The story begins 22 years ago in Johannesburg, South Africa where an alien spaceship lands. A group of extraterrestrial, non-humanoid monsters (later on known derogatorily as “prawns” throughout the film) are discovered. These creatures are evacuated to a special area referred to as District 9. The area soon becomes a desolate slum. Years later, the government contracts a private company named Multinational United (MNU) to relocate over one million aliens to District 10 due to escalating conflicts between humans and aliens.

The operation is led by Wikus van der Merwe (Sharlto Copley), a rather dim young government bureaucrat, whose father-in-law happens to be one of the heads of MNU. Wikus is a likeable character before he comes across a mysterious alien biochemical in the aliens’ shacks. His body then starts to metamorphose into a “prawn” and it is when we start to see his true personality. During his mission, he teams up with Christopher Johnson, the aliens’ leader (a very cool looking creature, fully rendered in computer-generated imagery), in hope of getting solution to his metamorphosis.

The first half of the film drags on a little, focusing mainly on the history. Even though the documentary feel makes the whole story more believable, it gets slightly boring with the lack of action and too much newsroom dialogue. In the second part of the film, the pace turns up. It is finally action-packed with the alien weapons’ effect and occasionally revolting ripped up human bodies.

Blistering action sequences throughout the rest of the film give a whole new dimension of the science fiction genre because of the astounding realism captured in each shot. Somehow amidst all the seamless special effects and explosion there is something undecidedly human about how the aliens behave and interact with each other and with humans.

It is rare to see important moral issues being explored as an art form in motion

pictures these days. Slowly you realise how Blomkamp uses a cleverly crafted storyline to show an allegory to racial conflict and it makes you take in how serious the problem of prejudice is in our everyday lives. The film is thought provoking and you would either love it or hate it.

Even if you are not a science fiction film fanatic, the striking visual effects, the multi-limbed monstrosities splattering across the screen and Copley’s brilliant performance will impress you. The aliens look so realistic you can almost feel them coming towards you. They were designed by the renowned Weta Workshop which gains prominence with the film’s producer Peter Jackson. Copley improvised the majority of his dialogue in the eviction scenes and it is hard not to feel sorry for him in the heart-wrenching scene when weapons are tested on him.

Whether you call it a twisted political wraith on camera, an emotional drama about discrimination and segregation, a pseudo-documentary or just a good old extraterrestrial flick, there is just something original about *District 9* that will leave you in awe. What is the message of the film? Let me hear you shout “pro-humanity” when you walk down the aisle on your way out.

Verdict: A fine, piquant prawn cocktail.

EDITED BY VANESSA YUNG

Movies

The Ugly Truth



(Courtesy: comingsoon.net)

The heat is on in this ‘battle-of-the-sexes’ romantic comedy *The Ugly Truth*. Katherine Heigl plays romantically challenged Abby Richter, an ambitious television producer. Mike Chadway (Gerrard Butler), a hardcore TV personality full of chauvinist throwbacks, is forced upon her to boost ratings. The two professional rivals unite as Mike decides to be Abby’s love coach in a bid to help her land the handsome doctor next door. This chick flick may not reach the box office heights achieved by films such as *Sex and the City* and *The Proposal*, but with all the laughs it nonetheless appeals to the guys as well as the girls thanks to Mike’s refreshing remarks. The best scenes are those in which Mike coaches Abby and she reluctantly comes to appreciate his sexually crude suggestions. The too-hard-not-laugh scene is homage to *When Harry Met Sally* when Abby reaches orgasms while wearing vibrating knickers controlled by a young boy at a restaurant. The movie will be released in HK on 15 October.

My Sister’s Keeper



(Courtesy: comingsoon.net)

People come to the world mostly by coincidence. But Anna (Abigail Breslin) was a test-tube baby genetically engineered as a source of spare parts to keep Kate (Sofia Vassilieva), her leukemia-stricken older sister, alive. At the age of eleven, Anna can no longer stand it and decides to sue her parents for medical emancipation and the rights to her own body. This film raises some controversial and ethical questions. Should one be artificially conceived for saving another’s life? And should one take away one’s body tissues without getting the person’s permission even if the person is too young to make a decision? Nick Cassavates, the director, tugs at the audience’s heartstrings once again. But Cameron Diaz pushed herself a little too hard that turns out Sara (the mother) is like an insane freak who wants to control everything including Kate’s life, though I can see how Diaz tried to get rid of her old way of acting. DVD will be out on November 17.

Restaurants

Modern Toilet

3B, MPM, 240-244 Portland Street, Mong Kok



Ready to dig in your dung? I mean, ice-cream. As the name suggests, Modern Toilet has a fully-fledged toilet theme which brings out a humorously realistic feel of a washroom. As soon as you enter the restaurant and finish gasping at the toilet bowl seats and

porcelain sink tables, it is easy to see why this restaurant had caused quite a stir when it set its foot in HK in 2007. Just when you thought the unique décor wasn’t enough, dishes are delightfully served in miniature toilet bowls, bathtubs and urinals. Ice-cream desserts are suspiciously shaped like tamagotchi-poo.

However, Modern Toilet may not be that funny as it was intended to be, with many locals not yet warming up to the idea of eating out of a toilet bowl. If you are let down by the awful-looking food, The menu does include an interesting mix of soup and meat dishes, gratins and spaghettis. But most of the meals are pricey, bland and incomparable to your normal yet delicious Chinese cuisine. Although the restaurant is losing the locals to normality, it remains an obvious hit with photo-taking tourists who have a ‘sick’ sense of humour.

Hing Kee Tea Restaurant

11-12 Block 10, Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate, Ngau Tau Kok



Grab your chance to recall the collective ‘ngau-ha’ (Lower Ngau Tau Kwok Estate) memories at Hing Kee Tea Restaurant, which closes at the end of October. More than its typical Cha Chaan Teng food, the restaurant has its well preserved 70s décor, with im-

ages of its 40-year dining scenes hanging on the wall, chronicles the residents’ lives in public estates.

Fried chicken wings, pork chop buns, egg and ham sandwiches in the typical menu are the most mouth-watering delicacies that tantalize many kids’ taste buds. You can smell the aroma of fried wings even though they are far from you. The deep fried wings are crispy and have only absorbed very little oil. Surely they can raise your appetite. For the pork chop bun, the bread tastes so well with the butter. What’s really interesting is that the outside golden brown layer is very crispy, but inside, the pork chop is soft and tender. These blended textures make the pork chop bun tastes more dynamic. Is the food there extraordinarily good? Probably not. But what they serve really recall my childhood memory.

WRITTEN BY CARRIE CHENG, JEMELYN YADAO

EDITED BY JOYCE KOON, PHILA SIU

OPINION

The world's freest press

Who has more freedom—journalists in the East or the West? NURY VITTACHI is surprised by the answer.

MONDAY

It was the worst possible start to the week. Someone tampered with my morning fix. It was 7.55 a.m. (yes, there are TWO seven o'clocks in each day) and I was in a coffee shop waiting for the delivery of my drug of choice.

The barista/pusher shouted out something I didn't catch and placed a paper bucket on the bar. A woman holding a similar container approaches, and says: "Oops, sorry—that's mine. I picked up the wrong one." She guiltily puts the one she's been holding back. I pick up my drink—the one she has returned—and take it to the office.

When I take a sip, I practically spit all over my keyboard. In the 30 seconds that she was holding my drink, she has added half an ounce of cinnamon powder, a piece of ginger and something tangy which smells suspiciously like garlic.

The day got worse when the boss gave me an impossible assignment. He said, "I want you to write a piece—light, funny but at the same time deadly serious—which proves that the media in Asia, contrary to conventional wisdom, is more free than the media in the West."

"But it isn't," I object. He waves away this inconvenient obstacle and me. I leave the room with a bad feeling this week is going to be a stink worse than my coffee.

TUESDAY

Happily, my fears prove unfounded. Yesterday I sent out a request to my regular contacts asking for examples of excessive freedom in the Asian media. This morning a key piece of evidence is in my email inbox. It is a report from a Manila newspaper about a politician who has been assassinated. The victim "was widely believed to have been corrupt, so perhaps it's not such a bad thing", a police officer is quoted as saying.

I phone a friend at the *New York Times* and ask whether he be free to print an official saying that a murder was a good thing? "Of course not," he replies. "It would be utterly tasteless."



NURY VITTACHI

Talking of having problems with taste, I can't help thinking about the woman in the coffee shop who likes ginger and garlic in her coffee. Why would anyone do such a thing?

WEDNESDAY

A source in Indonesia sends a newspaper clipping. A hotel public relations officer in Jakarta, speaking after a guest committed suicide, said, "Please tell the public that if they have to die, they should not do it here. They can use the river for example."

I call a friend at *The Guardian* in London. "Media relations officers in the West just don't say such insensitive things," he replies. "Although they probably think them."

Decide to slip a bit of ginger root into my coffee just to see what it is like, although I would never put garlic into it. Tastes quite nice.

THURSDAY

Arrive in India late in the day on a short visit to interview someone. I ask my local contacts for examples of media freedom.

Within minutes, they have flipped through New Delhi magazines and assembled half a dozen clippings you'd never see in the Western media. One is a feature on tissues which "kill the virus that causes AIDS". There's cough mixture which cures cancer.

But the funniest is a feature about dried lumps of bull droppings, which are guaranteed holy, divine, and possessed of miracu-

lous healing powers. What a load of—no, I won't say it.

TUESDAY

Back in Hong Kong, I find an absurd ad in a newspaper, "Wanted: Assistant Merchandiser. Must be: Neither sex."

WEDNESDAY

I am in the boss's office. "You're right," I tell the editor. "The Asian media is freer than the Western media. We are not bound by limits on decency, taste, intelligence or honesty."

He is not sure how to take this. "Hmm," he says. "Is that good?"

"You didn't ask me whether it was good. Just whether it was free."

THURSDAY

I see the woman in the coffee shop. "Why do you put garlic and ginger in your coffee?" I ask.

"You the guy whose coffee I spiked by accident last week? Sorry. Coffee or tea with garlic and ginger gives you clarity of mind," she says. "I read it in a local magazine. Did it work for you?"

"That's absurd," I reply. "But I think it did."

Nury Vittachi writes a daily syndicated newspaper column at www.mr-jam.org

Priceless bond society depends upon

BY JOJO CHOI

“Rent-a-friend” agencies are flourishing in Japan. They rent out fake spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends, relatives, friends and even colleagues. This is not a good news to our society.

Many would immediately relate this to compensated dating, which might be similar to a certain degree. Compensated dating was originated from the concept of renting a girlfriend to hang out with lonely guys. And you may well recall the shocking case of the 16-year-old teenage girl who got decapitated and some body parts flushed down a toilet by her compensated-dating boyfriend in April.

Unlike the loosely organized compensated dating “industry” in Hong Kong, the rent-a-friend industry in Japan is of a larger scale. One of the largest “rent-a-friend” agencies in Japan has more than 1,000 “extras” for rentals. They don’t just go on a date with their clients. This mass of extras works

in all sorts of social functions from weddings to funerals, from family gatherings to children’s school sports day.

Customers might be satisfied by their service after paying more than a thousand dollars for a single stand-in to turn up at some important social functions. They act perfectly. Nobody else would know the truth, let alone exposing your secret at the scene. Yet these are only skin-deep.

When customers have paid, extras are happy to walk away, and problems that prompt him/her to rent a stand-up are not really solved. The missed characters are still missing. Single-parent children still lack father/mother’s love. Single guys are still lonely. There is no point in having a paid stranger showing up on social occasions.

People may also fall prey to the illusion that money can buy love. The truth is that money can buy you a rented lover or attract some fellows, but we should never forget what they are coming after. To put it further, deriving self-worth from these unreal relationships is extremely risky. One may

lose confidence in himself when he no longer owns a large fortune.

All of these are originated from the alienation in the society. The connection between individuals is weak. People become over independent and are not willing to be concerned with anyone out of their personal life. They gradually get accustomed to the habit of avoiding basic social contacts and do not know how to make friends anymore, not to mention how to keep a healthy relationship.

What we need to do are simple. Place your dollar notes back in wallet first. You don’t need them. Smile, and always smile. Poker faces scare people off. Stay cheerful whenever possible to bring people around you sunshine. It would be nice if we can pay more attention to little details in life and appreciate them. Sometimes we are mad at people just because we care too much, stay calm. Show your love and care in a pleasant way.

Start doing it today. Build and maintain a solid interpersonal network and derive emotional support from our loved ones instead.

Dear readers,

We are sorry to announce that the issue numbering of *The Young Reporter* was mistakenly indicated for several past issues.

The faulty issues concerned issue two to issue eight of volume 41 printed from November 2008 to May 2009. The issue number indicated on our issue two was volume 42 and those on issue three to eight were volume 43. However, they all ought to be issue 41.

The issue number indicates the number of years *The Young Reporter* has been printed for. The skipping of issue number was solely caused by inattentive proofreading of some of our past members of the editing team.

We apologized for any inconvenience caused, especially to those who file our publication in archive. To avoid further confusion with our future issues, please correct the issue numbers of the past issues you have received or kept in archives.

Yours sincerely,

TYR Editorial Board

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GALLERY



Antiquated markets

The government's bid to conserve and revitalize historic buildings of Hong Kong has missed some of the old market architectures.

Wan Chai Market and Central Market are regarded as structures with great historical and architectural value. Wan Chai Market, for instance, is listed as Grade III historical building.

Some activists and neighbours of Wan Chai Market had just grieved the partial demolition of the iconic building.

Built in 1973, the market shares the



still shines in town

principle of “form follows function” with its counterparts in Hong Kong.

With their simple but highly functional structures, these modern infrastructures contrast greatly with other historical buildings with Edwardian and Victorian styles, demonstrating the other side of the pragmatic colonial government.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ANDY AU YEUNG
EDITED BY EDITORIAL BOARD



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