



Minimum wage

Passing of an era

The last days of Tsoi Yuen Village



TYR

The Young Reporter
-by HKBU journalism students since 1969-

01

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GLOBAL Thai tourism rebounds P4



INTERVIEWS Man in red - Edward Yum Liang-hsien P17

EDITOR'S NOTE

The summer vacation has finally come to an end. The holiday has not only been a break for TYR editors and reporters, but also given us breathing space to revamp TYR's layout and prepare for a fresh beginning.

As Issue 1 marks the start of a new academic year for us, villagers of Tsoi Yuen Village face an end to their way of life - the deadline for them to move out of their homes is getting close. The progress of relocating the village has still got a long way to go. If the government does not postpone the deadline, the villagers will sooner or later become homeless. TYR reporters have made a record of the vanishing rural village and the last month of village life.

In late August, the tragic Manila hostage crisis occurred. TYR Editorial Board would like to express our condolences to the victims and their families, and wish them good health and every happiness in the future.

TYR comes out eight times a year. We very much like to hear your comments. Please feel free to email us at tyrej@hkbu.edu.hk. We value your advice highly.


Alan Kwok Kim-fung
Chief Editor

Minimum wage, what's that?

Migrant workers say they knew little about the already passed minimum wage bill while discussions on the rate are heated

BY JACK AUNG MIN KHIN

272,361 South & SE Asians reside in Hong Kong.
72,068 are from places other than Indonesia and the Philippines.

-Latest figures by Census and Statistics Department

Pakistani Mr Aslm Denga, 48, works ten hours a day, six days a week, hauling electronic appliances in Tsim Sha Tsui. He has been doing the job for the past 16 years and earns \$200 a day.

With five children aged from one to 15, the money he earns can barely make ends meet. He is the only one working in his family and it is the only job he can find here.

The Legislative Council has passed the minimum wage bill in July and the new law is expected to take effect next year. Although the law does not cover foreign domestic helpers, it does apply to other migrant workers like Mr Denga.

According to 2006 population by Census by the Census and Statistics Department, there are around 60,000 Southeast Asians living in the city, excluding Filipinos and Indonesians, who are mostly employed as domestic helpers and whose minimum salary is prescribed by the Employment Ordinance.

The minimum wage rate is yet to be decided, but if it is set at \$33 an hour, as several unions in Hong Kong wish, Mr

Denga will earn nearly \$2,000 a week, \$800 more than what he does now.

Asked about how he felt about that, despite his imperfect English, his answer was clear enough: "I don't know what minimum wage is."

Like most of the other bills in Hong Kong, the new law is available on the Legco's website only in English and Chinese. As some migrant workers have difficulties in reading both languages, they know little about the law.

Mr James Lung Wai-man, chairman of Southern Democratic Alliance, said it was important that migrant workers were informed because they suffered the most from low wages.

"They always earn low wages because their network (in labour market) is smaller than Hong Kong people and their communication skills are worse," Mr Lung said.

"Even after enforcing the minimum wage policy, ethnic minorities will still be at the bottom line of earning."

He suggested the minimum wage bill be translated into different languages to help migrant workers.

"If they know about the minimum wage policy, their employers cannot take advantage of them," he said.

Ms Jennifer Kwong from Christian Action, an organisation for ethnic minorities, agreed with Mr Lung. She said the government was responsible for presenting information in multi-languages on the policy.

"I think the government has not promoted the minimum wage policy well enough. There is no excuse to say that ethnic minorities are of a smaller number and their languages are difficult because everyone has the right to know," she said.

Although the employers can be taken to court if they pay less than what is required by the new law, she said it was

unlikely the migrant workers would voice the injustice "because of a lack of education and knowledge".

Lawmaker and vice-chairman of Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions Dr Pan Pey-chyau said they did not fight for any particular group.

"Anyone who works in categories covered by the minimum wage law will enjoy protection of the law," he said.

Some worry if the rate of the minimum wage is set too high, employers may cut staff to save costs, and low-income earners are considered to be the most vulnerable group who might be laid-off.

Dr Pan said the minimum wage had more than one side to look at. He said they would think carefully before pushing the rate to \$33 and would try to convince employers to accept their demands.

"Our voice representing only the workers will not be strong enough compared to other voices. But I think the fact is we had the minimum wage bill passed. It is a victory," said Dr Pan.

Prof Joseph Cheng Yu-shek, chair professor in political science at the City University of Hong Kong said minimum wage in Hong Kong might fail.

"Minimum wage may work well in a democracy because political parties have to show some respect to electorates. Now, we have limited democracy. Business interests dominate the Legislative Council and labour unions are weak," Prof Cheng said.

"There is an understanding that minimum wage (in Hong Kong) may not work... Nonetheless it has a symbolic value," he added.

Despite knowing little, Mr Denga's hope is simple: earn more in the future to keep his family from going hungry.



Mr Aslm Denga earns little in spite of the hard work and long working hours.

EDITED BY ADA LEE



Troops in parade march on the street in Bangkok.



Ongoing reconstruction.

Thai tourism rebounds

Visitor confidence in the country has been restored after the Red Shirts' retreat

BY HEI IN LAI IN BANGKOK

The tourism industry of Thailand was hit early this year by protests mounted by the Red Shirts, the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship, who support former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Between February and May, visitor numbers dropped when the streets of Bangkok were often blocked by protesters. The once popular travel destination lost its fans after a state of emergency was declared in about 20 provinces.

After the protests subsided, the Thai Tourism Board provides all tourists with free insurance coverage up to US\$10,000. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, protests and gatherings are now forbidden under the Emergency Decree. A 24-hour hotline has also been launched to update tourists on the conditions of roads.

"They come back as they're obsessed with this energetic and amazing place."

-Roger Wu Wai-chung, travel writer

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs exempts visa fees for tourists from May 2010 to March 2011. Numerous airlines and hotels are offering discounts too.

Mr Simon Ho Chun-way travelled to Bangkok from Hong Kong after the travel warning signal against Thailand was lifted. "I am definitely not scared. As you see, Bangkok has resumed to normal," he said from the city.

According to the World Tourism Organisation, the growth in number of tourists visiting Thailand dropped drastically from 41.9 per cent in February to minus 12.9 per cent in May, but the figures bounced back from minus 1.1 per cent in June to 14.2 per cent in July.

"After the travel warning signal was lifted, tours to Thailand have been thriving," said Ms Sandy Lau Wing-kwan, tour guide from Hong Thai Travel Services Limited.

Thai government has also organised a series of promotional activities, such as parades, blessing ceremonies, carnivals, and song and dance, to attract lo-

cals and tourists to its capital, Bangkok.

"Safety and fun are two major concerns of tourists," said Thailand-based travel writer Mr Roger Wu Wai-chung.

"They come back as they're obsessed with this energetic and amazing place," he added.

The riot-hit shopping malls in Bangkok like Siam Paragon and Central World are offering discounts. Smaller stores are launching joint programmes such as "Together We Can Grand Sale" and "Silom Walking Street" in an effort to attract customers.

Thai government arranged media tours for foreign reporters to convey a positive image of Thailand. Hong Kong media that have taken part included Sing Pao, Hong Kong Daily News and Today's Living.

But some still fear the Thai political situation is not stable as bombs can be found in Bangkok every now and then.

Mr Ben Davies, an Australian fan of Thailand, falls in love with its sunshine.

"It doesn't make sense to give up my enjoyable holidays due to a little risk. But my relatives and friends don't feel easy with my trip," he said.

Many buildings and scenic spots were badly destroyed and are still waiting for reconstruction. There is still a long way to get a full recovery.

"It may take us six more months to rebuild the mall," said a representative of the renowned shopping mall Zen World, which was burned by the Red Shirts.

EDITED BY LAURA LUO

Lawmakers demand review of travel alerts after bus hijack

System is inconsistent, says tourism legislator Paul Tse

BY CLAIRE CHU & JASMIN YIU

Hong Kong imposed the black Outbound Travel Alert on the Philippines since eight of its citizens were killed in the tragic Manila hostage crisis on August 23.

The OTA identified the bus hijack as a “civil unrest” and “serious crime”, and therefore issued the black alert to advise travellers against going to the country for their own safety.

But legislator Mr Paul Tse Wai-chun from the tourism sector has serious doubts about the OTA system.

“There is no clear indication in the OTA warning system. It doesn’t explain how the alert is rated,” said Mr Tse.

Meanwhile, similar systems in other countries such as Australia had not raised their alerts for the Philippines.

“The Philippines is not the most dangerous place in the world at this moment. It doesn’t make sense to issue the black alert on the Philippines,” Mr Tse said.

“It’s inappropriate to use the black alert as a punishment to a country for an accident,” he added.



India is under Amber alert of OTA, but it is not mentioned on travel agencies' posters.

The OTA, which provides travel advice to the public, was established by the Security Bureau in 2008 after violent confrontations occurred in Bangkok.

The alert has three levels. They are amber, red and black, which represent “signs of threat”, “significant threat” and



Severe threat



Significant threat



Signs of threat

“severe threat” respectively.

The Security Bureau considers the nature, level and duration of threat to personal safety in rating the alert.

According to the bureau, the red travel alert was in effect during clashes between the Red Shirts and Thai police in April 2009 when the Bangkok International Airport was closed.

On April 13, violent confrontations caused a lot of casualties. Hong Kong then raised the black alert for Thailand.

“The rating of the alert is based on inconsistent criteria. It lacks stability and integrity,” said Mr Tse.

Some complained that little information was provided on the OTA website.

“I read news or have to check other travelling websites to get more complete information,” said Mr Martin Liu, who was planning to travel with her wife.

Some travellers even said they never checked the OTA when they planned their trips.

“I travel a lot, but I have never heard of the alert system until recent months,” said Ms Vanessa Ip, who is planning a trip to Japan this Christmas.

“The system is still very new. It should be more informative and better promoted,” said Mr Tse.

Since the hostage crisis, tragic news flooded into Hong Kong. Some were still feeling depressed and puzzled.

“With substantial coverage by the media, people could hardly forget the tragedy. They could hardly sleep well,” said psychologist Ms May Leung.

She said people’s emotional reaction to the incident could be rationalised as

they might have never thought of such a tragedy during a happy journey.

“They feel scared, and somehow their intention to travel is affected. They might be too worried to go travelling,” said Ms Leung.

According to Ms Leung, survivors and families of the victims in the crisis may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PPSD) causing them sleepiness, fear and irritation. They feel like experiencing the tragedy repeatedly.

Ms Leung advised those who suffered

“It’s inappropriate to use the black alert to punish a country for an accident.”



from emotional problems to maintain a regular lifestyle and rest well. She said hanging out with friends was a good way to heal oneself.

“The effect of the crisis on everyone is different, so the time needed for recovery varies. What people need most is encouragement and companion,” Ms Leung added.

Political agenda

Parties offer training courses for the city's budding politicians

BY PEARLIE YIU

The League of Social Democrats has recently established its own school called Proletariat Political Institute to provide courses for party members and the public.

While the courses are seen as a way to nurture the party's new blood and target the young generation, students are coming for various reasons, ranging from learning political knowledge to taking the courses as a stepping stone to enter politics.

Mr Ng Kai-yeung, 31, a multimedia freelancer who plans to run for district council election, has signed up for the LSD's institute.

the courses are practical.

"Learning about elections, and how to organise political campaigns and interact with the public could enrich my life experience," said Mr Chin Wai-lok, student of LSD political course who is an accountancy graduate.

However, taking part in these political courses might seem like a propaganda of the parties to some.

"I am labelled as 'radical' by my friends, but I think it doesn't matter as long as I have a clear conscience," Mr Chin said.

He was under pressure from his family members who did not want him to

were not objective at all as they promoted LSD's ideologies.

"Most students are in fact our supporters or people who are interested in the LSD," he said.

Academics are even afraid that students will get "brainwashed" by attending the courses.

"Apart from learning techniques of organising political campaigns, politics should be more or less about accomplishments," said Dr Cheung.

Besides the LSD, other parties are offering political courses as well.

The Civic Party has been organising courses about district development since May 2009 while the Savantas Political Academy (SPA) and the Democratic Party, pioneers of local political courses in 2009, have suspended their courses. But the SPA is holding adult liberal and cultural courses instead.

The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong has been working with the Hong Kong College of Technology in launching a diploma programme in political leadership. Most students are university graduates and professionals.

The programme aims to educate a group of future leaders and the syllabus covers Chinese history, conservation, education and economics, which are taught by academics and government officials. One of the 14 lessons is about DAB's political concepts.

Dr Cheung advised that people should beware of political parties' intentions in offering these courses.

No matter how objective they claimed they were, the parties were trying to promote their political aspirations through the courses, he said.

Dr Cheung reminded people interested in a career in politics that being a civil servant or a member of government think tanks could be a way of getting involved in politics as well.



LSD leading members teach students tactics about political campaigns.

By LSD

"I want to improve my persuasion skills to gain people's support in an election. I think the course is helpful to me so far," Mr Ng said.

"People who vote for you might not be attracted by your political stance but your personal charisma," he added.

The LSD's institute offers courses designated for people interested in district elections on Saturdays since July.

LSD members like Mr Raymond Wong Yuk-man and Mr Andrew To Kwan-hang teach students about political theories, law, district councils and election campaign strategies.

Some students believe the content of

give up his accounting profession.

Dr Cheung Chor-yung, dean of students and professor from the Department of Public and Social Administration at City University of Hong Kong, criticised political parties for infiltrating district organisations.

"Those courses are just a way of packaging to raise the parties' reputation and credibility," Dr Cheung said.

He added that the courses offered by LSD were not substantial enough as they provided just specific skills to serve for political campaigns.

Mr Yeung Ke-cheong, legislative assistant of the LSD said their courses

EDITED BY MINNIE LI

Junior DJs run their first broadcast

Teenage hosts model their youth radio on Nepal to go on the air

BY JACKIE YIN

In the second episode of the Voices of Youth radio programme, three young hosts expressed their concern over the livelihood of ethnic minorities in the city.

"We should care for them and respect them," Glororo said on the show.

VOY, an online children's radio show pioneered by United Nations Children's Fund, is a half-hour programme broadcast every Saturday night on uChannel website of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups.

It aims to speak out for children, and listen to and respect the voice of youth.

"Children are vulnerable. So we have to provide a platform for them to speak out. This is good for their mental health," said Ms Kitty Chan Kit-chi, advocacy & public relations manager of the Hong Kong Committee for Unicef.

There are altogether 16 hosts in the programme, who are all under 18 and work on a voluntary basis.

Apart from race issues, poverty, drug abuse and climate change are all being

and unsafe sex into the light.

Ms Heidi Woo Wing-man, a 16-year-old VOY host, was inspired by what she saw in Nepal last year.

"I was very impressed and touched when I visited the Nepal radio station," she said.

VOY is catching up. The 16 hosts receive training and guidance by attending regular workshops. They are geared up with life skills such as critical thinking, interpersonal relationships, emotion control and empathy.

Ms Woo said the show should cover a wide range of topics from sex to education reform.

"Young people in Hong Kong lack confidence. They care too much about what people think and say," she said.

"I hope this would change as our show went on."

Dr Dennis Wong Sing-wing, associate professor of the Department of Applied Social Science at City University of Hong Kong, said the programme was a "good try" and set a role model for youngsters.

"But we can't expect too much from it," he added. "Hong Kong is highly materialistic and competitive, and spares small room for change by children."

The programme will soon appear in local primary and secondary schools in mid-October, making it possible for students to listen to it in class.

Ms Lee Lai-yee, who teaches Chinese and religious studies at Buddhist Sin Tak College, said she was not sure if her students would listen to the show.

"The topics are too serious for the kids and they might not stick to it," Ms Lee said.

And technology is another challenge ahead.

"With different types of media coming up, it is crucial whether the kids can maintain audience," Mr Singh said.

Despite the challenges, Ms Chan was confident towards the future of VOY.

"Definitely positive," said Ms Chan.

"They can improve. But we don't want to push them too hard. They are just kids and we need time to grow."

"Children are vulnerable. So we have to provide a platform for them to speak out. This is good for their mental health."

- Kitty Chan Kit-chi, co-founder of VOY

discussed during the twelve episodes of the show till November.

"The idea of the programme came up when we sent a group of young people to Nepal last summer," said Ms Chan.

In Nepal, a similar show called Saathi Sanga Manka Kura (SSMK), which means chatting with my best friend in English, has been launched successfully since 2001.

Now broadcast through more than 20 local radio stations as well as the Internet, SSMK has drawn six million fans from home and abroad.

"The programme is so popular that we had even got feedback from the US asking for help," said Mr Sabin Singh, 24, SSMK production team leader.

Mr Singh said SSMK hosts dared to bring taboo subjects such as premarital



Teenage hosts record their radio show at uChannel studio.

By VOY

EDITED BY ALAN KWOK

Long way to cast out electronic waste

Government fails to curb threat of discarded electrical and electronic appliances

BY SIMON YUEN

Friends of the Earth reveals that over 90 per cent of local waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) is not properly treated despite voluntary schemes to recycle computers and rechargeable batteries.

While the city becomes more tech-savvy, little focus has been put on how to control the constant increase in potentially-harmful discharges of WEEE.

This growing form of waste, including parts like circuit boards, wirings and batteries from electronic equipment, could in fact be recycled like common forms of

Another 78.5 per cent are shipped to other places for treatment while the remaining 20 per cent are being stored at households or chucked to landfills, according to Ms Au.

“E-waste contains water-contaminating heavy metals, which may come back to human through the food chain,” said Ms Au. “People dealing with e-waste without protective gears can develop Rhinitis, sore throat, headache or reproductive malfunctioning.”

On average, each Hongkonger purchases a new mobile phone every 1.5

room for improvement in recycling used computers and audio-visual devices,” said Ms Au.

Under the WEEE Recycling Programme, the EPD reckons that 40,000 computers and other devices are recycled each year, but it is just a small portion of the 70,000 tons disposed annually. Ms Au said the programme was lacking scale, promotion and incentive.

Many people also find it hard to off-load their WEEE for recycling.

“I just put them into rubbish bins. Al-

“E-waste contains water-contaminating heavy metals, which may come back to human through the food chain.”

- Michelle Au Wing-Tsz, senior environmental affairs officer from Friends of the Earth (HK)



By Friends of the Earth (HK)

The majority of the city's WEEE is shipped to other regions without any treatment.

waste such as paper, aluminum cans and plastic bottles.

Nevertheless, the Environmental Protection Department estimates that only a fraction of the 5.41 million pieces of WEEE generated each year is properly recycled.

“Around 80 per cent of electronic devices are recyclable but only 1.5 per cent of these are handled and recycled by local charities subsidised by the EPD, which includes St. James’ Settlement, Caritas Hong Kong and the Chamber of Hong Kong Computer Industry,” said Ms Michelle Au Wing-tsz, senior environmental affairs officer of FoE (HK).

years, generating a huge amount of WEEE by doing so. Three pieces of phone batteries, containing mercury, lead and cadmium, can pollute a full-sized swimming pool.

The EPD claims success in the Rechargeable Batteries Recycling Programme, which recycled one-tenth of all waste batteries in the year 2007 and 80 to 100 tons of those in the past two years. But their efforts remain ineffective in dealing with other forms of WEEE.

“I can see there are adequate collection points for rechargeable batteries and the Producer Responsibility Scheme works in that area. But there’s much

though I know there are recycling programmes and collection points for electrical appliances, I can’t find any one of them in my estate. I have no choice but to dump them, even though I know I am polluting the environment,” said Ms Mui Chiu-bik, a housewife from Sheung Shui.

“I understand the concept of sustainable development and environmental protection, but I don’t have much information about WEEE recycling in Hong Kong. I don’t know whether I should dump or recycle them,” said Mr Chan Ho-yin, resident of Beacon Hill.

The schemes are not attractive to recycling plants either.

“Companies are required to follow regulations set by the EPD, and they do lose money when doing so. So it is much more lucrative for companies to sell e-waste to less-developed countries with underpaid workers and less environmental regulations,” said Ms Au.

The Legislative Council is discussing a way out for the government in tackling WEEE by a new mandatory Producer Responsibility Scheme.

Successful legislation could cause the importers or consumers of electronic devices paying for their disposals.

The EPD hopes the scheme would bring WEEE down from 70,000 tons to 30,000 tons a year.

EDITED BY ANDY AU YEUNG

While green living has become chic in the US where more and more homeowners are making their homes as energy efficient as possible, some local interior designers are introducing the lifestyle to the city too.

Architect Mr Gary Chang Chi-keung, 48, built a 344-square-foot apartment which can be switched to 24 different designs, all by just sliding panels and gliding walls to create a green and comfortable living environment.

He nicknamed the flat “Domestic Transformer”. The design caused quite a stir in Hong Kong after being featured by the TV programme, *World’s Greenest Homes*, on the Discovery Channel.

In fact, Mr Chang has lived there with his parents and younger sisters since he was 14. He used to sleep in the hallway because of the limited space.

By gliding wall units suspended from the ceiling along steel tracks, Mr Chang can transform the living room into a kitchen or the study room into a laundry room. Now, he has more space which can even accommodate a lounge bar.

Located downtown, Mr Chang’s apartment is as typical as many of those of local residents. But it marks a success of interior reconfiguration.

“Small area, but for us, small area means efficiency and user-friendliness,” said Mr Chang in the TV programme.

There are various green elements in “Domestic Transformer”. For example, its large yellow-tinted windows allow lights in to fill the room with radiance.

“My home is always sunny even in gloomy weather. I don’t need to turn on the light most of the time of the day,” Mr Chang said.

Mr Chang added that those space-planning and space-saving devices contribute to his home’s main eco-friendly features apart from the energy-saving appliances and equipments.

Although the transformation of Mr Chang’s apartment attracted lots of attention, Hong Kong people often find it difficult to live green because of the high cost of eco-friendly products.

Ms Hilary Ho Shun-hei, 23, will be moving into a new apartment with her mother in November.

“I consent to the effectiveness of eco-friendly products,” she said. ‘But I need money for my family. So it’s necessary for me to take the cost of everything into



Shops in Sai Kung sell eco-friendly products but the price is not cheap.



The living room turns into a kitchen.

By EDGE Design Institute Limited

Too hard to live green

High property prices and expensive environmentally friendly products cost a fortune to live green in HK

BY JUDITH KI

careful consideration.”

She was wondering if there would ever be any incentive schemes launched by the government helping to cope with the huge expenses to live green.

The government, however, has not brought out any policies that aim at getting individual’s involvement in green living after the left-aside energy-saving light bulbs voucher scheme.

Green living supporter Mr Lowell Lo Koon-ting, 60, suggested several affordable products for reference.

“Chemical-free toilet bowl cleaner is a long-lasting product which can be used for at least five years. Natural vol-

canic rock can even be used forever. And cedar lavender balls cost less than ten dollars each,” he said.

He advised those whose budget is really tight to save water and electricity consumption.

“Living green does not have to be costly. For instance, vinegar, lemon, salt and soda powder can be used as cleaners,” he said.

“The so-called lack-of-budget barrier to green living is only due to people’s lack of eco-knowledge and reluctance to change their habitual high-carbon lifestyles. These are the true obstacles to live green.”

EDITED BY YOYO SUN



Crayfish, also known as “mini-lobsters”, got the name from its pair of lobster-like claws.

Mini-lobsters' aquarium invasion

Exotic aquatic species have found their way to pet-keepers' tanks

BY GARY KWOK

Some people are scared by their fierce-looking claws and lobster-like appearance, but others like their cute miniature size and mysterious shell pattern.

Their colourful bodies, embellished by waterweeds in the background, catch the eyes of many aquatic pet lovers.

Crayfish are gaining popularity in Hong Kong - not as gourmets' choice, but as living aquatic pets.

Also known as fresh water lobsters, crayfish are related to lobsters but differ in the sense that they live in fresh water and have a tiny size.

Crayfish were first introduced to Hong Kong five years ago. Back then, shopkeepers did not expect them to become such a hit with aquatic pet lovers.

“At first people were not very keen on keeping crayfish,” said Mr Chan, shopkeeper of a crayfish store in the famous Goldfish Market (Tung Choi Street, Mong Kok).

“Eventually more people got to know about the new pet through Internet forums. Sales then soared greatly over the past few years,” he added.

“So we started to import more species to meet the market demand.”

Today there are around 20 species of crayfish available in Hong Kong.

“They are easy to keep, colourful and long-lasting. The requirements for fish tank settings are simple,” said Mr Chan.

According to him, a small fish tank and a pump are all one needs to start keeping crayfish.

“They are omnivore and therefore can be fed with almost anything.”

At the Goldfish Market, keepers can bring their own crayfish to shops and try to breed young crayfish.

Ms Helen Lee, a crayfish keeper for over four years, said what fascinates her was to breed crayfish with new colours.

“I feel successful and satisfied when I can breed young crayfish with new colours,” said Ms Lee.

However, cross-breeding crayfish of different species is not encouraged since it may contaminate the genes of crayfish, resulting in an unhealthy foetus.

To many crayfish lovers, the ease of keeping this type of aquatic pet is just a minor reason for their love.

Ms Bonnie Kwok started keeping crayfish two years ago, she said the “unusual vigour” of crayfish excited her.

“I love to watch my crayfish waving their big claws at me whenever I walk by their tanks. They look so energetic and lively. They bring vitality to my house and my life,” said Ms Kwok.

She said crayfish gave her a more concrete feeling than other fish pets.

“You can feed a crayfish with an aquatic pincer and you actually feel their force when they grab the food.”

“I love to watch my crayfish waving their big claws at me whenever I walk by their tanks. They look so energetic and lively.”

- Bonnie Kwok, crayfish keeper

“You cannot pick up a fish from the tank, but you can pick up a crayfish for a short while. Seeing their ecdysis gives me lots of satisfaction,” she said.

Ecdysis is the natural process of shell-shedding in shrimps and crayfish. Every time a crayfish cast off its old shell, it becomes bigger and its colour varies slightly.

According to Ms Kwok, how the colour changes reflects the living condition of the crayfish.

“The better the water quality, the shinier the crayfish gets every time after they shed their shells. The shinier they get, the more they worth,” she said.

She even made “quite some money” through breeding colourful crayfish and selling the babies to shops.

Mr Wah, crayfish lover for over 21 years, started his own breeding room for crayfish and other aquatic pets in Tuen Mun two years ago.

He first launched his breeding room with only two fish tanks, now he runs the breeding room as his full-time job.

“I have started keeping all kinds of aquatic pets since I was young. But I am particularly attracted to crayfish’s ability to regenerate their broken limbs. It is amazing to see them recover from injuries,” said Mr Wah.

Next time you walk pass Goldfish Market, do not be surprised if these creatures wave their claws at you. You may want to stop, have a look or maybe you will begin to see the beauty in them.

EDITED BY BRIAN LAW

Paint your stress away

With an apron on and a palette in hand, all you need to bring is a willingness to relax

BY CARLOS CHENG

The studio sets the mood and plays the music. Here, Ms Joanne Yuan Quan becomes a “professional” painter at Art Fête, an art jamming studio in Jordan.

“When my boyfriend first took me to Art Fête, we were anxious about our studies,” said Ms Yuan, a finance student at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Since then, the 19-year-old college girl has opted for art jamming to relax.

Artjammers express themselves and socialise while painting on their own canvases. They can share the creative experience with friends and loved ones.

Most people believe that art jamming originated overseas. But Ms Betty Cheung Yee-wan, a Hongkonger, is in fact the pioneer who created this social painting experience.

“I came up with the idea when I was very stressed and unhappy with my profession,” said Ms Cheung, who was an

architect. She was having a hard time in the year 2000.

Then she planned to paint.

“I used to paint when I was a child. It set me free,” said Ms Cheung.

But she lacked inspiration at that time so she decided to paint with her friends. That is how art jamming was born.

Ms Cheung then set up her first art studio in Central in 2001 and later a branch in Tsim Sha Tsui.

The art studios provide canvases, acrylic paints, various paint brushes, a wet paint box and aprons.

No skills are required and no topics are given. Artjammers paint whatever they want.

Unlike other forms of entertainment, art jamming not only helps you kill time, but also keep your mind away from work.

“While you are drawing, you can temporarily forget all your stress. You just put all your effort in and focus on how

to paint,” said Mr Lee Wai-lun, owner of Art Fête.

“You can express all your feelings and emotions through the canvases by your choice of colours,” said Mr Lee.

“Painting here is not just painting, but a kind of sharing and learning to improve relationships.”

More and more art jamming studios were being set up since the activity had become increasingly popular, he said.

“Painting here is not just painting, but a kind of sharing and learning to improve relationships.”

- Lee Wai-lun, owner of Art Fête

When the college girl Ms Joanne Yuan recalled having her first art jamming experience, she did not know what to paint.

“At first, we had no idea what to paint. But when we left the studio, our stresses were gone,” said Ms Yuan.

Artistic activities, like art jamming, are ways to raise our creativity and at the same time, can be fun and stress relieving, according to Mr Jordan Potash, an art therapist who graduated from the University of Hong Kong.

“I enjoyed the atmosphere here. We chatted a lot, laughed a lot and drank a lot as well,” said Ms Kelly Chan, a regular artjammer.

“And you don’t have to worry about staining your apartment anymore,” she added.

A four-hour art jamming session costs about \$280 to \$500 per person.

“The cost of paints and canvas are expensive, and I usually use lots of colours when I draw,” said Ms Chan. But some think it is worth the money.

Ms Cheung, founder of art jamming, concluded the activity is a “therapy”.

“Art jamming allows people to reconsider the way they see art and themselves,” she said.



Artjammers use different tools to express themselves freely through colours. By Art Fête

EDITED BY CARRIE CHENG



Fighting against time

As the October 15 relocation deadline closes in, Tsoi Yuen villagers face losing their cherished homes and way of life

BY CECILIA CHAN, VISQI HE, XAVIER NG & WINNIE YIU



With zero progress on the 150,000-square-foot (about 14,000-square-metre) site for Tsoi Yuen relocation, where stretches of weed-covered paddy fields lie, the move is likely to be deferred.

Although the government is adamant in not postponing the deadline, there seems to be no other alternative but to allow an extension, said activists helping the villagers.

According to Ms Bobo Yip Po-lan, project officer of Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, it might take at least half a year to finish the relocation as Tsoi Yuen villagers have not bought the land yet.

If the villagers are forced out of their homes, they would have nowhere to take shelter. People from all walks of life have helped them protest and appeal, but to no avail.

"The government did not announce they will postpone the deadline officially. They just said they would deal with it flexibly," Ms Yip said.

She said the government required the villagers to prove they were farmers at Tsoi Yuen Village, and made and will make a living upon farming.

"The government's role is very limited in the relocation of Tsoi Yuen Village. They did not assign any officials to guide the relocation. All works are done by civilians and the villagers themselves," said Ms Yip.

Not only will the villagers lose their homes, they have also become outcasts as they face resistance from their new neighbours.

Residents in Tai Wo Village along Kam Sheung Road in Yuen Long have put up posters at the entrance of the village, objecting to Tsoi Yuen Village's relocation to their village.

They said the newcomers would be too many for the village to accommodate. They suspected that the land would be used for purposes other than farming.

A total of 55 households will be relocated to the new site. On average, each household will get approximately 3,000 square feet (about 280 square metres). According to the Transport and Housing Bureau, a maximum area of 400 square feet (about 40 square metres) is permitted to be used for a temporary domestic structure and the rest must be used for agricultural purposes.

To Mrs Choi, a 50-year-old villager who runs a store at Tai Wo Village, the newcomers are not welcomed as she thought they would not follow the government regulations.

"The permitted land for farming is only around 2,600 square feet. How can they farm with such limited land? You can guess what they really want the land for," Mrs Choi said.

Apart from the farming issue, Tai Wo villagers also think the current infrastructure will not be able to withstand

the increase of households, including electricity supply and drainage systems.

One main concern is whether the only road which connects Tai Wo Village and nearby Yuen Kong San Tsuen to Kam Sheung Road - the main road to other nearby settlements and MTR station - can withstand more load.

A 15-minute walk to reach Tai Wo on foot, the private road as it is known to the residents, was built in 2002 with funding by Tai Wo Village and nearby Yuen Kong San Tsuen. The road is narrow, allowing only two compact cars to pass through at the same time.

Those in the fund think that it is unfair that the newcomers can have access to the road without contributing to the funding. They said the road is too congested already as it is and with more cars it would cause inconvenience.

Sitting inside Mrs Choi's store, Mr Choi was ready to stop the newcomers by all means. "We will block the private road if they force to move in with these problems unsettled," the 60-year-old said. Other villagers echoed his views.

Villagers from Tsoi Yuen village are not exactly thrilled about the move either. "We are simply farmers and really want the same peaceful life just like the old days after moving to the new site," said "Tai So", a 65-year-old villager who has lived in Tsoi Yuen Village for over 40 years since she came to Hong Kong from the mainland.

She loves the community and the bonding between people.

"If there is no eggplant, just ask the neighbours for one. There is no need to go to the supermarket," she said.

The Tsoi Yuen Village Concern Group said the residents of Tai Wo Village have motives behind their protests. Mrs Ko Chun-heung, president of the group said the Tai Wo villagers were exaggerating the effect of their relocation and no actual problems have risen yet.

Mr Lo Ming-kong, the group's vice president said it was all politics.

"They are probably taking this opportunity to demand something from the government," he said.

An earlier report from a Chinese newspaper said the government would take back the ex-gratia cash allowance (EGCA) if the villagers were unable to move away before October 15.

"We definitely won't do this," Mr Lo said. "We are now waiting for the government's response to see if they can postpone the deadline."

More than a harvest

An exhibition of farming culture by the Post-80s is keeping Tsoi Yuen Village's traditional lifestyle alive - for now

Despite the intense summer heat, Ms Jenny Lee strolls with glee through an experimental farm where eggplants, corn and basil are growing.

Six months after cultivation began at the farm in March, she and other volunteers have successfully grown more than ten kinds of crops with the help of villagers.

Ms Lee is one of 15 young people in their twenties who started to build what they regard as a life exhibition of farming at Tsoi Yuen Village. The exhibition involves cultivating a few patches of farmland and constructing a self-built wooden hut to record and reminisce the traditional lifestyle of indigenous villagers. Its theme is the farming culture as it was done in the past.

Weekly courses are held at the wooden hut to teach the young people and the villagers how to cultivate organic vegetables.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the young farmers of the experimental farm sell their produce in the organic wet market in Wanchai and flea markets.

The environmental-friendly farm also serves a political purpose. The revenue

earned from selling the produce will fund the demonstrations and petitions against the government's decision to spend \$67 billion to build an express rail link from Hong Kong to Guangzhou, forcing the demolition of Tsoi Yuen Village in Shek Kong, Yuen Long.

"The life exhibition is the continuation of the anti-express-rail-link protests and a fight for an alternative lifestyle for Hong Kong people," Ms Lee said.

"It is a way for us to express our concern about the way of life of our society and the government's policy of depriving people of a choice to settle and live in a traditional rural lifestyle instead of the business-oriented one that they encourage us to live in," she added.

"The life exhibition is the continuity of the anti-XRL protest, to fight for an alternative living style for Hong Kong people."

- Jenny Lee, person-in-charge of the Life Exhibition at Tsoi Yuen Village

The founders are all from the Post-80s anti-express railway group, who shot to fame for their eye-catching demonstrations to express their opposition to the government's decision to demolish homes at Tsoi Yuen Village.

Young, energetic, and creative, the group has surprised the city with their active involvement in civic affairs and their emotional attachment to the traditional way of living and farming.

The life exhibition forms part of the efforts to conserve Tsoi Yuen Village and the farming culture in Hong Kong.

"Farming is a form of living which enables you to have full control of how and what you would eat," Ms Lee said.

By buying food from supermarkets, Hong Kong people nowadays had no power in deciding what we ate, and we never know where the food came from, she said.

The government's policy was is not only demolishing the houses, but also the choices that people could have had.

"The construction of the railway destroys the traditional lifestyle of the villagers, and the government also deprives Hong Kong people of a choice to live in a rural living environment," she added.

The youngsters are also bringing changes to the lives of villagers.

Mr Lo, who has lived in Tsoi Yuen Village for more than 25 years, said the "Post-80s" introduced to the villagers the concepts of being more environmental-friendly.

"Villagers will no longer burn the rubbish and fallen leaves, because this gives out carbon dioxide that hurts the village's environment," Mr Lo said.

As the relocation deadline approaches, the life exhibition also faces being moved.

"The life exhibition can and will move to wherever it is possible to relocate it. As long as we have enough space, it will not be gone," Ms Lee said.



Next to the main entrance of Tsoi Yuen Village, there is a nondescript two-storey house that looks just like any other structure in the village. Take a step past the timeworn wooden gate and you'll find the only grocery shop in Tsoi Yuen Village - San Wai Store.

Mrs Chow has been running the live-in store for over half a century. The 65-year-old leaves the gate open and everyone from locals to visitors are welcomed to drop by.

The photos of villagers lining the store's walls reveal the gradual change of Tsoi Yuen Village over the decades that will soon become the past.

In the early 60s, Mrs Chow started selling food, drinks and soy sauce and slowly it became more than just a shop - it was a community centre and the hub of the whole Tsoi Yuen Village.

Every day, gathering at San Wai Store is a daily activity for all villagers.

"They love to come and chat when they get bored," Mrs Chow said.

The shop-owner has got used to passing the time by reading newspapers or chatting with fellow villagers.

One of the frequent visiting-villagers, nicknamed Tai So, spends her time with Mrs Chow every day.

"I am always hanging out here, so you can find me anytime by coming to the store," she said. "You can't find this kind of houses that is so comfortable anywhere else in the city."

Beside the store is a flourishing gar-



Interior of San Wai Store, a gather sphere for villagers.



The one and only grocery shop, San Wai Store, in Tsoi Yuen Village.

Priceless humanity

A grocery store which supplies the things in life that money can't buy

den where Chow's pets run freely. Lychee trees surround the house and produce fresh fruit during summer.

After a long day of work, the first thing that all Tsoi Yuen villagers do is to step inside the store, not aiming to buy anything but to get the latest village gossip from Mrs Chow.

Tsoi Yuen Village is not like any other fading villages in the countryside. Here, different kinds of people live together and contribute to make it a better community.

Language is no barrier for Mrs Chow. When a Nepalese lady comes to the store, Mrs Chow can't speak English but with the smile straight from her heart,

"We know we need to move, but all we hope is to be able to stay together after we moved. We don't want our community to break up."

- Mrs Chow, the 65-year-old shop owner

she still can figure out what her customer wants and offer a big hug for free.

Even the villagers who have left the village are still emotionally attached to it and the people there.

"An old lady who used to live in the village moved to Yuen Long recently," Tai So said.

"She comes back every week and every time she comes back, she brings us food that she bought in Yuen Long like we don't have food to eat here."

The village is going to be demolished in the coming months, so does the San Wai Store.

"We know it's a fact that we can't change, and we have no choice but to accept it," Mrs Chow said.

"We know we need to move, but all we hope is to be able to stay together after we moved. We don't want our community to break up."

As for San Wai Store, Mrs Chow said she would love to continue the business and provide a gathering place for villagers somewhere else. That is, however, still a case of "wait and see".

Instead of surrounding the Legislative Council to protest against the construction of the costly Express Rail Link (XRL), a local freelance photographer chose to use a peaceful way to express his concern for the affected residents in Tsoi Yuen Village.

"I want people to know what is actually being destroyed when the funding of XRL was approved," said Mr Tse Pak-chai, whose photographs are featured in the exhibition *Home's there, Life's there*

a Tsoi Yuen villager.

"We are all satisfied with those beautiful photos," she said, adding that she always carries her own family portrait with her.

Ms Chan was the one who helped to bring the photographer to the villagers. There were around 20 families involved in the photo-taking.

"We want others to know that this is the place of our homes and community for many years, which should be trea-

at the same time breaking off the social relations and mutual trust inside, which need years to build up." Mr Tse said.

The exhibition is not only aiming to draw public attention, but to prompt people to reflect on urban dwellers' lifestyle in contrast to the villagers'.

Mr Tse Ming-chong, the exhibition organiser, paused after he glanced at the photos and said: "They remind me of my family and what 'family' really means."

The photos will soon be displayed in



Captured moments

Snapshots of Tsoi Yuen families show bonding with land and home

and Tsoi Yuen is there.

The exhibition attracted 1,610 visitors last summer in Lumenvism, a photography workshop in Shek Kip Mei. The photographs include images of groups of people, some with their pets, sitting closely in front of their commodious houses. Mr Tse said what he tried to do was bring out the best of Tsoi Yuen Village to the outside world.

"We were all delighted when we first heard the idea (of taking family portrait)," said Ms Chimmy Chan Hoi-shan,

"They are destroying the things that the villagers depend for a living."

-Mr Tse Pak-chun, local photographer

sured," she said.

Tsoi Yuen villagers enjoy their spacious homes. "Unlike what the government describes as 'cottages', settlements there are apartment-like houses with a good living environment," says the foreword of the exhibition.

Mr Tse said he was impressed most by the villagers' lifestyle during his visits.

"They can even recognise the different varieties of bananas," he said.

He thought it was unwise to force people to relocate for urban development.

"In fact, 'community' is a kind of important wealth to them," he said. "It is much easier for the weak to seek help when they have developed a sense of belonging within their own community."

"The demolition of Tsoi Yuen Village is

a restaurant called Culture Shock in Tai Po.

"I have not decided how long I will keep the photos. Maybe let the villagers decide later," said Mr Spencer Ma Kin-wai, director of Culture Shock. As an old friend of the photographer, Mr Ma shows his support by such action.

"Our ultimate goal is far more than just to record their lifestyle, but also to preserve and keep practicing it in the future, even after their relocation to the new site," Mr Tse finally added.

Even though Tsoi Yuen villagers cannot escape from the village's fate of demolition, there are always warmth and happiness lying inside these meaningful portraits, together with their irreplaceable history and memory.



By RYANNE LAI

Man in red - “Grassmud Ma”

Interview with Mr Edward Yum Liang-hsien

BY LITING YONG

In the past ten years, the auditorium of the RTHK's long-standing broadcast-live *City Forum* has been dominated by “Victoria Park Uncles”, a group of outspoken elderly yelling out their views, sometimes with a handmade loudspeaker, before the host and guests.

They faced no challenges until Mr Edward Yum Liang-hsien, a 31-year-old young man, engaged in the forum.

“He is like a magnet,” said the host of *City Forum* Mr Joseph Tse Chi-fung.

“Before Edward's participation, the show only had around 80 members of audience and was almost dying. Now it is getting better and once even attracted nearly 400 members of audience to join the forum,” said Mr Tse.

Since his Debut at the forum in December 2009, Mr Yum shows up at the forum every Sunday in his signature red T-shirt. Like the “Uncles”, Mr Yum dares to roar out his opinion and ask the guests questions.

“Everything is impromptu. What the guests say on the show triggers my emotion. Therefore I rushed to *City Forum* to fight back,” said Mr Yum.

On the Internet, he named himself “Grassmud Ma”, which in Chinese refers to people who are so wrong that even their mothers cannot tolerate them.

Unlike the other post 80's political activists who are from the grassroots, Mr Yum was born in a middle class family. His father, Mr Yum Sin-ling, is an ex-Legco member. After completing his studies in the US, he returned to Hong Kong and is now an associate director of a financial services company, Amicorp



In pink striped shirt with glasses, Mr Yum looks no different from other businessmen.



Hong Kong Limited.

Dressed in a pink striped shirt with his surname “Yum” sewn on his breast pocket, Mr Yum looks no different from a businessman in his office.

Nevertheless, he chooses to shout at the forum guests with sweat and tears rather than spending his weekends on a golf course.

“Of course everybody wants an easy life. We can just sit by,” he said. “But Hong Kong is sick and that's why more and more people, including myself, want to go on streets and voice out.”

Edward's sensational yet substantial speeches and signature red shirt have not only attracted the media's attention, but also gained him lots of young fans. Actually, Mr Yum has been an outspoken person since his student days.

“He is never afraid of speaking his mind. Putting his debating skills to use at *City Forum*, he has successfully caught the eyes of the audience,” said Mr Jeff Au Yeung Ying-kit, Mr Yum's best friend as well as his debating teammate during their school time at the Diocesan Boys' School.

We have gone through an exciting year for Hong Kong politics from the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Incident to the anti-express-rail-link movement and the recent Legco by-election. Social protests are spreading.

“Sometimes citizen participation is not just only about voting. It is about taking more actions to express yourself,” said Mr Fred Lam Fai, chief campaigner of Roundtable Community.

“That is exactly what ‘Grassmud Ma’

is doing. He comes out, grabs the microphone and speaks up at *City Forum*.”

Apart from being a “permanent” member of the audience at *City Forum*, Mr Yum has joined the League of Social Democrats in May last year.

“I identify with the principles and philosophies of the LSD, which is the frontier and pioneer of promoting social democracy in Hong Kong. It always acts things out,” Mr Yum said.

After winning the district council by-election for the Southern District this year, Mr Yum has started to put more efforts on the upcoming district council election in November 2011.

“I am getting myself both mentally and physically ready to sacrifice even more of my private time for politics.”

Juggling between business and party work is hard. But he has never thought of becoming a full-time politician.

“I would still keep my career even though I have to spend lots of time on politics. I will not give up either. I am just too greedy,” said Mr Yum.

Although there are criticisms of his aggressive approach, Edward has faith in his method.

“If you speak louder or if you give the authority more pressure, eventually they will have to face up to the problems.”

His belief to be aggressive, enthusiastic and energetic is just like the colour red that always comes to his mind. Mr Yum remains positive about his actions.

“Hopefully in the next five to ten years, we can bring major and significant impacts to the system, the government and even the whole society.”

EDITED BY EDWARD MA

Comic strips of life

Ah Lei's dose of humour for the minutiae of everyday life

BY THOMAS CHAN



Mr Leung's favourite comic strip. By Aken Leung Chun

To most people, walking from home to work, having lunch at fast food restaurants, and working in a cubicle at the office are boring routines. But in the eyes of Mr Aken Leung Chun, everything is full of fun and humour.

Mr Leung, a comic artist is the creator of the uproarious comic character "Ah Lei", who is a sharp observer who explores themes of daily trifles and local cultures with humour.

"Lots of my story ideas are about what I see and do every day. So they can easily create resonance amongst readers," he said.

The young comic artist emigrated to the United States at the age of ten with his family. Having completed his

undergraduate degree in fine arts at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, he returned to Hong Kong in 2001.

But academic qualifications did not guarantee him a career as a comic artist in Hong Kong.

"When I came back to Hong Kong, I drew more than 100 pages of comic strips and sent them to different publishers, hoping for a chance to have a book of mine published," Mr Leung said.

Life does not always turn out the way you want it to be. He received no response at all. Then he mustered up the courage to publish his first comic book by himself.

After that, Mr Leung wished to go further by getting his comics published in newspapers and magazines.

"After a few attempts, my comics finally appeared in several local magazines. But still, not many people were aware of my work," he recalled.

When he was invited to be a comic columnist by AM730, a free local newspaper, "Ah Lei" started to grab the attention of readers.

Since then, publishers had started to approach him to have his works published, he said.

Mr Leung is the type of person who looks for details in life.

"When there is a flash of ideas in my mind, I write them down right away."

- Aken Leung Chun, creator of Ah Lei

"I always have a small notebook with me wherever I go. When there is a flash

of ideas in my mind, I write them down right away," he said.

"I usually pick an idea from the notebook, and try to add humour to it.

"After that I try to split the story into four different parts. When the story line is ready, I start sketching the comics, then inking, computer colouring, and finally putting dialogs into the speech bubbles."

Mr Leung's ideas of blending daily trivia and local cultures with humour were greeted by readers and other comic artists with warm applause.

"The Ah Lei series is 'unputdownable' as most stories in the books are indeed what we experience and see in our daily lives," said Mr Oscar Tsang Cheuk-fai, a secondary one student at Stewards Pooi Kei College.

"I appreciate his creativity and passion for the city very much because some of his stories make me reminisce about the old Hong Kong cultures," said Ms Maggie Lau Hoi-yan, a young local comic artist.

Having dedicated to comic drawing and writing for a couple of years, Mr Leung is still having endless ideas and creativity.

"In the near future, I will publish 'Ah Lei' comics and books on other topics, do more paintings and make my exhibitions," said the artist.

From housework, study and work to all aspects of life, Mr Leung sees the world full of amusement.

"Jokes can intertwine with local cultures and daily trivia to remind people of cherishing every bit of life," he said.



Mr Leung and his famous comic character "Ah Lei". By Aken Leung Chun

EDITED BY JOHN XIAN

New York artist Ms Ellie Ga's first solo art exhibition in Asia, *At the Beginning North was Here*, has started at the agnès b.'s LIBRAIRIE GALERIE.

Located at Wing Fung Street in Wan Chai, the small-scale gallery is nestled amongst trendy cafés and restaurants.

The exhibition concludes an 18-month scientific expedition to the Arctic Ocean. Ms Ga, the only artist-in-residence at the Explorers Club in New York, joined a small scientific team.

The series of work displayed at the exhibition were conceived and constructed during Ms Ga's time on board, covering both conditions of daily life and psychological distress in some extreme environment.

The team set off on a polar vessel, Tara, in October 2007, and spent 18 months on the pack ice. While on

board, Ms Ga recorded everything, from tiny details such as deciding whom to wash dishes by drawing, to the scientific investigation work in various forms including photos, videos and journals.

After Ms Ga was back, she produced the firsthand materials into forms of archival pigment prints, projections and light boxes.

Without much enjoyable experience, Ms Ga's expedition is more likely one that can be epitomised as a long period of unpredictable and disconnected life, suffering on ice since there was always uncertainty at the location. Ms Ga used such sense of 'distress' as the basic concept of this series of work.

In the projection of *A Hole to See the Ocean Through*, a five-minute video of still images and sound, Ms Ga keeps on mapping the word 'plankton', a species of underwater organism they studied on. Ms Ga captured the characters of planktons, floating along the ocean current and flowing back and forth from pole to pole, and associated them with the condition that they were enduring – being stuck into the pack ice and letting ocean

currents decide where to go next.

In another projection, *Possibilities*, the crew's fortune is emblematised by a disconnected video footage of people playing Tarot cards and drawing lines on palms. Without accurate prediction though the technical equipment supposedly could mark the location, the scene never stopped changing. All they could rely on was to believe in chance and in fortune-telling.

"Sometimes large fissures formed in the ice and they reminded me of reading the lines on a palm to know the future", Ms Ga said. "I lit up these fissures with our headlamps as if these lines could tell us the possible points where the ice was weak and we could break free."

Far beyond simple artworks, Ms Ga's voyage to the Arctic Ocean is not merely an exploration of science but also an experience of self-discovery and a process of facing the weakness of oneself by being stronger.

Known as the only overseas gallery of the France-based brand agnès b, LIBRAIRIE GALERIE has been cooperating with different artists to hold exhibitions. Ms Ga's art exhibition will last till December 31 this year.

Now you may have an extra option of where to spend your leisure after enjoying a cup of tea at Wing Fung Street. Just a few steps from the cafes and you can take a look at images brought from the mysterious polar world. You might probably find new inspirations and be enlightened, who knows?

A journey into polar art

Ellie Ga's multimedia record of the travails of sailing through the Arctic Ocean

BY JOCELYN ZHAO



EDITED BY LEILA POON

Tales of Tsoi Yuen Village

BY ROY KWONG

Once upon a time, there was a village. The elderly lived there. And the villagers' almost 50-year-old neighbourhood created a harmony. Most of them had decided to live there for the rest of their life.

But something suddenly changed: government officials came to their homes and a high-speed railway project was going to destroy the village. Villagers tried their best to protect their community. They from beginning to end believed in miracles.

This is the story of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen.

To me, it is always worthwhile to fight with all the villagers, no matter how hard the battle is.

The battle makes me realise: realise how arrogant the government is, how cold-blooded the officials are, and how ridiculous the policies can be.

Villagers could never forget November 11, 2008 when there were over a hundred officials barging into the village and posting removal orders on all houses. The government attempted to clear the village after a 2-month haste consultation.

Villagers then started to gather and to fight for retaining the village. And that is when I started to help them.

A signing activity was once launched at a street in Yuen Long. Passers kept asking us "What is the express rail link?" and "Where is Tsoi Yuen Village?" Very few people understood the project. Yuen Long residents knew nothing about the railway which would cross through their district, leaving no station for them. Great area of land would be held.

At that time, I did not believe in miracles.

Not until I saw how the old villagers never gave up any chance to voice out the



unfairness of the project, I was really touched. Though they were ignored by people and even scolded by some, they were always firm.

Thereupon, my heart was so warm.

I tried my best to spread the message to everyone by means of delivering speeches and holding signing activities. People began to pay attention to the case. We got over 10,000 signatures and expected that the situation could be improved. However, the government destroyed our hopes, claiming that those signatures disagreed with the consultation rules, and ignored people's voices.

Then, we changed our strategy. We demanded meeting the officials. And we finally got the chance. I still remember the question which Mrs Ko raised: "Could you let us stay here?"

"A public housing flat would be arranged for you later," an official replied with a cold tone. Our government got no sincerity to talk to us. The officials just wanted to get their job done early. How can we trust the government?

Though Tsoi Yuen Village is facing the most unfavourable situation ever, aged villagers have not given up anyway. They are always protecting their homes. Their passion even attracted the Post-80s to join their protests. They walked around the city and demonstrated outside the Legco and inside universities.

People could not agree to such an expensive project, spending

\$66.9 billion. After discussions lacking public participation in the Legco, councilors from the functional constituencies finally became "kingmakers". They were only concerned about their possible interests from the project and were not standing on people's side.

I will never forget the day January 16, 2010 when the project was being passed by the Legco. At that moment, old Mr Yau asked me: "If it is passed, do we... have to leave?"

I was speechless: "No... maybe miracles would come."

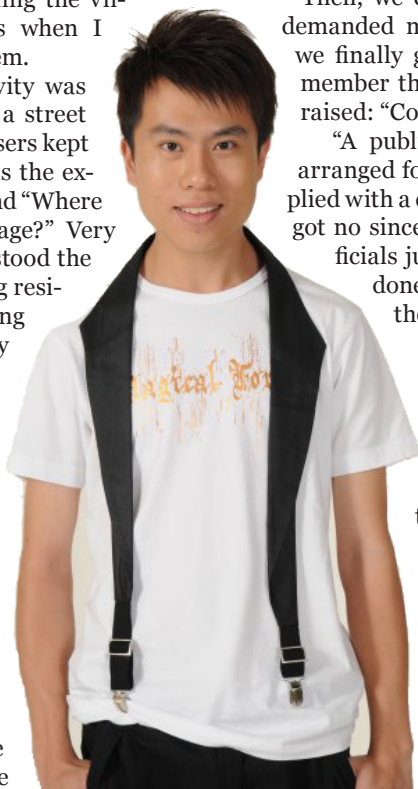
I was helpless, never ever since I have been accompanying them. After the project was finally passed, some old villagers cried. I wanna say a few encouraging words, but when I held their hands, I cried too.

It was gone. Everything was likely to be gone. A few minutes ago, old Mr Yau was asking: "Shouldn't we believe in miracles?" Yes, he is right. We should believe in miracles.

Actually, from only tens of villagers at the beginning to over 10,000 people protesting now, it's already a miracle.

I believe, as long as we strive for the best, miracles will come to us, no matter in the village or along the democratic path of Hong Kong.

Mr Roy Kwong Chun-yu is a Post-80s Yuen Long district councilor from Pek Long constituency area and also a member of the Democratic party. Since conflicts between Tsoi Yuen villagers and the government arisen, the 27-year-old enthusiastic young man has been helping the villagers to fight for their rights and interests.



Stop playing the blame game now

BY CARRIE CHENG

On September 20, the Philippines government finally released an investigative report on the Manila hostage tragedy that occurred on August 23.

In the report, eight points were elaborated on why the situation worsened in the evening. One of the highlights was media's live coverage across the nation which was believed to have angered the hostage taker, ex-policeman Rolando Mendoza, into killing the hostages.

In fact, the government should have activated the Crisis Management Committee when the crisis first happened so negotiators and rescuers could make judgments by referring to data from the authority. Apparently, the "well-planned" negotiation strategy fell short and there was no contingency plan.

It was under the order of Philippine President Benigno Aquino III that the media aired the live coverage of the situation to give a bird's eye of the outside world and even the tactics of the police

to Mendoza. But the media was not the main culprit in the tragedy.

According to Mr Joseph Scanlon, professor emeritus and director of the Emergency Communications Research Unit at Carleton University, the FBI Academy's four steps to handle the hostage crisis should be to warn the people, to control the communications between the hostage-taker and the outside world, to set an outpost zone and outer perimeter for the police, and to use the delayed tactic to negotiate with the hostage.

The Philippines government failed all the steps. The report stated that the live broadcast of Mendoza's brother under arrest and being handcuffed triggered the bloodshed. Questions were raised at this point – why didn't the police interrupt TV signals of the bus? Did they intend to let Mendoza watch the entire episode of a group of incompetent police trying to capture him? This was just many of the mistakes made that day.

The so-called SWAT team should

also be blamed for using half-baked rescue methods during the deadlock. There seems to be no reason why the rescue took almost half a day and no action was taken during the day. After being held captive by Mendoza for 11 hours, eight tourists were killed and many injured.

I suppose if there was more communication between the Philippines government and media during the whole rescue process, things could have turned out differently. TV stations say the government did not stop them from doing a live broadcast. Moreover, the media did not know there was a TV on the bus. So, out of professionalism, the media did what seemed to be right at the time, to get the story to the public as quickly as possible. No media would sacrifice their chance to report the tragedy.

At that point, the government should have set some guidelines and rules on what and when to air this kind of news. Another solution would be to use media specialists to facilitate communication between the government and the media when necessary.

I am not saying the media bore no responsibility in worsening the rescue. Press freedom and journalistic responsibilities are not excuses for the media to disregard people's life and safety. Without live coverage, the world would have no idea of how the incident happened until the Philippines government released the news. No one would have known that the Manila police's incompetent SWAT team had staged a bungled rescue. But could the media have handled it in a better way?

The Philippines government is trying to brainwash the world that the media are to be blamed for the deterioration of the situation. But the truth is the corrupt government is to blame for a lack of equipment, training and resources in the police department.

So what is wrong with the media broadcasting the truth? I bet there is no answer. We can only hope that journalists can handle this kind of news in a more balanced manner in the future.

The media should be held accountable but only partially. Aquino III has every right to blame the media but this must not be used as a cover-up for his corrupt administration.

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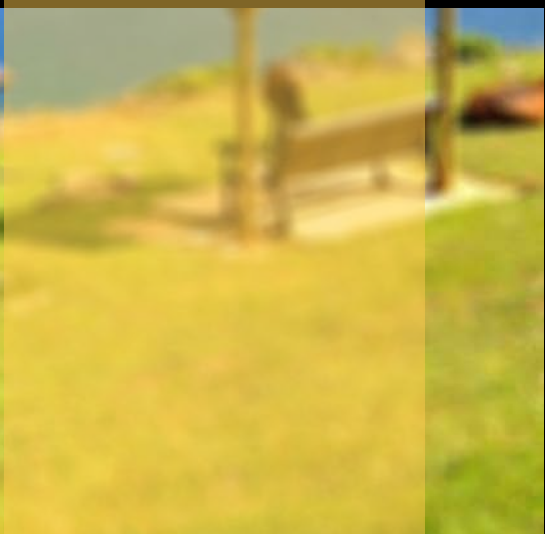
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HK NEEDS BREATHING SPACE

PHOTOS & TEXT BY GINA NG
EDITED BY ELEVEN LIU

The Development Bureau is considering revising the Public Open Space Policy.

It may prohibit private developers from exploiting public open space so that more urban oases could be created.

With seven million souls and just over 1,100 sq km of land, Hong Kong ranks fourth among 239 countries in terms of population density. The living environment is stifling, as most people live in small flats in multi-storey buildings, closely packed together with little space between them.





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