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Home Ownership Scheme **5,000 Flats**
CY Leung Albert Ho Chief Executive **Henry Tang**
Minimum wage **HK\$28**
ID Card **Foreign Domestic Helper** Right of Abode
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2011 TOP TEN LOCAL NEWS
Referendum **By-election** Legislator 220,000 people
HK\$6000 Cash Handout **Erroneous Report**
ATV **Jiang Zemin** **Leung Ka-wing**
Sub-divided Flats **Ma Tau Wai Blaze**
Brainwashing Tool **National Education**

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Editor's note

To review the year 2011, TYR conducted a survey among journalism students in Hong Kong to find out what these future journalists saw as the biggest local news.

The views of these prospective media workers may indicate how they would arrange the news rundown when they start their career and thus affect the way the general public consume news. They may serve as an indicator of future media behaviour. The cover story may be seen as a record of what big happenings the city has gone through in 2011.

Not surprisingly, media-related incidents got the highest votes as press freedom is said to be declining in Hong Kong. As gatekeepers, journalists need to fulfill their duties of informing the public without fear or favour, but their ability to do so is determined by the degree of freedom they possess in trying to report what they deem to be significant. On the other hand, international happenings like the European debt crisis and Sino-US relations also make great impact on a cosmopolitan city like Hong Kong. It would be wise to pay attention to these developments in addition to local happenings.

Gary Kwok Ka-lok
Chief Editor


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TOP 10 LOCAL NEWS OF 2011**CORRECTION NOTE**

Please note that the story "Think twice before releasing captured animals back to the wild" (Issue 3, P.7) was written by Joyce Cheung and edited by Thomas Chan. We apologize for any confusion caused.



THE CITY DOES NOT NEED SO MANY LIGHTS

Complaints about excessive luminance are rising

The light-festooned billboards that brighten the city may look pretty for overseas travellers but spare a thought for the locals.

Environmentalists and the public are increasingly concerned about light pollution caused by excessive external lighting. The number of complaints about light nuisance received by the Environmental Protection Department was 226 in 2010, up from 59 in 2007.

"The problem [light pollution] is getting worse," said Ms Gabrielle Ho, project manager of Green Sense. The local green group has been keeping an eye on the gravity of light pollution.

"There were 98 complaints about light nuisance during the period of 2006 to 2008, but only 10 cases were actually being followed up by the EDP. Many of the complaints have fallen on deaf ears," said the project manager.

Jor Chui-ting, 20, who lives in Causeway Bay, said that excessive luminance from commercial signs intruded her bedroom at night.

"It's nonsense to keep them [signboards] glittering all night. There are only a few people hanging around after midnight. Why not just turn them off? It seriously affects a quality sleep," said Jor.

Amid growing consciousness among the public pertaining to the issue, the EDP submitted a paper on controlling light pollution in March to the Legislative Council for discussion.

One of the key solutions proposed by

Residents said neon lights like these affect their quality of sleep.



the government – introducing a set of voluntary guidelines to encourage good practices in businesses – has provoked divided opinions among the public. The suggestions include switching off lights after business hour and installing automatic controls for lighting.

Criticizing the guidelines as too vague and toothless, Ms Ho said it was very unlikely that business owners would follow the suggestions.

"To be sensible, few people would follow the guidelines because they're not compulsory. There should be legislation to combat light pollution," she said.

Unlike Hong Kong, many foreign governments have put forward laws to tackle light pollution. For example, in London, light pollution is a statutory nuisance and offenders can be fined or jailed, and new projects on external lighting are required to seek approval from the local planning authority.

In a proposal submitted to the EDP, Green Sense has put forward a statutory and blanket control over the lights-on period for signage, spotlights and advertising billboards.

For advertising signboards and spotlights, the green group suggests they be turned off after 11pm, while lighting for signage of shops should be switched off after business operating hours.

Apart from regulating the operating hours of external lighting, the EDP has proposed the "zoning approach", which is widely adopted in other metropolises

like Shanghai, Sydney and Tokyo.

The system involves dividing different areas of the city into various lighting environmental zones of commercial and residential activities. Preset times and limits for external lighting will be recommended by the authority in corresponding areas.

Mr Ken Lee, a lighting designer of LEDARTIST, said poor urban planning in Hong Kong meant that the zoning approach was doomed to fail.

"Mixed land use is a unique feature of Hong Kong. For example, there are both commercial and residential areas in Mongkok. How are you going to draw a line to divide such areas into two different zones?" said Mr Lee.

Rather, he said that meticulous planning on lighting design could help alleviate the problem.

Poor lighting designs, he added, spilled light to nearby residences and into the sky, which caused not only light disturbance but also energy wastage.

In deciding where to install lights, he tries to take into account the environment and where the light sources will be to reduce light pollution.

"At the planning stage, you have to think about sensitive locations that the lighting may affect, the ambient brightness condition, angle from which the light emission comes from, and types of lighting device to be used," he said. ■

STORY/CLARIE LEE
EDITED BY/BHAVAN JAIPRAGAS



THE COMEBACK KID OF LOCAL FOOTBALL

After a long hiatus, Mong Kok Stadium, the home of Hong Kong's First Division League, has made a comeback to top-tier competitions.

Just two years ago, the symbol of local football and a regular venue for league matches, was a worn-out sight. There were no medical rooms, insufficient media facilities and crammed changing rooms. Moreover, the stadium grounds had not seen any major upgrading works since its opening in 1961.

“ I miss the good old days. Back then, football wasn't just confined to the stadium itself. ”

Mr Hui Chung-kai, football fanatic

The sporting arena has since undergone a facelift, with the addition of a roof, green features, including a rainwater recycling system, and amenities to facilitate handicapped patrons. Besides other modern installations, the stadium's stands have also been refurbished with individual seats replacing original spectators' benches, reducing the capacity to 6,680, from 8,500 before the upgrades.

The stadium reopened on October 16 this

year to an attendance-setting record of 4,499 spectators, when the home team Sun Hei hosted Sham Shui Po in a 5-0 rout.

Mr Cheung Siu-chung, a supporter of defending champions Kitchee Sports Club, had never been to the stadium until the current season.

He felt that it was a pity because he had heard many fans reminiscing about the good old days. Unfortunately, he was in for a surprise.

"I thought there would be many people at the stadium but turns out, there were only about 700 to 800 people," Mr Cheung said. "I guess it is still too early to say if the upgrades really work."

For some die-hard fans, the love affair with the stadium began from an early age. Mr Hui Chung-kai, a supporter of the Tin Shui Wai Pegasus, grew up watching league games at Mong Kok Stadium with his father. Every Sunday, the elder Hui would bring his pre-adolescent son from their home in Tin Shui Wai to Mong Kok to watch their favourite teams play.

"I miss the good old days. Back then, football wasn't just confined to the stadium itself," said Mr Hui. "It was common to find fans at the restaurants near the stadium."

Ho Yuen Restaurant, which has been around for three decades, has seen its fair share of supporters back in its day due to its convenient location. The Hong Kong-style restaurant is a two-minute walk from the



Ho Yuen Restaurant is popular amongst fans.



The stadium re-opened on 16 October 2011

stadium.

"I can't say that we benefited from the matches but come game day, [Ho Yuen] would get busier than normal days. The place would be filled with football fans," said Mr Leung King-kuen, who has been working the restaurant for the last ten years.

Although Ho Yuen does not cater to football fans alone, the football culture has long become a part of the restaurant. For Mr Leung, it was entertaining just hearing customers talk about the matches while he was at work.

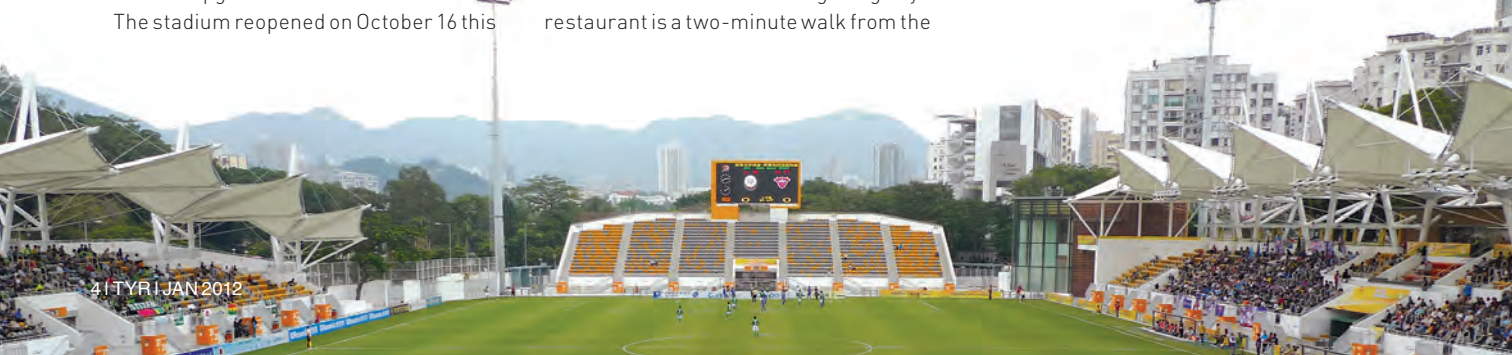
Unsurprisingly, he felt that something was amiss when the stadium stopped hosting matches for upgrading works.

During the two years without a game played in Mong Kok, he found himself serving construction workers who worked at the stadium more often than the football fans he is used to seeing around.

"Now, Mong Kok Stadium is back and we are starting to see more fans coming," said Mr Leung.

"Although it isn't as many as in the past, it always brings joy to see them again." ■

STORY/KRIS LUI
EDITED BY/CALVIN YANG



A narrator describes subtle components of the scene like facial expressions of characters.



MOVIES IN WORDS

“Film listeners” get the right mood from audio narrators

For the 50-plus people inside a small theatre showing the film *The Orphan* (by Bruce Lee), watching the movie was not about focusing their eyes on the screen, but tuning their ears to the sounds that came out of the loud speakers.

Those sounds included not just the audio contents of the film – dialogues, background music and the like – but also the voice of a narrator describing in great detail the visual composition and ambience of each scene and the actions and subtle facial expressions of the characters.

Thanks to the film narration, or audio description, service provided by the Hong Kong Society for the Blind (HKSB) since 2009, this audience of visually impaired people were able to understand the film by more than just hearing its dialogues and other sound effects.

Living a life in darkness, Mr Pang Siu-ching, a regular of narrated film shows offered by HKSB, said that film narration had brought great joy to him. “I used to be upset about not knowing what is happening in the film while watching, but now I can understand almost everything with the audio descriptions,” he said.

“There are many meaningful points the director wants to deliver to the audience by using certain arrangements of plot or ways

of expression. I am delightful that I can understand and even reflect on them now,” said Mr Pang.

While audio description was introduced more than 30 years ago in many countries in the West, it was still at the early stage of development here, said Ms Chan Lai-yee, Manager of the Information Accessibility Centre of HKSB.

Funded by Creative Hong Kong, HKSB launched this year a training scheme called “Development of Audio Description Services for Hong Kong Films”, aiming at cultivating professional narrators and publicising the service. With workshops conducted by senior professional narrators from the U.S. and Taiwan, the trainees learn the basic skills of audio description and writing narrative scripts.

The scheme has since attracted more than 130 participants, most of whom are from the broadcasting and film industries. “It’s great to know that there are many people willing to support us. The impact of audio description is growing,” said Ms Mak Wai-ching, who suffers from visual disability. “I hope someday we can go to the cinema to watch the latest popular films, like what normal people do,” she said.

When the visually impaired understand more about the movies, they feel better

connected to the society, have more common topics to chat about with family and friends, and feel less isolated.

“It delivers the message of equal information accessibility and social integration,” said Mr Lau Shing-kwan, Program Manager of Hong Kong Blind Union. “They can grasp the whole story like anybody else as they’re no longer limited by visual barriers.”

Although Hong Kong Blind Union does not have film narration services yet, Mr Lau said HKSB’s training programme was a good idea for raising public awareness of the visually impaired. But he feels our society still pays little attention to and has scant knowledge of the needs of the blind.

Of the 122,000 visually impaired in Hong Kong, only about 2,600 have so far attended narrated film shows. Also, most of the shows were held in activity rooms instead of cinemas, which are not equipped with narration facilities.

HKSB’s next step is to raise awareness of the service in Hong Kong by encouraging more people to join the training schemes for narrators and more cinemas to install film narration facilities so more blind people can go to the movies more often. ■

STORY / PEYTON GUAN
EDITED BY / CECILIA CHAN



All sorts of fresh fruit and vegetables can be found in the market.

EAT FRESH, BUY LOCAL

The Athens Farmers Market in Ohio offers a wide variety of locally grown fruits, bedding plants and organic produce for locals and visitors

Located in Athens, Ohio, The Athens Farmers Market is a year-round non-profit producers' market. Customers can order annual Thanksgiving dinner boxes directly from local farmers and purchase numerous home-grown vegetables and fruits.

Open since 1972, the Athens Farmers Market is well-known for its chemical-free products. Local families can pre-order a fresh selection of locally produced turkey, vegetables, jam and stuffing mix for Thanksgiving.

More than 100 vendors from nearby farms offer a wide selection of local products, ranging from vegetables, fruits, poultry, to candies, bakery and decorations at the market. The Athens Farmers Market is also the largest open-air market in Ohio, and opens every Wednesday and Saturday from 10 am to 1

pm.

The Athens Chapter of the Ohio Ecological Food & Farm Association (OEFFA), based in Columbus, Ohio, acts as an educator and researcher for sustainable farming, and coordinates with Athens Farmers market vendors to supply Thanksgiving boxes.

Each Thanksgiving box contains various fresh ingredients such as potatoes, salad dressing and butternut squash for pumpkin pie, which enables families to prepare their Thanksgiving meal with local food grown by natural methods.

Most food in the Thanksgiving box is organic. "We grow all our stuff organically, non-ovicides, non-pesticides," said Angie Starline, the president of the Athens Chapter of the OEFFA.

Ms Starline added that they do not use any hormones or biocides in rearing



Bakeries like pizza is also available.

livestock.

"We feel that it is very important to know where your food comes from, and what the methods are in growing your food," Ms Starline said.

Francoise Cauchie is a regular customer at the Athens Farmers Market. "I come here every Saturday and I also try to make it every Wednesday," she said. Ms Cauchie often buys vegetables, fruits and eggs from the market.

It is Ms Cauchie's fourth year to preorder the Thanksgiving box. She said the food at the market is healthier and she would also like to encourage the local economy.

"The price is higher here, but I find it normal because it's locally grown and fresh. I prefer to buy food here than Wal-Mart," Ms Cauchie said.

Many farmers sell directly to restaurants in Athens. "We have lots of restaurants in town, maybe when you order salads in a restaurant, you probably get some vegetables from the local farmers," said Kip Parker, the market manager of the Athens Farmers Market Board.

"A lot of people come to the Athens Farmers Market for health benefits," Mr

Parker said.

Most of the vendors are certified organic, "the state agency comes and looks at their farms' records to make sure that they comply with all the rules so that the food can stay organic," Mr Parker said.

According to the Athens Farmers Market rules, producers shall sell only agricultural, horticultural or food items

“We feel that it is very important to know where your food comes from, and what the methods are in growing your food.”

Angie Starline, President of the Athens Chapter, OEFFA

that they themselves have grown, produced or processed.

"As long as you grow or do part of the process, you are allowed to have it here," Mr Parker added.

Mitch Meadows is the owner of the Mitch's, one of the vendors. Mr Meadows

has been selling fresh vegetables and fruits in the market for 17 years.

He has been to other markets such as the Hocking Hills Market (a large flea market in Ohio), but he said the Athens Farmers Market impresses him the most since it is more efficient and smooth, and he could earn a lot from the market as well.

However, Mr Meadows said it would be better if vendors are allowed to sell products from other factories at the market.

Kelley McArthur, a 20-year-old Ohio University student, said she usually buys food from supermarket but sometimes visits the market for vegetables and bread.

Ms McArthur said she prefers to support local farmers. "I like coming here because I know the food is coming from good places and I know people that are growing it. I do feel better when I'm eating if I know it's local," she said.

With growing health awareness, the number of visitors at the Athens Farmers market has kept increasing. The market not only brings business opportunities to local farmers and producers, but it also supports the local economy and encourages sustainable farming in Athens. ■

STORY/SOPHIA FU
EDITED BY/GINA NG



A variety of business opportunities are brought to local farmers and producers by this market.

2011 TOP TEN LOCAL NEWS

The Top Ten News of 2011 are chosen based on the results of the questionnaires garnered by TYR reporters. A total of 470 valid questionnaires were collected from journalism students of the University of Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University and Hong Kong Shue Yan University.

The questionnaire consists of 50 news headlines and students were asked to grade the items according to their social impact on a scale of one to ten, with one being the least important and ten the most.

STORY / BETH LIU, JOHNNY LO, JOYCE CHEUNG, REV HUI
EDITED BY / GARY KWOK, GOOSIE CHAN, HELEN WU, THOMAS CHAN
PHOTO CREDITS / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



ATV fined over Jiang Zemin's "death"

ATV broadcast a false report on the death of former president Jiang Zemin on several new bulletins on July 6 and did not formally retract until the following afternoon. After the incident, the newsroom chiefs Leung Ka-wing and Tammy Tam Wai-yee resigned to take responsibility for failing to prevent the airing of the unconfirmed report. The Broadcasting Authority fined ATV a record \$300,000 for not verifying the report and answering the watchdog's inquiries in an irresponsible manner.



2

\$6,000 to every permanent resident in budget U-turn

The cash handouts scheme for more than 6 million adult permanent residents was announced after a budget U-turn in March by Financial Secretary Tsang Chun-wah, who had initially proposed the money be paid into Mandatory Provident Fund accounts. The scheme was later extended through the Community Care Fund, to cover needy new migrants who could pass a means test. Registration for the \$6,000 started on August 28 through banks or Hongkong Post in batches according to people's year of birth.



3

Killer blaze exposes dangers of sub-divided flats

A blaze that broke out in an old and dilapidated building in Ma Tau Wai in mid-June claimed four lives, and highlighted the safety threat of sub-divided flats, which are commonplace in old buildings in the city, providing cheap accommodation to impoverished single people and new immigrant families. One week after the incident, the government admitted doing an inadequate job of inspecting sub-divided flats across the city, and vowed to improve building safety. The departed included a pregnant woman, her two sons aged six and one, and a teenage girl.



4

Vice-Primier's HKU visit triggers policing row

During Vice-Premier Li Keqiang's three-day visit to the city in August, between 2,000 and 3,000 policemen were tasked with protecting him every day. When Li went to the University of Hong Kong to attend a ceremony marking its 100th anniversary, three students trying to stage a protest were dragged to the ground by police in one incident and many students, alumni and journalists were barred from getting close to him. The heavy-handed policing was condemned as a violation of the freedom of expression.



5

Foreign domestic helpers may seek right of abode

A landmark judicial review of domestic helpers' entitlement to the right of abode in the city in late August sparked a heated debate over the definition of residency. The court case was initiated by five Filipinos who were denied residency rights despite having worked in Hong Kong for over seven years. Three of the plaintiffs lost, but The Court of First Instance judge, who handed down the judgement in the last case, said each claim was 'fact-sensitive' and needed to be determined 'case by case'.

99

The difference in scores between the first and the second items, with the first getting 3,810 votes



6

Minimum wage comes into force

Hong Kong's first statutory minimum hourly wage – HK\$28 – took effect on May 1. Some workers were laid off due to the introduction of the law, while some complained that their employers had shortened their working hours to offset the increase in labour costs. Meanwhile, according to the Minimum Wage Commission, the wage floor has lured more people – especially the elderly – to come out to seek jobs.



7

Tang and Leung in the run for top job

Former chief secretary Henry Tang Ying-yan and former Executive Council convenor Leung Chun-ying have declared their candidacy for the city's next chief executive. Leung, who has been ahead of Tang in opinion polls, suffered setbacks early last month in the voting for sub-sector representatives on the Election Committee. His known supporters won 58 seats, little more than a third of his rival Tang. The other two potential candidates, Albert Ho Chun-yan and Frederick Fung Kim-kee, will wrestle in a primary election for nomination by pan-democrats in the Election Committee.

46%

Percentage of respondents who consume news in the form of printed materials

80%

Eight out of the ten top news items involve politics or government decisions



8

Home Ownership Scheme revived

Chief executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen announced the resumption of the Home Ownership Scheme, under which government builds flats for sale to eligible families at discounted prices. The scheme was suspended in 2002 and will now be revived with changes in pricing and resale practices. The Housing Authority will build about 5,000 flats a year between 2016 and 2020 for households with monthly income of no more than HK\$30,000. A 400 to 500 sq ft flat, under the subsidised scheme, is expected to cost about HK\$1.5-HK\$2 million.



9

Plan to scrap by-elections condemned

The government proposed to scrap by-elections in geographical constituencies to stop lawmakers using by-elections to stage referendums. Instead, a vacant seat that arises from the resignation or death of a legislator would be filled by the next best placed candidate in the previous election. In late June, a policy U-turn was announced that the candidate filling the vacancy must be the next-placed candidate on the same party list as the departing member, instead of the next overall. The proposal was criticised as a violation of the public's right to choose their lawmakers.



10

Brain-washing fears over national education

The government proposed to make national education a compulsory subject in primary schools in 2012 and secondary schools in 2013. The proposal was opposed by teachers and pan-democrats who said that it would mean a heavier workload for schools, and that the subject could become a brainwashing tool for the government. A four-month public consultation on the proposal ended in August, but the government has not yet announced any further details.

BIPOLAR VIEWS ON NATIONAL EDUCATION

A row has broken out among educators over making national education a separate school subject.

A poll conducted by the University of Hong Kong found that only 28 per cent of the population saw themselves as Chinese, revealing the weak sense of national identity among Hongkongers.

But according to the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, 70 per cent of the teachers are opposed to the introduction of the new subject. They are worried that compulsory national education would become a brain-washing tool and be used to rationalise autocratic rule on the mainland.

Dr Leung Yan-wing, associate professor of the Department of Education Policy and Leadership at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, said the proposed curriculum of

the subject was incorrect, though he agreed that the city should cement its national

education.

He said that the subject prompted students' patriotism, which was important yet equally destructive to the country.

The subject curriculum consists of five parts, namely person, family, community, nation and world citizenship.

Dr Leung said that the curriculum put too much emphasis on achievements yet described the problems as challenges. He described it as an intention to amplify the bright sides yet to conceal the dark sides.

"The proposed curriculum will make students become sheer patriots who have no value judgment. A desirable national education should teach students too see their country with a critical eye," he said.

Brother Steve Hogan, principal of La Salle College, also said that the proposed

curriculum overlapped with those of current subjects.

"If it is going to teach knowledge about China, history and liberal studies have already covered it. If it is going to raise students' loyalty to their home country, it is difficult to teach," he said.

Despite his objection to the idea of a national education subject, Bro. Hogan said that it might not be as evil as others had perceived since proper teaching materials picked by teachers could rein in the brain-washing contents.

But teachers from schools with pro-Beijing background are positive about the proposed subject. Mr Lee Wing-sun, a liberal studies teacher at Fukien Secondary School, said it was sensible to have national education as a news subject.

"It's important to let students know that whatever good or bad happens on the mainland, we're still Chinese," he added. ■

FOREIGN HELPERS MAY NOT TAKE ABODE "FAVOUR"

Hong Kong people may have overreacted to the High Court ruling that foreign domestic helpers could apply for permanent residency, say some helpers.

On 30 September 2011, the High Court ruled that sections of the Immigration Ordinance barring the helpers from seeking residency rights violate relevant provisions of the Basic Law on right of abode. The ruling has sparked fears of a possible influx of foreign domestic helpers.

However, not all foreign domestic helpers would like to stay in Hong Kong.

"To have permanent residency is just like (having) a second country," said Tess, a Filipino domestic helper who has been working in Hong Kong since 1984.

She said she would not apply for permanent residency because Hong Kong was a Chinese city where foreign domestic helpers did not have a sense of belonging.

Tess said she loved her hometown, and she wanted to spend the rest of her life in a place where she truly felt at home. "I do not want to get old all the way here without my family. That's not fun," added Tess.

She also prefers the green environment in the Philippines. She added that one could easily buy green vegetables and fish in the

Philippines, whereas in Hong Kong, those could only be found in the supermarkets.

The same sentiment is shared by Belle, a Filipino domestic helper who has been working in Hong Kong for two years. She said she was not interested in applying for permanent residency because she came to Hong Kong only to work.

"I do not like Hong Kong. I like my life in the Philippines with my family," said Belle.

When asked to explain her disapproval of Hong Kong, she pointed to the contrasting culture and values between Hong Kong and the Philippines. She explained that life in the Philippines was happier as Filipinos were easily satisfied.

Meanwhile, Vallente, another Filipino domestic helper who came to work in Hong Kong one and a half years ago, lamented over her harsh life here.

"The things in Hong Kong are expensive," said Vallente, "I am just a maid and the life here is unaffordable for me. I cannot pay the taxes here."

Even though some may want to become permanent residents, the High Court recently ruled against the application for permanent residency of several foreign domestic helpers.

Given the doubts on whether these foreign domestic helpers are willing to treat Hong Kong as their home, whether they can earn a reasonable income to be able to pay taxes, and whether they have a place to live, the process of seeking permanent residency is not as easy as commonly perceived. ■



Foreign helpers may not want to stay in Hong Kong even with the court ruling that favours them.

HOS STILL TOO UNAFFORDABLE FOR HOME-STARTERS

Surging property prices have out-stripped buying power



The government plans to provide more than 17,000 flats over four years from 2016-17 onwards.

The public is still dissatisfied with the revival of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) announced by Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen in his 2011-12 policy address.

In a city where property prices are at an all-time high and rank amongst the highest in the world, there have long been calls from the public to resume the scheme as many are currently unable to afford a flat in the highly inflated private property market.

Worse, many low and middle-income families are also unable to apply for Public Rental Housing (PRH) as their household income have exceeded the relevant limits. The only option left for these families is to rent a flat, often at inflated rates.

Aimed specifically to plug this loophole, the price of a new HOS flat with a saleable floor area of 400 to 500 square feet will roughly be set in the range of \$1.5 million to \$2 million to make it affordable for families with monthly income of \$20,000 to \$30,000.

However, despite being billed as a solution to low and middle-income families' housing problem, there have been doubts over the viability of the Home Ownership Scheme.

Gordon Hui, 29, has so far been frustrated in his attempts to purchase a flat in the inflated private property market. He believes that the price quoted by the government is still too high for low and middle-class income families.

Mr Hui explains that the toughest part in buying a flat in Hong Kong is to have the money to pay for the initial deposit. Current market standards require buyers to pay a 30 per cent deposit in cash which equates to \$600,000 for a \$2 million flat, an

astronomical sum for low and middle-income families.

He added that it is almost impossible to save up that much money for people like himself, who has only been working for a relatively short period of time.

"I started working ever since I graduated from university six years ago and I do save a substantial part of my salary," said Mr Hui. "But \$600,000 is just impossible. Moreover, from what I did actually save, a huge chunk goes to repaying the loan that I took to finance my studies."

One way to solve the housing problem would be to adopt the public housing policies of Singapore, as has been widely brought up by columnists in various publications.

Singaporeans are allowed to use a portion of their Central Provident Fund (CPF), the equivalent of Hong Kong's Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF), in addition to their own savings, to pay the initial deposit of a flat. This policy helps relieve the pressure on low and middle-income families and allows them to pay for the initial deposit far easier.

As of today, more than 80 per cent of Singapore's population live in public flats, with 95 per cent of them owning their own flat.

Mr Hui's fiancée, Grace Wong, 29, a former real estate agent in Singapore, believes that Singapore's public housing policy is well suited to Hong Kong due to the many similarities shared between the two cities.

"Hong Kong's problem lies in the fact that people are unable to come up with such a large amount of deposit," says Ms Wong. "Adopting Singapore's policy can help solve

that problem as people buying public housing now have another source of funds to tap into. Most importantly, they are only tapping into their own MPF accounts. The money belongs to them to begin with."

However, the government has repeatedly stressed that Singapore's public housing policy is not suitable for Hong Kong.

Moreover, there are concerns that if buyers were allowed to use their MPF funds to help pay for the initial deposit, it would leave a big hole in their retirement fund. As a result, the quality of their post-retirement life would suffer.

Mr Tang Chung-hang, 23, whose family owns housing properties in both Hong Kong and Singapore, does not share their concerns.

"Having a house is the best guarantee of a comfortable post-retirement life. Yes, we will have less in terms of cash, but not in terms of assets" said Mr Tang. "It is a choice between owning a flat and having less retirement fund and renting a flat and having more retirement fund."

Ultimately, restarting the Home Ownership Scheme is an indication that the government is trying to alleviate the housing problems of low and middle-income families by providing them with cheaper alternatives. Even if it does not solve the root of the problem, it is still to the benefit of the people. ■



One of the features that differentiates fixies from ordinary bicycles is that they do not necessarily have brakes installed.

BIKES WITH NO BRAKES MEAN MORE BUZZ TO THE SPORT

Fixed-gear bikes sparks world-wide frenzy

Biking is no longer a boring leisurely activity as many people think – thanks to the rise of fixies, or fixed-gear bikes.

Fixies are bikes that have no freewheel so they do not coast – whenever the bike moves, the pedals go around. They have just one gear, so cyclists cannot shift gears to accommodate different slopes. They are often brakeless, so cyclists have to slow down by reversing the pedals or skidding.

Riding a fixie can be tricky for beginners. “This takes some practice. But as many put it, these techniques will come to you,” said Mr Eric Lee, a fixie enthusiast for two years and the owner of Alleycat Fixed Gear, an online seller of

fixed-gear bikes and accessories.

“Riding a fixie is no rocket science.”

One may put some colours on the all but dull black-and-silver bike with, for example, fluorescent orange and lime green. Saddles can also be changed with one that is made from genuine Italian leather to match the retro-futuristic but vintage-styled bike. But to take creativity to a whole new level, some gears may be removed and brakes may even be dumped.

Originated from early track bikes that had fixed gear as the only option, fixies were the only racing bikes before the invention of derailleur that made multiple gears possible.

But a question arises: In a city with

heavy traffic and a dense population, why would people risk their lives and limbs riding a somewhat inferior and tiring bike that they cannot easily stop?

“It’s a lot of fun,” Mr Lee said, adding that he was afraid of it at first, but bought his first fixie just two months after his friend showed off tricks that only fixies could perform.

Another reason for the growing popularity of fixies worldwide, from New York to Tokyo, London and Paris, is their minimal and sleek design.

“There is a purity and simplicity to the fixed-gear bicycle that can be quite seductive,” Mr Lee said, quoting the words of the late Sheldon Brown, a bike mechanic and an early proponent of



Simplicity of fixies is one of the key elements that attract youngsters.



Riding fixies is not a privilege to men only; girl riders are common.

“There is a purity and simplicity to the fixed-gear bicycle that can be quite seductive.”

Mr Eric Lee, fixie enthusiast

fixie for ordinary street.

“Fixies are simple and good looking, and from them I’ve learnt a lot about design, art and bike history,” said Mr Anson Xue, the webmaster of Threemin, the biggest online Chinese fixed gear platform.

“Why some of us, including me, don’t want to put a brake on my fixed-gear bike is because once you do that, you’ll break the style of fixed-gear bikes. It’s like riding a bike in a motorcycle suit,” he said. “But still, having brakes is safer than none, though it ultimately depends on the cyclist and his style.”

In the first nine months of 2011, there were 14 fatal bike accidents. The number is higher than the same figure last year, which raises concern about the safety of cyclists, not to mention cyclists whose bikes are brakeless.

But to some fixie cyclists, a brake is not necessary for every route they ride.

“If my route includes a lot of uphill and downhill roads, I’d put a brake on my fixie for safety,” Mr Xue said. “On the other hand, if I’m just riding my bike in the city, there’s no need for an extra brake.”

Against all odds, when some women in Hong Kong deems cycling a somewhat

“extreme” sport, fixie as a kind of bike that requires a more skillful and enduring cyclist, has a woman fan base albeit small.

1667

Total number of bicycle accidents from Jan-Sep 2011

Source: Legislative Council
Panel on Transport

Viola Tso, one of the founders of Hong Kong Fixed Gear Girl, joined the unstoppable trend just three months ago.

“We’re a minority on cycling path, among our hundred something members, only twenty of them are fixie riders in Hong Kong,” she said.

She may not be as athletic as one might think, due to the fact that she was

not even a regular cyclist before owning a fixie. But the amateur rider is adventure some when she decided to join a Tour de Hong Kong Island organized by other fixed gear cyclists, cycling the island once at midnight.

“Almost all of my friends advised me against joining the ride, mainly out of fear that I couldn’t make it,” she said.

But she made it, after spending hours spinning her fixie’s pedals all the way from Chai Wan to Stanley, then from the south of Hong Kong island to the west with occasional stops at places like Aberdeen and Cyberport.

“It was also the first time I bike on road with other vehicles. And I was nervous when I saw the inclination of Tai Tam Road on my way to Stanley. Luckily I practiced a lot before the ride and made it through at last,” she said in excitement after the ride they knew as “Hardcore Ride”.

“It’s tiring at points but I feel more connected with my bike when I’m riding a fixie,” she said, explaining the unique appeal of fixies to her besides their chic appearance.

“Biking can be fun and chic, too.”

STORY/ALAN WONG
EDITED BY/JENEMY MA

THE ONE AND ONLY FACTORY FOR THE ANCIENT QIN

The last Qin factory lies in Shek Kip Mei, run by Master Choi Yi-men, the man of this ancient talent

Staring out at the rain, Master Choi Yi-men took a sip of tea from his Celadon cup. On the wall behind him hung his collection of Qins, which included some of his own works and several antiques ones over 500 years old.

Master Choi, 81, runs Choi Fook Kee Musical Instrument Factory, the last and only Qin Factory in Hong Kong.

Clamped between an art studio and a movie workshop, the factory is no more than a room piled up with music scores and Qins. Master Choi recalled how the factory relocated numerous times, from Pottinger Street in Central to Sai Wan, then to Tung Tau Tsuen, Hung Hom, Sha Tin, Ngau Tau Kok and finally Shek Kip Mei.

"The factory got smaller each time we moved," Master Choi said, "It's no longer the Choi Fook Kee I knew when I was little."

Master Choi Yi-men was born in a musical family in Shantou, Guangdong. His

grandfather, an honourable squire in late Qing Dynasty, was the first owner of Choi Fook Kee.

"Grandpa used to make tiny bird cages for me with fine bamboo splits," Master Choi said with a smile, "He was a dexterous craftsman."

During the Second World War, Master Choi came to Hong Kong at the age of three with his father. Helped by the two musical instrument masters sent by Master Choi's grandfather, Choi Fook Kee was successfully set up in Hong Kong.

Among eight children in his family, Master Choi Yi-men was the only one who learnt the craftsmanship musical instrument making.

In the 1940s when Japan took over Hong Kong, the Choi's family had to flee back to Shantou with the 20 craftsmen who worked in Choi Fook Kee. They travelled all the way back to mainland on foot.

"It was the most heart-stopping days of my life, we stayed in abandoned temples and got caught up by robbers," added Master Choi.

Four years later the Japanese surrendered and he returned to Hong Kong with his father. The old factory, together with all the materials prepared for making musical instruments, was burnt down.

"Luckily we still had our customers from overseas," said Master Choi. The business was restored with a new start.

Choi Fook Kee had been passed from his grandfather to his father, and gradually to him. Before Master Choi Yi-men took over the family business, this factory was known for manufacturing and repairing all sorts of musical instruments, both western and

“My life is meant for the art of Qin. Some call it crazy, but I call it passion.”

Choi Yi-men, Qin Master



Master Choi Yi-men sitting in front of his collection of antique qins.

eastern.

Throughout the 1970s, Master Choi's tiny factory manufactured and exported high quality guitars and violins to the world. "We had to; we cannot live solely on making and repairing Qin. It is so unpopular compared to other musical instruments after all," Master Choi added.

Master Choi Yi-men's story with Qin started at his age of 11, when one day Mr Xu Wenjing, who later became Master Choi's teacher, brought a Qin to Choi Fook Kee for repair.

"Qin was so different. The unadorned timbre and simple design impressed me," Master Choi said.

He decided to study under Mr Xu Wenjing, the most famous Qin master back



Master Choi is keen to pass on his passion to the next generation, teaching Qin making in his own factory.

then, in art of Qin making. That was the first and only time did Master Choi not learn manufacturing musical instrument from his father.

But it was not as easy as he thought. "I begged him to accept me as an apprentice, again and again." Master Choi recalled, "At first he never agreed, as he insisted making Qin was not meant for me, a young heir of the wealthy Choi's family."

Master Choi did not stop there. He followed Mr Xu everywhere, skipped classes to visit his place and cleaned his room. "He finally gave in, under my persistence." Master Choi said with a smile.

Mr Xu Jingwen suffered from eye disease when Master Choi was still an apprentice, yet that caused no problem in his teaching. "He just knocked on the Qin I made and knew everything about it right away."

Master Choi said if apprentices disobeyed or slacked, Mr Xu would lose his temper immediately. "Thanks to that, I learnt all that needed to pass the skills onto the next generation."

Throughout the years Master Choi has completed more than 300 Qins by hand, each involving 250 hours of work on average and over 100 processes.

In 1992, Master Choi was diagnosed with esophagus cancer. Since then he has turned to teaching the craft of making high-quality Qins.

Every Saturday, Qin players gather at Master Choi's factory seeking guidance on how to make their own high-quality Qin. Most of Master Choi's students, including doctors, university teachers and accountants, have studied under him for over 30 years.

"Most of my works were sold, and I can no longer make new ones. Buyers do not accept Qins made by my students," Master Choi said as he showed the back of one of his handmade Qins, which had an engraved red seal that reads "made and judged by Cheong Sou", alias of Master Choi in the industry.

Yet Master Choi, the only remaining master Qin makers in Hong Kong, is not passing the art of Qin making to his five

children, though both his wife and youngest daughter are also fond of Qin playing.

"They are more passionate about western music," he said, "I'm not worried since I have my students."

"I did not play Qin when I met him, but as we got along I learnt it," said Master Choi's wife. "Playing Qin really calms you down."

Every day she accompanies Master Choi to the Jockey Club Creative Arts Center, sets up the room for teaching and cooks for him. Most of the repairing work on Qin, such as replacing silk strings and lacquering with deer horn powder, is also done by Mrs Choi.

Surrounded by piles of old music scores and calligraphies, Master Choi finished the last sip of tea and put down his favourite Celadon cup.

"My life is meant for the art of Qin. Some call it crazy, but I call it passion," he said as his fingers tidied up the dangling tassels attached to the end of a Qin. ■

STORY / **COCO ZHENG**
EDITED BY / **XAVIER NG**

DARE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Student who flunked the school leaving exam 20 years ago has got his PhD and become principal of an education centre

Beaming with confidence as he talks, Dr Matthew Lui Yu-chun sheds no trace of a major blot in his academic record, which includes failing every subject in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) some 20 years ago.

As principal of an education centre, the 39-year-old took his failure as a negative example for teenagers. He said his confidence hit a new low after being insulted by the interviewer at his first job interview. The interviewer pointed at his HKCEE certificate questioned its worth. But he did not give up after that blow. Instead, he decided to pick up his life. Several years later, he finished a bachelor degree with first honour. Now he even holds a doctorate in philosophy.

Recalling his route to where he is today, he said the goal was all that mattered. "You first have to get an ideal picture in your mind, and you will have motivation to make it real," said Dr Lui. "Even if your dream is as superficial as to get a girlfriend, you still need to do something to accomplish it."

Speaking of teenagers nowadays, Dr Lui thought that they were complaining too much. "It is

always easy to blame others, say the society, government or developers," he said. He thought young people were not working hard enough or managing their money well enough before they started grumbling and mumbling.

"Youngsters nowadays do not acknowledge the essence of hard work because they are over-protected by protective parents," said Dr Lui. He said he knew many parents paid the initial deposit for buying a flat for their children. But he felt that it would make the children less able to deal with difficulties in life as they had never tasted defeats.

Mr Lui also thought youngsters lack individuality and dared not to be different. "It's easy to follow the crowd and play safe but you will never excel and shine," he said.

When he started his teaching career, he chose to study and teach the subject Liberal Studies, which was not in vogue then. Now it has become a core subject of the new senior secondary curriculum, meaning that opportunities are blooming for him.

As for success, Dr Lui had his own definition. "Fame and gain can be an incentive, but they are never meant to be the ultimate goal of life," he said. He said the real success of life lies in how one can make a difference to other people's lives. ■

STORY//ADA YEUNG
EDITED BY//PEARLIE YIU





UNCONVENTIONAL FASHION BLOGGER HOPES TO SWAY TRADITIONAL MINDSET

Despite being a shy young man who did not even dare to tell his family about his passion, fashion blogger Joey Ma is trying to challenge the mindset of Hong Kong youngsters on men's clothing style.

While studying in Los Angeles at the age

of pioneers.

Mr Ma said his clothing style had been criticised as being feminine, but those criticisms would not stop him from wearing "fashionably".

"If I really care about what everyone

“Paying more attention to their appearances does not mean that men are feminine”

Joey Ma, fashion blogger



of 20, Mr Ma was fascinated by an artwork of Vivienne Westwood who designed Sex Pistol's outfits in the 70's London punk scene. He then started putting on very special clothes, which he described as fun, exaggerating, androgynous and spontaneous.

"I want to open people's minds so that they would not judge others based on their appearances," Mr Ma said. He created his own fashion blog, "Individuality", in March 2010. The name is meant to symbolize the idea of uniqueness and his belief that people "should all be treated equally and with respect".

With the encouragement of his friends who think it would be a waste if others could not see his creative outfits, he took many photos of himself wearing those exotic clothes. He said he would be too shy to pose in front of a professional photographer. "I [would] probably don't know what to do," he giggled.

Despite his friends' support, Mr Ma was not brave enough to tell his family about this interest at first. But after several interviews by the press, his family found out his blog. To his surprise, they have been very supportive, Mr Ma said.

As a creative person, he tries to experiment with new things, even though many people find it hard to accept the ideas

thinks about my clothing style, I will be so exhausted," he said with a smile.

But what keeps Mr Ma going in this industry is the positive feedback he gets from his fans, who praised his outfits for being creative and courageous. That made him happy to continue following his heart.

Mr Ma said that compared with counterparts in the West, Hong Kong men were a bit behind in taking care of their appearances, but they were catching up rapidly over the past ten years. As Hong Kong men paid more and more attention to their appearances, Mr Ma felt it was a matter of self-respect because they look clean and well-dressed in public places.

"Paying more attention to their appearances does not mean that men are feminine," said Mr Ma, adding that he hoped the society would accept all kinds of people and be less judgmental.

He said he would keep on posting his style on his blog and see how far it would go to make an impact on the Hong Kong fashion world.

"I am just a free spirited man and I try to dress whatever I think looks good on me," he said. ■

STORY/JIM WONG
EDITED BY/SAI AUNG THEIN



PHOTO CREDITS/JIM MA

AN AFTERNOON JOY IN TURKISH STYLE

It was a Saturday afternoon when I walked past Tung Choi Street, or better known as the “Ladies’ Market” in Mongkok. The aroma of freshly grilled meat floated in the air, drawing me to a restaurant filled with the pleasant smell. Our Restaurant, which serves Turkish cuisine, came in sight.

Painted with warm and relaxed azure tones, the restaurant serves a wide range of Turkish dishes that share their basic repertoire with other Middle Eastern cuisines. Though serving mainly lamb and mutton, the restaurant also offers dishes made with beef, chicken and seafood.

The famous one on the menu is the Doner Kebab roll, a Turkish dish made of roasted meat cooked on a vertical spit. It contains rich and savory grilled hot meat, flavorful cheese and wild vegetables. Served with Lavash bread and salad, the grilled meat mixes with other types of cuisine as well.

Customers are well mixed, from youngsters to middle-aged, locals to foreigners. I took a seat and ordered chicken Doner Kebab with chips, which came with normal garden salad components such as tomato, cucumber and shredded lettuce. When the dish was served, I was deeply fascinated by the savory smell of roasting chicken.

A cup of Turkish red tea, which is the national stimulant, is served in the lunch set. A bit smoother than Chinese tea, the sweetness compliments well with sourness to make the taste quite original.

I wished to order a rice pudding but unfortunately it was out of stock at that time so the waiter suggested I should try Turkish Ayran.

Ayran is one of the fundamental drinks of Turkish culture dating back from Central Asia. It is a slightly salty yogurt drink and tastes like creamy buttermilk, but not as thick as yogurt. On top of the Ayran is some tiny air bubbles left after stirring. The drink tastes a bit strange as yogurt is sweet in taste normally, but this one does not contain any sugar.

As the Ayran yogurt is mixed with spring water, it is said that a cold refreshing glass of Ayran goes well with a spicy kebab dish. I was not used to this kind of dessert. The special mushy taste was still there when I finished my cup.

You may find it hard to look for Turkish food and it is usually expensive in Hong Kong. But this restaurant is a nice place to try an inexpensive, quick and rather special Turkish meal. Dining at it make you feel like eating at a friend’s home. ■

STORY / **FECHON WONG**
EDITED BY / **JACKAUNG**



The restaurant has 36 seats and a take-away service.



Traditional Turkish food like Chicken Doner and Ayran are served.





THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE IN UPPER ALBERT ROAD

THE UNFORGOTTEN BRITISH LEGACIES

A number of heritage properties dating back to the time when Hong Kong was a British colony can still be found 14 years after the city reverted to China as a special administrative region.

These grand pieces of architecture have no fears of being demolished, as they have all been graded as worthy of protection and are put to good use.

STORY / **DENNIS LEE**
EDITED BY / **SIMON YUEN**



THE HELENAMAY IN GARDEN ROAD



SAIYINGPUN COMMUNITY COMPLEX IN HIGH STREET



DR SUN YAT-SEN MUSEUM IN CAINER ROAD

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