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THE YOUNG REPORTER magazine

February 2014



Cove As one of Hong Kong's bustling art-infused streets, Sik On Street in Wanchai has become the centre of a campaign spearheaded by local artist Mr Carl Cheng Chi-ming to engage the public in a debate on urban development through interactive street art installations.

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Letter from the Editor

THE YOUNG REPORTER magazine

In the February issue, we take you on a visual trip down one of Hong Kong's most popular gathering places for local street artists: Sik On Street in Wanchai.

Specifically, we look at how some local artists utilise interactive public art to raise awareness of and promote dialogue on large-scale urban development.

As domestic violence has escalated in the city, we shed light on the alarming rise in spouse battering against men and the lack of public assistance programme available to them.

Amidst growing public participation in lotteries and lucky draws organised by local companies, we have decided to unearth the potential legal risks of joining unlicensed trade promotional competitions.

Finally, as the city's craze for liquid nitrogen ice-cream rages on, we look at whether it is indeed a more eco-friendly alternative to conventional ice-cream as it is claimed to be.

With the Chinese New Year being just round the corner, we wish our readers an auspicious Year of the Horse!

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View

Watch Out for Words of the Year

Chinglish

Besides enjoying fireworks at Victoria Harbour on chilly New Year's Eve, there is one more interesting thing to do as we conclude the year 2013: Checking end-of-year lists. We want to know who are among the richest people in the world or in our country, although we do not earn as much as they do. We also want to know what the best products of the year are, no matter whether we will buy them or not. Journalism students including me are always instructed to read the Time's Persons of the Year, or the Economist's Countries of the Year, no matter we agree on the publications' choices or not.

I would like to draw your attention to word-of-the-year lists in different places, no matter you are a linguist or not. As usual, this column targets Chinese only. As my Chinglish translation fails to make sense at times, I shall not be liable for your tuition fee of learning my mother language.

In mainland China, there are two well-known lists. One is compiled by a Shanghai-based literature monthly Yaowen Jiaozhi (literally means Chewing Essays and Crunching Characters), and the other is jointly worked out by the Commercial Press, Beijing Language and Culture University as well as National Linguistics Resources Monitoring and Researching Centre, a body affiliated to the country's education ministry. "China dream" topped all the popular phrases selected by Yaowen Jiaozhi this year, whereas in the latter list, "positive energy" is the 2013 buzz word and "house" is the character of the year.

Hold on. I am not showing you small-circle selections of propaganda clichés only. Well, on the surface, party terminologies seem to be the politically safest in Chinese euphemism "the most harmonious" options that will not embarrass the country's ruling elite, especially when the new leadership just ascended to power one year ago. I do not mean that such rankings of words are politically determined, given my limited knowledge of their internal selection process. But if I were a senior central government official in charge of all forms of publications, which by the way is impossible, I would not be as flattered as hundreds of millions of Chinese netizens to see things like "smog", "carcass" or "corruption" dominate the repertoire.

In fact, much more fun resides in runner-up lists. After all, Beijing does not have enough party-exclusive phrases that can fill up all these spaces. Both rankings included popular words around China's cyber space such as "nuhanzi", or muscular women who behave as candid and upfront as their male counterparts. Heated Weibo discussions on this topic were unprecedented, challenging mainlanders' traditional perception of women to be soft, amorous and tender. Another example is the much-famed "tuhao", a thousand-year-old word

that quickly went so viral this year that it was even rumoured to be enlisted in an upcoming edition of Oxford Dictionary. The expression, better understood as nouveau riche, connotes both people's discontent and subtle envy to those with abundant wealth.

If you do not know the following newly-born Chinese idioms, hybrids of four keywords extracted from a long sentence, you are unlikely to be regarded as Weibo-savvy. It is sad to hear "shidongranju" (though deeply touched, a girl rejects a boy anyway), because she "leijuebuai" (tired and sore, one cannot love anymore). This illustrates "renjianbuchai" (life is hard and the truth hurts), and makes us feel "xisikongji" (think it through, and it will scare you to death). We can always resort to the excuse of "bumingjueli" (one does not get it, but thinks it sounds terrific), but if we understand it, we would "xidapuben" (delightfully telling everyone the good news).

Once you have overcome the resistance to those aforesaid exotic expressions, you will find a feature they share except bizarreness, or at least I hope so. They are overwhelmingly ironic or even sarcastic about the status quo, spreading the "negative energy" that needs to be alleviated. Popularity of these words is not related to political matters, but the impact these words have on China's politics is no less than "China dream". With their work toughening, inflation rising, environment deteriorating and relationship alienating, many young Chinese can find happiness nowhere but make fun of themselves on the Internet. Although the joy of seeing fellow netizens' creativity might temporarily relieve their grievances, these grievances will become "xisikongji" once young adults are in desperation.

In other places, end-of-year words might be worrisome as well. Taiwan selected "fake" in 2013. Singapore picked "haze". Malaysia preferred "rise". In South Korea, Yonhap news agency reported in December that 204 out of 622 professors surveyed chose an idiom meaning reactionary and perverse. The idiom is widely interpreted to be against the rule of the country's first female president Ms Park Geun-hye. Probably the only good news is from Japan, where people chose "ring", as the third largest economy in the world had won the bid to hold the 2020 Olympics.

What about Hong Kong? I learned that the DAB was holding a similar event. But will it be "representative"? Imagine that we can elect the word through "universal suffrage", will the outcome be "occupy", "love China love Hong Kong" or even the name of IKEA's adorable toy wolf "Lufsig" that reminds people of Cantonese profanity? Would it be more interesting than "selfie" that is favoured by Oxford Dictionary? Let us wait and see.

by Song Cheng

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In **Art**, we pace urban development

Local artist swims against the current of development and turns Sik On Street into his gallery



Local artist Mr Carl Cheng Chi-ming installs his exhibition on Sik On Street to protest against rapid urban development in the city

You can be an artist by simply walking along the dimmed pedestrian path of Sik On Street, an inner lane tucked in Hong Kong's Wan Chai district and secluded from the busy Queen's Road East it intersects with. Your steps will be sculpting "rivers and mountains" on the clay and plaster spread on the floor by local artist Mr Carl Cheng Chi-ming as part of a site-specific exhibition, *The Legends*.

The artist said the steps of passersby coming and going would be shaping and re-shaping the originally flat

ground covered with clay and plaster, symbolising the ongoing development and re-development of the city.

The interactive exhibition was installed to respond to the city's "over-development", said Mr Cheng.

"Once I asked a pupil whether he had comprehended the art piece. He nodded and said, "I was building the city and destroying it," he recalled.

Public art expert Dr Stella Tang Ying-chi said community participation had brought the artwork alive and made it easier for ordinary people to relate to.

"Artistic creations that are inspired by fragments of life or relate to

everyday living can enhance the public's understanding of the artwork," she said.

Local artists felt the tentacles of urban development had reached Sik On Street when the Lands Department said last September a site on the street had been sold for \$139 million for a private residential development.

Mr Cheng speculated that the development, which was restricted to no more than 12-storey high, would be a luxury apartment building.

Armed with art, the artist protests in silence.

Mr Cheng attached a white wing handicraft piece to the chicken wires



Mr. Carl Cheng Chi-ming raises public awareness of excessive urban development through interactive art installations.

“The interactive exhibition was installed to respond to the city’s over-development”

marking the edges of the development’s construction site, inspired by the Greek mythology of Icarus. The fabled man soared up high in the sky with a pair of wings constructed from wax and feather and ended up in the sea when the wax melted under the scorching sun.

Mr Cheng said he placed the wing to question the extent to which people were pushing the boundaries of their existence.

A curtain emblazoned in black and white with the pictures of seven metropolises was seen dropping from a window of a shop on the street, once crammed with printing workshops and curtain stores.

It was both a throwback to the street’s past and a test on whether people could still tell one city from another given the worldwide urban development that had eroded histories that made each city unique, according to the artist.

Under a four-storey-tall banyan tree, Mr Cheng has installed a piece of artwork showing an axe hacking into a round brass plate.

The idea was drawn upon a Chinese folk tale in which Wu Gang, the Chinese equivalent of Sisyphus, was condemned by the Jade Emperor for chopping a self-healing cherry tree on the moon for trying to be an immortal, said Mr Cheng.

The art piece had laid bare how excessive desires could end up being self-destructive, he said.

The artist doubts the property developer would keep its words to leave the tree alone, so does Mr Ryan Lee kwok-wang, who has been working on the street for three and a half years.

Mr Lee lamented it was just a matter of time before the street was forced into change and development.

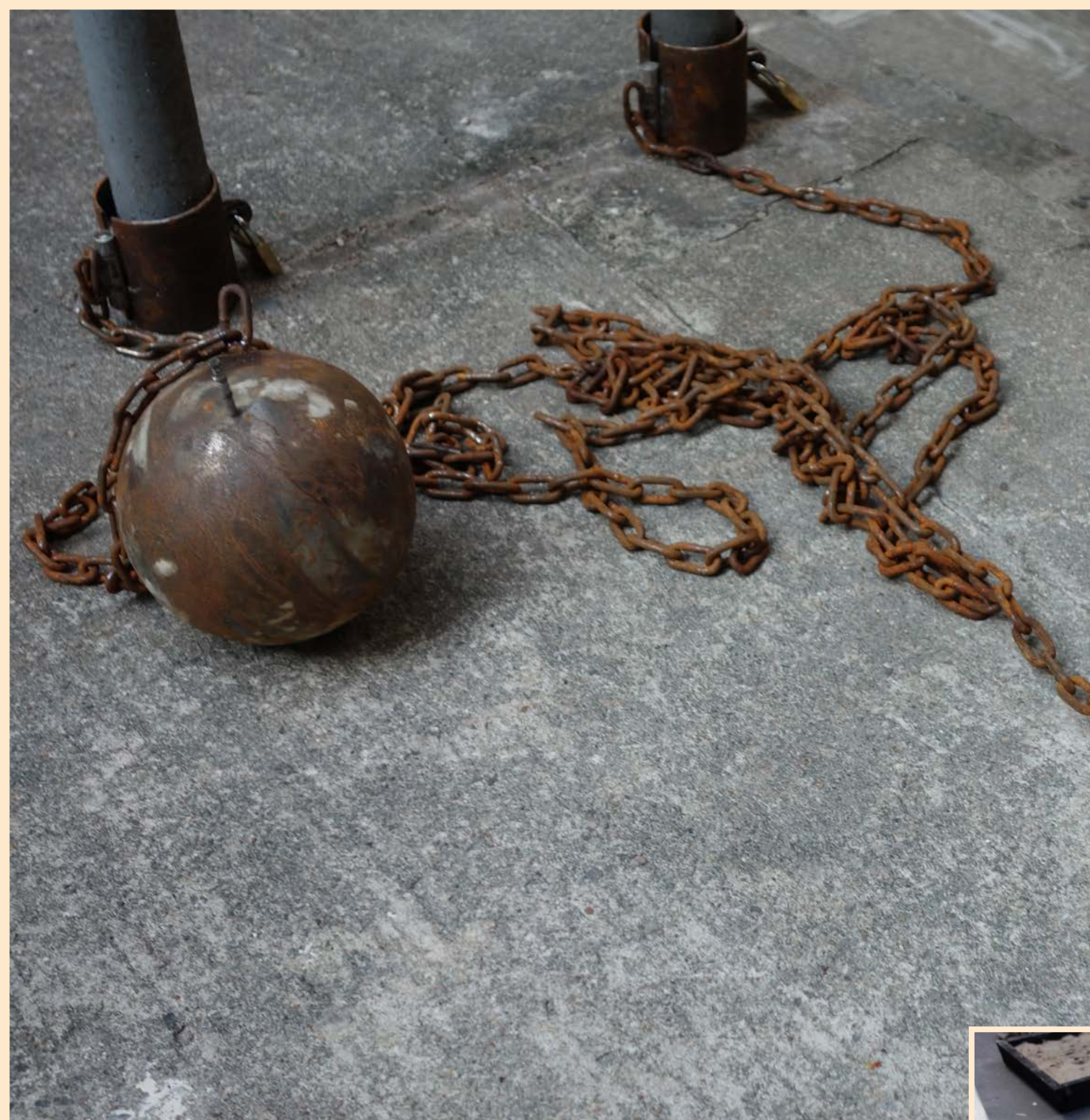
“If the tree is cut down and the street is re-developed, Hong Kong will have fewer quiet yet low-rent places left,” he said.

Mr Cheng agrees. “Sometimes people have lunch on the steps and play with stray cats under the tree,” he said. “But apparently this place cannot defend itself from development.”

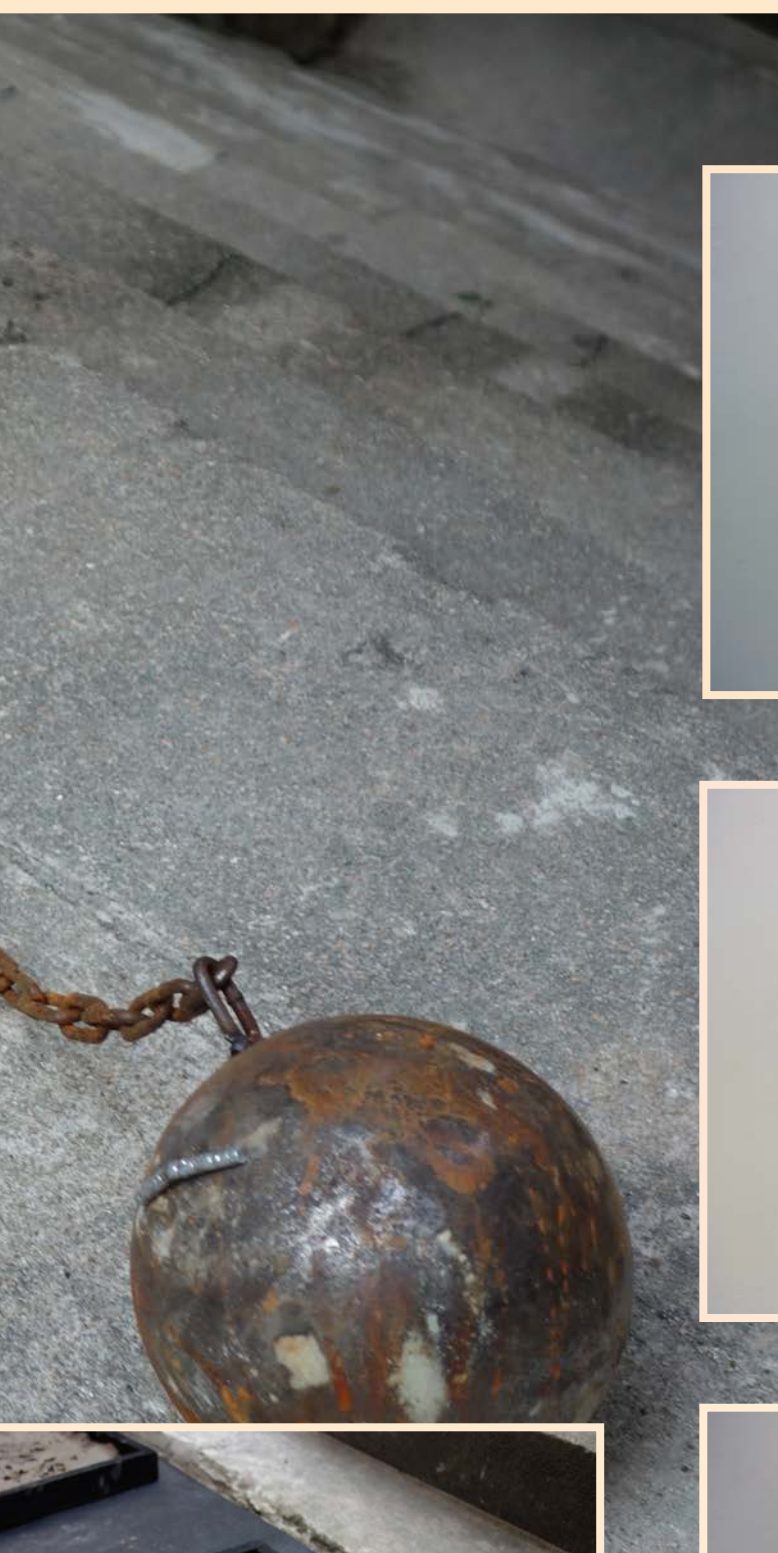
By **Annie Lee**
Edited by **Giselle Chan**

Mr Carl Cheng Chi-ming shows how urban development has made cities lose their uniqueness in a his exhibition.





Local artist Mr Carl Cheng Chi-ming believes “over-development” will eventually prove to be self-destructive.



POLITICS

Legal risks of promotional competitions

Few people know they could be prosecuted for organising or joining unlicensed lucky draws and lotteries

MR Jim So Yik-him, an assistant marketing officer at a local jewellery company, received an unexpected call from the Office of the Licensing Authority on a typical weekday.

He was issued with a prosecution warning by the Office of the Licensing Authority over his company's unlicensed online lotteries and lucky draws, and was ordered to stop running them immediately.

Completely shocked by the prospect of prosecution, he and his colleagues cancelled all the online entertainment events and asked the Licensing Authority for more details about licence application.

According to the Gambling Ordinance, companies seeking to organise any trade or business promotion competition which involves chance must first obtain a Trade Promotion Competition Licence from the Licensing Authority. Lawyers have pointed to the lack of promotion and public education about the legal liability for organising and participating in unlicensed trade promotion competitions.

They say this has led to the widespread lack of awareness amongst local companies and residents about the risk of prosecution for their involvement in such activities by the authorities.

"The lack of promotion and education are the main reasons behind the low public awareness of the law in the city," said Mr Christopher Wong Kwok-yan, a solicitor who specialises in criminal defence.

In July 2011, the Oriental Daily News reported that it had sent the

names of 14 local organisations that had conducted lucky draws on Facebook to the Licensing Authority, and that only one was confirmed to have applied for a licence.

It also revealed that famous jewellery chain, MaBelle, was one of the organisations that had not applied for

manner," she said.

Ms Wong added that the authority would usually refer complaints about unlicensed trade promotion competitions to the Police, which would then decide whether to take enforcement actions against the organisers or participants.

The Young Reporter recently talked to four Hong Kong residents aged between 19 and 31 about their experience participating in lucky draws, and whether they would check if the organisers had obtained a licence before joining one.

All of those responding said they had never heard of the law and did not know they could be prosecuted for participating in any unlicensed trade promotional competition.

While guidelines on licence application and related information can be found in government leaflets and on the Licensing Authority's website, Mr Wong suggested that

online promotional videos be created to further enhance public education about it.

"From the government's perspective, the law is a 'minor matter,' and it does not think it needs to put a lot of effort into promoting it," said Mr Wong. "But people cannot be ignorant of the risk of violating the law."

"The lack of promotion and education are the main reasons behind the low public awareness of the law in the city."

Mr Christopher Wong Kwok-yan, a solicitor who specialises in criminal defence

a licence before conducting an online lucky draw.

But Ms. Florence Wong Ching-hung, a spokesperson for the Home Affairs Department, said the authority had issued more than 2,000 licences annually from 2010 to 2013.

"The purpose of licensing trade promotion competitions is to ensure they are run in a prescribed and controlled

By **Tiffany Lee**
Edited by **Brian Yap**

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SOCIETY

Spouse battering against men sees steep rise

Most men in Hong Kong feel ashamed of speaking out against spousal abuse



Hong Kong Men's Association runs a helpline for men experiencing domestic violence with subsidies from the government.

It was early in the morning and Ben, who would identify himself only by his first name, was about to take his seven-year-old daughter to the bathroom before she got dressed for school.

Suddenly, his wife yelled at him, "How dare you harass your own daughter!" Feeling shocked and enraged, Ben shot back, "I am her father, what on earth are you thinking?"

Immediately Ben's wife grabbed a clock just beside her and threw it right at him, hitting his forehead.

While he sat on his bed waiting for his daughter to get dressed, blood oozed out from the wound and streamed across the bed sheet, his daughter's schoolbag and uniform.

Although Ben is now 60 years old and retired, the grievous experience of being assaulted by his wife decades ago is still fresh in his memory.

According to the Social Welfare Department, there were more than 500 spouse battering cases in which men were abused over the first ten months of 2013. The number had outstripped the 434 cases recorded in the previous year.

Experts have pointed to a lack of willingness by men in Hong Kong to report spousal abuse against them to the police or social workers.

Mr Leung Chi-keung, chairperson of Hong Kong Men's Association, told The Young Reporter that numerous such cases had gone unreported.

"Those cases will never come to light if nobody is willing to report them," said Mr Leung, adding that "the majority of the assaulted men today were born in the 1980s."

Mr Wallace Tsang, a fieldwork supervisor and a social work lecturer at the University of Hong Kong, said that most men would feel shame if other people – especially social workers or the police – knew about their disputes with their spouses.

"The perceived gender roles in traditional Chinese society discourage men from reporting spouse battering cases to the police," said Mr Tang.

As cases of spouse battering against men have increased in recent years, some lawmakers are concerned about the city's shortage of shelters for men.

"Some men told me that when they called the Caritas Family Crisis Support Centre to see if there was a place for temporary stay, they were told that rooms for men were full while there were still empty beds for women," said Islands District Councillor Mr Bill Tang Ka-piu.

"It indicated that men's need for shelter has proliferated. Sometimes it may be greater than women's."

Mr Tang called on the government to set aside more support and resources to assist male victims of domestic violence.

In early 2012, the government subsidised Hong Kong Men's Association to set up a domestic abuse hotline for men. However, according to the association, few people are aware of its existence.

Besides the lack of public knowledge of the hotline, Mr Leung spoke of a male caller's complaint against a hotline responder who kept talking about what he had done wrong during the entire conversation.

Mr Tsang said that volunteers and social workers staffing the hotline needed more professional training, as social workers sometimes treated their clients with double standards due to gender stereotypes.

"There is a need to generate publicity (for the hotline). We need to let them (male victims) know where they can seek help," said Mr. Henry Chan, director of international and public affairs of Hong Kong Men's Association.

By **Karen Leung**
Edited by **Celine Ge**



SOCIETY

Hong Kong is not a good place to die

The city is running out of burial sites and space for cremated ashes

SOME say death is the end of everything. Yet given the poor afterlife services in Hong Kong, this theory is not entirely true.

Since the 1980s, Hongkongers were forced to abandon burials due to the problem of land shortages. Now, the city has begun to run out of space to store funeral urns containing ashes of the cremated dead.

Official figures show the high demand for niches where funeral urns are stored, far outweighs supply. The Census and Statistics Department estimated the number of cremations from 2014 to 2018 will be around 215,875, while less than 100,000 niches will be provided by the government over the next five years.

Currently, most of the 213,300 niches in the eight public columbaria where urns are stored have been allocated. Yet with over 40,000 deaths per year, some have turned to niches offered by private columbaria. Such expensive services are often not an option for the poor.

"Many of the cases that we are following are grass-root families. They lack budget to afford the great expenses of a funeral and a niche," said Mr Arnold Leung Tsz Tun, Senior Service Manager of Hospice and Bereavement Services at a local Church.

While public niches are generally priced at \$4,000, private ones can cost from \$30,000 to \$500,000, excluding funeral costs.

Under the existing Comprehensive Social

Security Assistance Scheme, the maximum burial grant is \$12,560.

"This subsidy is a bit tricky, only if the deceased person is the allowance recipient can he enjoy the funeral subsidy. If the family members are the recipients but the deceased are not, they fail to meet the criteria," said Mr Arnold Leung.

Meanwhile, some patients struggle to afford a funeral. They must turn to the last resort which is the "Hospital Out" service, where dead bodies will be directly sent to the crematoria from the hospital mortuary.

"Hospital Out involves no death ritual," said Mr Ng Yiu-tong, who worked in the local funeral industry for more than four decades. Without any rite, no friends and family members will honour and celebrate the life of a loved one who has died. "No Chinese would wish to die in this way," said Mr Ng.

Yet due to financial difficulties, he estimated about 40 percent of elderly people pass away using the "Hospital Out" service.

The permanent chairman of the Funeral Business Association said Hong Kong was capable of making end-of-life services much more comprehensive, but no one is doing it.

"There is nothing that matches the demand of the city, which makes both the people that are alive and dead suffer a lot," said Mr Ng.

"Hong Kong is certainly not a good place to die."



Mr Ng Yiu-tong



Mr Arnold Leung Tsz Tun



*Hong Kong Rabbit Society
has been struggling to re-
home healthy rabbits while
taking care of old and sick
ones towards the very end.*

Dr Isobel Jenkins,
a veterinary at the
Society for the
Prevention of Cruelty
to Animals, has some
tips for pet rabbit
owners:



1. Rabbits should be kept in pairs if possible, or else they will feel lonely;
2. Rabbits should be kept in spacious cages for their psychological health;
3. Rabbits should be fed with a diverse, high-fibre diet. Feeding rabbits with carrots, which are low in fibre and high in sugar, is a myth and in fact detrimental to the animal's health.

SOCIETY

Rabbit refuge struggles to re-home surrendered bunnies

Hong Kong's only rabbit care centre has been overlaid as abandoned pet rabbits outnumber suitable adoptive and foster families by a large margin

HONG Kong's only refuge for rabbits is asking pet lovers to adopt a bunny instead of buying one as it is being inundated with a rocketing number of the furry animal surrendered by owners.

It also wants people to think over before raising a rabbit, which means a commitment of seven to ten years given the animal's normal lifespan.

Hong Kong Rabbit Society, the city's only animal welfare group exclusively for rabbits, says its care centre has been overlaid by owner-surrendered pet rabbits as bunnies catch on with local pet lovers in recent years.

The overwhelming number of pet rabbits had forced a yearly intake quota of 200 to be set in 2009 at the centre, said a committee member of the society Ms Joanna Chow Yuk-ha.

She said the society had been advocating for pet adoption instead of purchase and struggling to re-home a capacity number of over 40 rabbits currently at the centre.

Around 100 rabbits are adopted each year from the centre and more than 30 rabbits are now in foster families, but the figures do not look good when contrasted with the large inflow of the furry refugees, according to Ms Chow.

She said a shortage of qualified adoptive and foster families for rabbits had been a major setback in the re-homing process as not many people had the skills and perseverance needed for adopting or fostering a rabbit.

Ms Chow said the society went through prudent, month-long procedures when selecting new homes for the rabbits to ensure their fluffy clients' well-being. Applicants have to pass a phone interview to show "they know what to do" with a rabbit, attend a two-hour training session and volunteer at least twice at the centre before they can bring a rabbit home.

The society would also appraise whether a given family would be able to take care of the animal towards the end, she said.

"Your situation is okay now, but that doesn't mean you will be okay with the rabbits seven or ten years later," said Ms Chow, referring to a healthy rabbit's life span.

Ms Yuki Tang Yuk-lin, a volunteer at the society who has helped foster tens of rabbits in the past seven years, said old, sick rabbits were unpopular among adopters and would be taken care of by the centre until their final moments.

"Some rabbits are given up when they are quite old. I feel really sorry for them," said Ms Tang. "But no matter how old they are, no matter how sick they are, we will provide medical

care for them and try to restore their health."

Around 20 rabbits currently at the centre were in need of long-term medical intervention, which had stretched the society's tight budget by \$200,000 in the past four months, said Ms Chow.

Cases exist in which pet owners dump their sick rabbits on the street.

Ms Chow remembered receiving an abandoned rabbit in a paper bag brought in by a girl who happened to find it on the street on a freezing day in 2009.

"When we opened the paper bag, we were shocked. We couldn't see a normal rabbit," she recalled. "We picked up the rabbit and checked him, he was almost dead. He was dying."

The rabbit's eyes were closed and it could not stand properly, described Ms Chow. It weighed only 0.8 kilograms, 1.2 short of the healthy weight of its kind, she said.

Ms Chow and her colleagues thought the severely underweight poor mite would not survive, but it made to the next day and was named "Magic".

Magic lived for another two and a half years under the care of Ms Chow, who would even take it to work.

"He was very brave," she said. "You could see a tiny little thing like this trying to survive under such difficult circumstances."

Ms Tang urges pet owners not to give up their rabbits on a whim.

"If you choose to raise them, care for them towards the end," she said.

By **Steven Wang**
Edited by **Vanessa Piao**

The centre run by the six-staffer society currently takes care of a capacity number of over 40 rabbits.



ENVIRONMENT

A fancy or a fallacy?

Doubts over liquid nitrogen ice cream's energy-saving claim

A US-based ice cream company says its liquid nitrogen ice cream does not need a freezer to survive, which saves much energy. This trending way of making ice cream has already made its debut in Hong Kong.

Unlike most frozen dessert stores where ice cream stays in refrigerators for customers to pick up, local ice cream company Lab Made Ice Cream only sells its products on a purchase order basis.

Not that its ice cream is tailor-made with snob appeal, but a substance called liquid nitrogen makes everything different.

Liquid nitrogen is the liquid state of nitrogen, a gas forming about 80 per cent of the earth's atmosphere. This odourless and colourless component of air would be liquefied at an extremely low temperature of around -196 °C, Dr Stephen Chow Cheuk-fai, a science associate professor at the Hong Kong Institute of Education said.

This chilly liquid often serves as a cryogenic fluid that can cause immediate freezing on contact with living tissues. In the same way, it makes ice cream freeze within 30 seconds, according to Mr Ronnie Cheng Hong-wang, the owner of Lab Made Ice Cream.

To solidify ice cream paste, one just needs to mix it extensively with liquid nitrogen in an electric blender. "It will take you as long as 30 minutes if an ice cream machine is used instead," Mr Cheng said.

Mr Cheng needs nothing but a special container to store liquid nitrogen. And containers of this kind can be found in many laboratories.

"They work like vacuum flasks which can keep the liquid nitrogen at ultra-low temperatures," Dr Chow said. Thanks to its closed-system design and high pressure inside, the tank is able to prevent liquid nitrogen from evaporating without consuming energy.

Given that Mr Cheng only makes ice cream after receiving

orders, the shop's biggest electricity guzzlers are only several light bulbs and an air-conditioner.

It seems that the US company is on a concrete ground to make the claim that this innovative way of making ice cream saves a lot of energy. Yet Mr Cheng does not agree, although this can become a key selling point of his liquid nitrogen ice cream in Hong Kong.

"I am not saying it must be wrong. But I believe the company itself is not sure if the claim is right or wrong," Mr Cheng told

The Young Reporter. "It is true that no ice cream machine is used. But producing liquid nitrogen also uses energy. It is just that the consumption process takes place in the nitrogen factory instead of my ice cream shop."

Liquid nitrogen was produced, Dr Chow said, by putting nitrogen gas in an extremely cold medium such as liquid helium, the temperature of which was as low as -269 °C. An alternative way is to increase pressure of a fixed volume of gaseous nitrogen.

Both methods, however, require a huge amount of energy to compress either gaseous helium to liquid helium or gaseous nitrogen to liquid nitrogen.

"The truth is that energy is consumed as long as something freezes, no matter it occurs in a refrigerator or an electric blender with liquid nitrogen inside," Dr Chow said.

Liquid nitrogen is commonly used for storage of blood and cells, as its extremely low temperature can prevent the growth of bacteria and spoilage of tissues. Besides, liquid nitrogen is used for experiments which must be conducted at a fairly low temperature.

When it comes to using liquid nitrogen to make ice cream, scientist Dr Chow does have an opinion. "There is no need to make ice cream at a temperature of -196 °C. It is a waste of energy," he said.

"The truth is that energy is consumed as long as something freezes, no matter it occurs in a refrigerator or an electric blender with liquid nitrogen inside."

Dr Stephen Chow Cheuk-fai, a science associate professor at the Hong Kong Institute of Education



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