

# OPINION

**South China Morning Post**

## Protest, yes, but keep it orderly

**P**rotesters have turned Hong Kong's busiest streets to gridlock. Their weekend clashes with police have led to foreign travel alerts, a stock market stumble and expressions of concern by the business and financial sectors. With the National Day holiday tomorrow traditionally a time of anti-establishment demonstrations, there are concerns that the momentum will be raised to fever pitch and worse. Too much is at stake for our city's reputation and future to allow matters to spin uncontrollably out of hand; all involved have a responsibility to rethink their positions.

Nothing is to be gained by apportioning blame. The protesters have legitimate grounds for being unhappy and the government has an obligation to keep Hong Kong running smoothly. Riot police were following orders when they took on thousands of demonstrators outside the government's headquarters in Admiralty; it was the first time citizens had been tear-gassed since the return to Chinese sovereignty. The response caused not dispersal but anger, larger numbers and a spreading of the discontent to Central, Causeway Bay and Mong Kok. Those tactics have thankfully been modified.

But taking riot police from the front lines, cancelling the October 1 fireworks display and giving demonstrators control of vital roads does not resolve differences. Not permitting protests is a factor behind the escalation; that space has to be allowed in coming days, although conditions have to be firmly set that they be conducted peacefully and within the law. Organisers have to make that clear and take charge – challenging given the fragmented and leaderless nature of the movement.

Not since a taxi drivers' strike in 1983 has Hong Kong faced such chaos. But circumstances are markedly different, peaceful sit-ins and spirited chanting replacing the violence and looting of that turbulent time. Aspirations are high, though, with calls for full democracy, Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying's resignation and the reversal of the National People's Congress Standing Committee's decision on the 2017 election. Reality has to be faced: Beijing is not going to change its mind.

Images of the worst moments of the protests have circulated worldwide, giving an impression that our city is on the verge of anarchy. This could not be further from the truth; the demonstrators, police and authorities all have the good of Hong Kong at heart. Discontent can be voiced, but within our well-established boundaries. With reflection by all involved, a better course can be charted for the future.

## The end of an investment era

**U**S political guru James Carville might have been thinking about Bill Gross when he once said he wanted to be reincarnated as the bond market so that "you can intimidate everyone".

As the co-founder in 1971 and long-time investment chief of Pimco, Gross helped make the fixed-income mutual fund industry what it is today and heralded the three-decade bull market for bonds. His abrupt and acrimonious departure from Pimco last week truly marks the end of an investment era.

In the mid-1970s, at a time of double-digit inflation in the US, he made the brilliant call that rates were going to fall as a long-term trend. As bond prices move inversely to interest rates, this meant they would rise over time, thus starting a long-term bull run. With Gross at the helm, Pimco was frequently cited as the world's largest fixed-income mutual fund manager, with current assets worth US\$2 trillion. For all this, he was rightly dubbed "the bond king". Investors hung on his every word; his newsletters were eagerly read. Perhaps only stock guru Warren Buffett has had a bigger cult following.

But Gross' star began to dim with the onset of the global financial crisis, which started in the US. The main problem for Pimco has been poor performance and continual investor fund outflow, which became especially acute in the past year. The problem was that the market Gross knew used to intimidate politicians; not any more, at least for now.

After the US and global crises, powerful central banks, led by the US Federal Reserve, kept intervening in the market to keep interest rates low. His call that the bond bull run was over, while sound in its pure market logic, was wrong-footed by policymakers. But when he later reversed his call and foresaw a longer period of low interest rates, the Fed signalled – and bond markets are pricing in – higher rates sooner than later.

It's central bankers who have been intimidating the global bond markets, the largest of which has always been in US Treasuries. And Gross has become their most famous casualty.

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**Left in the dark.**  
 Is it fair to impose new rules curbing business giants that are deemed to have seized too much market share, but not provide them with guidelines which clearly define what is too much?

## LETTERS

**We welcome all letters.** Include your full name, address and telephone number, not necessarily for publication. Please keep letters to a maximum of 400 words. Email [letters@scmp.com](mailto:letters@scmp.com) Fax 2250 3242 Post 22 Dai Fat Street, Tai Po Industrial Estate, Tai Po, Hong Kong.

### Pan-dems have tried to negotiate

I refer to the letter by David Hall ("Three key questions for Occupy", September 28).

He asked if it was realistic to have public nomination, what the ideal nominating committee format was and when the pan-democrats would start to negotiate.

Firstly, the pan-democrats have tried to negotiate before. Many even tabled different forms of moderate reform without public nomination. But none has been accepted and all were banned by Beijing.

Besides, there are two aims of Occupy Central now, as the campaign's co-founder Benny Tai Yiu-ting has said. One is to force Beijing to abandon the harsh framework and have the political reform process start all over again.

It means that the nominating committee's composition should not be the topic of discussion right now.

Many people think that we should first pocket the political reform on offer and improve it later. But as Beijing has said, all improvements made should be based on this framework. In other words, there will only be minor changes after we accept the offer. But fine-tuning is surely not enough to make the election genuine.

Leung Chu-kai, Ap Lei Chau

### Time to get rid of Kyoto liabilities

The Kyoto Protocol was dreamed up by the climate jet set in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997. One of the first decisions of born-again-green Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was to commit Australia to phase one of the protocol in 2007. The treaty required signatories to cut carbon dioxide production to 5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2012.

As a late joiner, Australia had a lower target, involving no actual cuts. And it achieved that easy target by robbing Australian landowners of carbon credits through imposing tree-clearing bans. That larcenous trick can't be pulled twice.

Viv Forbes, Rosewood, Queensland, Australia

Ironically, the death notice for the Kyoto misadventure was posted by Japan, when it announced at Cancun in 2010 that it would not agree to any further targets. Japan was shocked at the billions in liabilities it had accumulated by not meeting Kyoto I target cuts.

Undeterred by this warning, another Australian Labor Party/Green government agreed to Kyoto 2 in 2012 – five per cent below 2000 levels by 2020. This target, agreed to without due diligence, is dreamland stuff for Australia.

Once the growing population is taken into account, this target would require Australians in 2020 to maintain industries and create new jobs using 30 per cent less hydrocarbon energy per capita than was used in 2000.

Mining and mineral processing, agriculture, manufacturing, transport, tourism, electricity generation, cement, forestry and fishing are Australia's backbone industries. These industries could not maintain production while also significantly reducing their production of carbon dioxide, unless Australia embarks on a crash programme of building new hydro and/or nuclear power stations. The chance that green regulators or politicians will allow either of these options any time soon is zero.

The use of carbon fuels, more than any other indicator, measures the growth and health of modern economies. The only way to kill carbon is to kill the economy – close industries or send them overseas. The global financial crisis of 2008 probably did more to reduce the use of hydrocarbon fuels than Kyoto will ever do.

Japan's exit from Kyoto obligations was followed by Canada and Russia. The United States never signed, nor did China, India, South Africa or Brazil. The four big competitors for Australia – Brazil (iron and beef), Indonesia (coal), Chile (copper) and Canada (wheat) are not burdened by Kyoto.

The Kyoto agreement is a failure. Australia repealed the costly carbon dioxide tax. Next we should get rid of Kyoto liabilities.

Fernando Chui Sai-on, Macau's chief executive, Dr

Kevin Rudd committed Australia to Kyoto. Photo: AFP

Macau's chief executive, Dr Fernando Chui Sai-on, has pledged he will lead a government in his second term that will look into the enclave's problems and improve people's quality of life.

But as with his first term, and like his predecessor, nothing has been done for the people except cash handouts and limited increases in social bene-

fits due to the massive surplus from gaming tax.

Nothing really works in Macau and no one really cares as long as the masters in Beijing cannot see it.

Does Beijing know that most of Macau's population does not have decent drinking water? In drier months, people in the old districts are given some money to buy bottled water so they can dilute the salty water that comes out of the taps.

At the same time, they are carrying out a so-called consultation on the mass transit railway to link all the new casinos, when work has already started on it. It has been extended only to residential areas because of public protests.

Despite inadequate buses, the government-owned bus companies are renting out buses to the gambling franchises as the latter use their better coaches for free shuttles to the casinos. The people suffer having to endure long bus queues.

And the post office is a shameful mess. A letter to Macau from Hong Kong takes more than a week. A letter sent at the post office in the ferry terminal takes 10 days to be delivered in Hong Kong. The telephone landline and mobile services are still monopolised by a major company, CTM.

And what about the 18,000 public rental flats that Chui's predecessor promised a decade ago? When will they be completed and allocated to people on the waiting list?

Chui has taken on more

### Taiwan going all out to guarantee quality of food products

Taiwan was shocked to discover recently that unscrupulous food manufacturers on the island were producing tainted cooking oil for sale on the market.

The scandal received global attention, especially among top trade partners such as Hong Kong. Hence, I would like to explain the response measures and reforms that the government of Taiwan has adopted in the wake of the incident to restore confidence in the safety of Taiwanese food products.

Upon discovering the irregularities, Taiwan's government responded immediately by launching comprehensive investigations, removing all suspect products from store shelves and meting out harsh penalties to lawbreakers. It also banned the production and distribution of tainted products and destroyed those found.

Hygiene authorities have been keeping trade partners informed of any tainted food products found to have been exported to them, so they can take appropriate measures to keep the products off the market.

Eight new systemic reforms were announced by Premier Jiang Yi-huah on September 17. These include imposing tougher punishment on violators; raising rewards for whistleblowers; setting up a central government tip-off hotline; instituting separate controls for different types of oil products; managing the recycling of waste oil; instituting three tiers of quality control; tracing food products, and reforming the good manufacturing practices system.

To eradicate unscrupulous businesses, the government, food companies and the public will be organised into an "iron triangle" of defence, with the government overseeing businesses, businesses tracing their suppliers' products to the source, and the public reporting any suspected illegal activity to prosecutors.

As a responsible member of the world community, Taiwan is going all out to guarantee the quality of its food products. It will continue to share food safety information with relevant countries, closely monitor food manufacturing businesses from source to market, and stamp out irregularities to ensure the food products that Taiwan exports are safe and up to standard and to restore our island's reputation as a gourmet kingdom.

**Sun Lih-chyun, spokesman, Executive Yuan of the Republic of China (Taiwan)**

promised the state leaders he would do a good job. He should start by doing his job, with honesty and a will.

**Edward Lee, Tai Po**

### It is wrong to give away pets as gifts

I think that it is wrong for people to give away pets as gifts to others.

This practice poses a threat to these animals, especially if the recipients of the gift do not take their responsibilities as pet owners seriously.

I think it is becoming more common with television programmes showing adorable puppies. This trend can lead to a lot of these pets being abandoned in the streets and having to survive as strays, where they face being harmed because they do not know how to protect themselves.

People should be deterred from this form of gift giving. It is important that people have the right attitude to gift giving and recognise that pets should not be given as gifts. Adults should pass on this message to young people so they do not lose their empathy with animals.

People should think very carefully before they decide to buy a pet, even if they are doing so to keep it in the home.

My suggestion is a simple one to implement.

### Force firms to protect environment

I love this city for its technological ingenuity and the resultant efficiency it brings to daily life.

Having focused on analysing efficiency in my studies (at least in the context of computation), I am fascinated by things of this nature. But I cannot help but despair at the costs.

The amount of waste and pollution generated by this city – in complete disregard for future generations – is nothing short of criminal. A friend recently learned that refuse from the recycling bin at his office ends up in the same container as the rest of the garbage. But is it the company's fault? The government does not even provide the option.

Residents of this city are often forced to pay out of their own pockets for the ability to recycle some of their waste. Hearing this fact about Hong Kong would shock most people in the rest of the developed world. As a colleague put it to me, "no one has yet figured out a way to profit from recycling" in Hong Kong.

The problem is an economic one, clearly, and is characteristic of an intrinsic, negative feature of markets. In a free market system, firms are driven to ignore so-called externalities, such as the environmental destruction caused by their actions. This effect, quite expectedly, is more pronounced in laissez-faire Hong Kong.

Government intervention in these matters will admittedly hinder the profits of companies, but only in the short term. If we look at the long term, environmental catastrophe is certainly not profitable for any of us. But, since corporations are intrinsically short-sighted in such matters, we are in dire need of regulating their actions with respect to their environmental repercussions.

Without stronger regulations, this city and others may not exist as we know them for very much longer.

Amrinder Brar, Mid-Levels

### MTR ignored very sensible suggestion

Once again, the MTR Corporation has shown that it does not listen to the public.

Recently at Fortress Hill station, one of the four escalators connecting the platform to the concourse was not working. With the other three escalators, two were going up from the platform to the concourse, leaving one going the other way.

I called the customer service hotline asking for a flexible arrangement. Because of the high number of commuters, there should be two escalators going down to the platform before 8.30am. After that it could have two going up to accommodate those going to work in the area. The MTR Corp said it could not adopt my idea, but would not explain why.

My suggestion is a simple one to implement.

I. Lam, Fortress Hill



Kevin Rudd committed Australia to Kyoto. Photo: AFP

### Macau needs stronger leadership

Macau's chief executive, Dr Fernando Chui Sai-on, has pledged he will lead a government in his second term that will look into the enclave's problems and improve people's quality of life.

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# OPINION

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## Stop the protests, start dialogue

The diversity of Hong Kong society means that political, religious and social leaders rarely speak with a single voice. Pro-democracy demonstrations led by students now in a second week have thankfully changed that, prompting our most prominent citizens to call for the protests to end and negotiations with the government to get swiftly under way. Citing concerns for safety and disruption to daily life, their exhortations are timely and welcome. If our city is to move confidently forward, their advice has to be heeded.

Patience with the protest tactic of blocking main roads in our busiest districts has worn thin among many residents. The chaos in Mong Kok last week showed how deep the anger runs; shop owners, commuters and businesspeople want to get on with their lives and continuing disruptions could easily lead to worse unrest. Retired chief justices, former chief executive Tung Chee-hwa, the heads of our top universities, leaders of the pan-democrat movement and other political groups, prominent business professionals and staunch backers of the protesters all made plain in separate statements that demonstrators should now step back and move to the next phase of their struggle. They were speaking not out of self-interest, but with the good of our city at heart.

As they point out, the students have had their voices heard and listened to. By capturing the attention of the international media, their cause has garnered a global following and foreign governments are monitoring events. Continuing the sit-ins does not improve the chances of goals being attained, but will instead tarnish achievements through negative impact on the economy, education, business and jobs. Organisers of the demonstrations have all to gain and nothing to lose by telling supporters to leave the streets and go home.

That will not be a sign of defeat, but a signal of strength. Negotiations with authorities are the only productive way forward and that is already tentatively under way through the Federation of Students. Although not representative of all protesters, the organisation is a good starting point from which dialogue can be broadened. A willingness to listen to reason has also been shown by protesters in allowing limited access to government headquarters in Admiralty so that civil servants can return to work. That has to be extended to all other parts of the complex. Such understanding and cooperation, not civil disobedience, will help the push for democratic ideals.

## City can be proud of sporting talent

Hong Kong's 472-strong squad of athletes won just six gold medals at the Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea, but that is no indication of underperformance or a lack of sporting talent, as might be expected.

The per capita haul was diluted by the decision to send our city's largest ever team. This followed criticism of the Hong Kong Olympic Committee for neglecting team sports in its selection. Although team sports, with few exceptions, are not our strong point, it was decided to include as many as possible.

As a result, Hong Kong was represented in 10 team events, with only the rugby sevens squad looking likely to win a medal of any kind; the team took the silver. The real story of the gold-medal haul is more uplifting. It lies in what it takes to be internationally competitive in the age of professional sport.

Talent, part-time training and turning up – or even access to the world-class training facilities at the Sports Institute – are no longer enough to guarantee success in the professional age. What sets our top-liners apart are the personal and competitive elements of an insatiable desire to be the best – full-time commitment, dedication and sacrifice. A reflection of what it takes is to be found in the post-victory remarks of double cycling gold-medal winner Sarah Lee Wai-sze. The first thing the Olympic bronze medallist wanted to do when she got home from months of gruelling international competition and training was to have dinner with her grandmother.

Lee has earned the HK\$400,000 incentive for each gold medal under a Hang Seng Bank scheme, taking her total since 2010 to HK\$2.5 million. Two more golds were won in windsurfing and one each in rowing and gymnastics, with the surprising – and exciting – win of Shek Wai-hung in the men's vault. That Lee and Shek grew up in public housing is inspiration and encouragement for the least advantaged in society. But it is the will to be the best, not mere financial rewards, driving athletes. In that regard, Hong Kong did well, finishing 13th of the 37 states and territories that won medals.

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**Pay packet hike.**  
 Do you agree with the Minimum Wage Commission that the statutory minimum wage level should be raised from HK\$30 an hour to between HK\$32 and HK\$33, or should it be even higher, given the high cost of living in the city?

## LETTERS

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### Full backing for dialogue with students

The Hong Kong Civic Association welcomes the appointment by Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying of Chief Secretary Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-nger to meet representatives of the Federation of Students to engage in dialogue on political reform.

Our association supports the chief executive's hope that "the chief secretary's dialogue with the federation's representatives will herald further communication with various sectors on political reform".

The chief executive rightly rejected the students' call for him to resign. His decision is endorsed by the central government that appointed him.

Our association welcomes the timely call by new University of Hong Kong vice chancellor Professor Peter Mathieson and Chinese University vice chancellor Professor Joseph Sung Jao-yi, who jointly urged the students to exercise restraint, during their visit to Tamar, Admiralty, minutes before the deadline the students gave to the chief executive to resign.

It is sad to see how the civil disobedience movement, so new to Hong Kong, was hijacked by student groups to create the chaotic conditions leading to major disruptions of community life in Hong Kong and Kowloon.

The Federation of Students leaders should now realise and be mindful of the widespread hardships they are causing thousands of families with children who wanted to go back to school but could not do so because of traffic disruption.

It is time for student groups to exercise further restraint and vacate the areas they are illegally occupying so that community life for their fellow citizens can return to normal.

Hilton Cheong-Leen, president, Frederick Lynn, chairman, Hong Kong Civic Association

### China's offer is better than EU set-up

There are two things which confuse me about the current unrest in Hong Kong.

Perhaps one of the demonstration leaders will explain how it is democratic for a significant minority in the community, most of them below the minimum voting age, to hold the majority to ransom over their demands?

Freedom of speech is one thing. Disruption of the majority by the minority, preventing them from going about their daily work earning a living, does not appear to fall under the heading of democracy.

The fact is that the Occupy Central protests are illegal acts,

Secondly, perhaps Chris Patten (the man who appears to me to have done more than anybody else to raise political expectations in Hong Kong to unsustainable levels) will explain why he is an ardent supporter of the European Union and its electoral process, when he is severely critical of what Beijing has put forward for elections in Hong Kong.

It appears to me that what Beijing has proposed for Hong Kong is more democratic than in the EU, as in the EU, citizens get no direct vote on who is to be the EU equivalent of our chief secretary.

N. B. Bentley, Central

### Protests have turned HK into a lawless city

The actions by protesters last week occupying main roads in the city should be condemned.

They went too far and in the process hurt schools and businesses. The student leaders caused widespread disruption.

Their so-called democracy campaign will never win the support of the majority of the people of Hong Kong.

They are just a bunch of selfish people who put their interests, in the name of democracy, over that of the majority of law-abiding ordinary citizens. What they did was not what I consider to be democracy.

My heart is heavy and it was truly sad to see Hong Kong becoming a lawless city.

York Cheng, Tseung Kwan O

### America should stop interfering

The White House has called for the people of Hong Kong to be given a genuine choice in elections.

I do not think the electoral process in the US is all that fair so it is not really right for Washington to ask for "real democracy" in Hong Kong.

What would be the next step if the US got the elections it wants in Hong Kong? Would people then start calling for Hong Kong to become independent?

The US appears to want to see a weaker China and to that end seems to want to encourage internal divisions.

In some countries where America encouraged the establishment of democracy, such as Egypt, Iraq and Libya, we have seen chaos.

If Occupy Central got its way, we would also see Hong Kong being reduced to a level of chaos.

I really hope Hongkongers who expressed their support online for the stand taken by Washington will think again about their views. Also, I would like the White House to recon-

### Police had duty to ensure people were not injured in crowd

I was home a week last Sunday afternoon and watched the live television news. I was also watching Leung Chun-ying and his team explaining their position to the media.

I do not think anyone wanted to see the protesters and police facing off, with some protesters wanting to get to the government headquarters in Admiralty.

The police were criticised for using tear gas.

However, officers were trying to stop a large crowd getting into the area around the government headquarters.

In effect, they were trying to monitor the crowds in the same way as they do crowd controls on New Year's Eve and Christmas.

If large crowds had been allowed to congregate in a relatively small area, then there could have been the risk of injury or death, as happened with the Lan Kwai Fong incident. Police would then have been blamed for not preventing a tragedy.

I do not think that all the protesters were peaceful. All the WhatsApp messages on my phone blamed the police for using pepper spray and tear gas. However, I am sure anyone watching reruns of that afternoon would agree that not everyone in that crowd was being peaceful.

It is absolutely true that everyone has the right to peaceful assembly. However, this right is only one of many human rights. Citizens also have a right to rest and leisure and a right to education. The right of peaceful assembly does not override these other rights. Therefore, the police have a responsibility to strike a balance when so-called peaceful assembly affects other people exercising these other rights, especially when law and order are being violated.

Peaceful assembly is one thing, but illegal assembly is another issue. The police have a responsibility to uphold the law and should be allowed to act when an assembly is illegal.

Students and other protesters knew what the consequences of their actions would be if they became involved in illegal peaceful assemblies. They should have thought long and hard about these consequences before embarking on their protests.

If the objectives of the demonstration were about justice and the protection of people's rights, then the protesters should have been fair to the police.

The officers were doing the jobs they are paid to do in a professional manner.

Also, the protesters should have thought about the rights of other citizens and if those rights were being infringed.

It is important to accept your responsibilities and be considerate with regard to other people's rights.

Jeff J. Har, Ap Lei Chau

so it is strange for the US to talk about rule of law and then support those in Hong Kong who are illegally occupying streets.

Also, Washington is hardly qualified to criticise China and its electoral process. After all, the US presidential election can hardly be described as fair. There is a filtering system for candidates who want to stand for president, with ballots in individual states.

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I really hope Hongkongers who expressed their support online for the stand taken by Washington will think again about their views. Also, I would like the White House to recon-

sider its position and to stop picking on China.

Su Yuen-ching, Tsuen Wan

### Car-free zones will lead to cleaner air

The student protests have divided the city and represent a major issue.

One thing that cannot be disputed is the noticeable improvement in air quality in Central, Mong Kok and Causeway Bay.

The Transport Department should have a car-free zone one day a week. It will improve the quality of life in Hong Kong.

Lawrence Cheung, Mid-Levels



Cleaner air on Connaught Road Central. Photo: Bloomberg

### Beijing will not forgive government

Knowing that Occupy Central's action was imminent, the government should have resolved its differences with the students or at least started genuine negotiations days before the protest began.

The Western world is demanding freedom for Hong Kong. Oddly enough, no one spoke about this freedom when Hong Kong was ruled by the United Kingdom. What are the liberties that were taken away after the handover?

If the actions that got out of hand were controlled by Occupy Central leadership, they should have lasted the two days of the public holiday only.

The leaders should have then asked everyone to go home. Seeing their strength, their power and their responsible attitude, the government would have come to the conclusion that this political force could not be ignored. But no one is running this mess and it is becoming an annoyance.

For better or for worse, the days of this government are numbered. Beijing will not forgive it for allowing the situation to go uncontrolled.

China cares about world opinion but it cares more about its interest. Taiwan, Tibet, the Uyghurs and many minorities are watching closely.

Beijing cannot afford to give in and encourage the break-up of its political entity.

The people of Hong Kong should not put Beijing in a position where it will need to send its army to restore order.

The people have spoken. They should allow time for their leaders to deal peacefully with the proper authorities.

Isaac Kamhin, Tsim Sha Tsui

### Youngsters can learn outside the classroom

Students had classes suspended in some parts of Hong Kong, such as Wan Chai and Central, because of the Occupy Central protests.

This has given young people the opportunity to learn more about civil society and about morals.

I think all Hongkongers, including students, have a responsibility to keep in touch with current affairs in the city.

Young people who are out of school should not see this as a chance to do nothing.

They should consider the issues being discussed in the city and try to develop their own thoughts independently.

This may not always be easy for young people, but it is worth the effort, even if they are only absorbing general information.

Parents should also take the opportunity to encourage critical thinking on the part of their children, with regard to the different voices in the Occupy Central movement.

I am not saying youngsters should necessarily join the protests, but they should consider the issues that are being discussed.

Xu Manfei, Kowloon Tong

# OPINION

**South China Morning Post**

## Disruption must not reach Legco

**T**o the relief of many in Hong Kong, the tension arising from the pro-democracy demonstrations has eased somewhat over the past few days. But worrying, another battle is looming. In what appears to be the prelude of a full-scale war with the Leung Chun-ying administration, pan-democrat lawmakers have signed up en bloc to sit in two crucial committees with funding approval powers. Some also vowed to block whatever is tabled to the legislature, raising fears that governance would be effectively paralysed.

That the confrontation is spreading to the legislature is not unexpected. Unlike previous street protests, the ongoing ones are apparently not led by pan-democrat lawmakers. Now that the uproar appears to be waning after more than a week, the pan-democrats may think it's time they took over the stage. A so-called Occupy Legco is set to become the next step of the civil disobedience movement.

There are also growing worries that protesters may make Legco the new target and try to besiege the complex when officials and pro-government lawmakers attend meetings. This prompted Legco to postpone the start of the new session until next week, pending better security arrangements. It will be up to the chief executive to assess whether to go on with his question time with lawmakers as planned on Thursday.

The pan-democrats are not known for being friendly to the government. They do not feel obliged to back policies and funding proposals tabled by officials. Relations were strained further after Leung took power, with a handful of rebels seeking to block funding and legislation by dragging the rules of procedures. Some projects and payments due for approval before the summer recess have already been delayed as a result. If the tactics are escalated into a concerted civil disobedience campaign with full backing from the pan-democratic camp, the disruptions to governance and people's livelihoods would be no less severe than those caused by street protests.

It is in the city's interest for the government and Legco to get back to normal business as soon as possible. Lawmakers from across the political spectrum have a duty to work towards the public good. While grievances are expected to prevail for some time, governance will become impossible if the pan-democrats push ahead with the so-called non-cooperation campaign. The city cannot afford to stand still. As the government machinery switches back to normal operation, so should the legislature.

## Protesters should clear the barriers

**H**undreds of protesters are still on our streets, yet barricades put in place by students and police when there were tens of thousands are still blocking traffic. The demonstrators insist that they remain, preventing attempts to take them away. They are the reason journeys in and through affected districts take longer, why some bus routes have been cancelled or diverted and road congestion has considerably worsened. As Chief Secretary Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-nger and the Federation of Students bargain for talks on constitutional development, there would be no better gesture of goodwill towards Hong Kong than to allow their removal.

Police yesterday made clear the extent of the disruption to daily lives. A total of 2.9km of our busiest thoroughfares, Connaught, Gloucester and Hennessey roads on Hong Kong Island, and Nathan Road in Mong Kok are fenced off. Traffic was at times banked up to a combined 12.5km. Emergency vehicles were not making targets; 93 per cent of ambulances were arriving on time, with delays of up to nine minutes.

Primary schools and kindergartens in affected areas have only reopened this week, the threat of further chaos now believed to have passed. But the road diversions mean travel times are longer for many children, just as they are for office and shop workers. Out-of-hours activities for many people are still disrupted. Understandably, those being inconvenienced wonder why, with the protests now so small, large stretches of streets behind the barriers should remain off-limits to buses, delivery trucks and private vehicles.

Police and education officials are among those who have appealed for protesters to allow the barriers to be taken away so that life can return to normal. Previous attempts have prompted students to alert other demonstrators, who have rushed in to ensure that ground gained is not lost. But our roads cannot be a bargaining chip in negotiations; they are for all the people of Hong Kong to use. Giving them back to the public would set the right mood and tone for talks.

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## WHAT THE TALKS WOULD HAVE ACHIEVED...



## LETTERS

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### HK's future outweighs business woes

I have followed Occupy Central with a vested interest. I have been there to support them when I can.

The thing that has upset and disturbed me the most has been the pitiful, hypocritical shouting of the anti-Occupy blue ribbon types. They are generally the older age groups in Hong Kong.

Let us put it on record that it was these people or their parents who fled the Communist Party takeover of China and greatly benefited from a foreign-run capitalist system in Hong Kong.

Granted, they didn't have democracy, but they used the system to their benefit. Now they have their wealth, businesses and their flats.

Fast forward to today. The younger generation has no hope of home ownership, has witnessed a total destruction of the small business retail environment by big business and greedy landlords and has a government that doesn't do anything for Hong Kong people despite having substantial cash reserves.

Is it any wonder that the younger generations of Hong Kong people are trying to make this great city a better place? All we get from the elders is the same old dogma that they ran away from in the first place, justified by claims for the need to maintain "stability" and "economic development".

I said I had a vested interest. I have two small businesses in Central affected by the protesters and two children. But you won't hear me whining about poor business, like some, because my children's future is more important.

David Howarth, Kennedy Town

### Students need to open their eyes to change

I sincerely hope those who have taken part in the protests in Hong Kong, especially the young students, will take some time to objectively look at what is happening on the mainland.



China is at the forefront of wind energy. Photo: Bloomberg

They would read that the innovation in China's e-commerce and dot.com world is stunning (Alibaba and Taobao), the solar and wind energy industries are leading the world, and they are hard at work on the environmental sciences.

Focus on the positive and do not just look at the negatives that the anti-communist leaders in the so-called pro-democracy camp have emphasised.

Hong Kong students' mainland colleagues are working harder, speaking and writing better English in addition to better Chinese, so they can advance.

Youngsters here should look at all this in a historical perspective. The world is looking at China as an engine of growth. Protesters are in no position to change that, or the Chinese leaders.

I was a university student in the United States during the student protests against the Vietnam war and during the civil rights movement.

Things will change, but at their own pace. As Michael Chugani implored, "wake up, please" ("Now get real", October 4).

The oldies urging the students on all have passports and money to go somewhere should the worst happen. The students don't and nor do I.

C. L. Woo, Mid-Levels

### Negotiations will help ease tensions

Hong Kong's Occupy Central movement spread swiftly across some of Hong Kong's major streets.

While it may appear on the surface to simply be a protest over the nomination system (announced by the National People's Congress) for choosing candidates for the 2017 chief executive election, it was also influenced by past events here and north of the border.

Enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law was the guarantee that Hong Kong would be ruled under "one country, two systems" and that the capitalist system and way of life in the city would remain unchanged for 50 years after the handover.

However, the massacre on June 4, 1989, in Tiananmen Square brought political instability to Hong Kong and the fear that the central government might break the promises it had made under these agreements.

With Occupy Central, fears of what might happen grew after the use of tear gas by police on September 28.

This resulted in news headlines around the world, because although the city is just a dot on the map, it is also a major financial centre. There were protests in other parts of the world in support of the movement here.

### Activists should focus on composition of nomination committee

I refer to the planned talks between protesting students and the government.

One of the student leaders expressed disappointment that the agenda would not directly address the students' core demands – genuine universal suffrage and public nomination of the chief executive candidates.

The pan-democrats keep on saying that they want a "genuine" election, and seem to imply that public nomination is the only way to reach this end. Protesting students need to abandon the public nomination demand. This is a non-starter with the central government.

What the students should do is to accept that there will be a nomination committee which will nominate the 2017 chief executive candidates.

These activists should concentrate their discussions with the government on how to make the composition of this committee the most representative of our society, and how its members can be elected in a most democratic way.

Another important point to discuss is what is the entry threshold a candidate needs to get onto the "to be considered chief executive candidates" list by the nomination committee.

In 2012, Albert Ho Chun-yan became a chief executive candidate after meeting the one-eighth nominating requirement.

The students can insist that a prospective candidate who gets the endorsement of one-eighth of the members of the nomination committee can get onto the "chief executive candidates to be considered" list.

With this threshold, the chance of a pan-democratic candidate getting onto this list is very high.

The students can say, "What is the use of getting onto this list? To become a chief executive candidate, one needs 50 per cent of votes of endorsement by the nomination committee members."

Here is where public nomination comes into play. The students and the pan-democrats do not need to insist that the 2017 political reform has a public nomination element. They can do their own public nomination.

After several rounds of these unofficial public nomination elections, it would not be surprising that a pan-democratic candidate with 800,000 or more public endorsement votes emerges.

When that happens, it will be very difficult for the nomination committee not to give this candidate the required 50 per cent endorsement.

We will then have a genuine 2017 chief executive election.

Alex Woo, Tsim Sha Tsui

### Police and protesters behaved well

I totally disagree with York Cheng's comment about the state of Hong Kong and his use of the word lawless ("Protests have turned HK into a lawless city", October 7).

While one may have a personal view on the motivation of all the protesters and those who would be against them, "lawless" is hardly a word that comes to mind in view of the relatively peaceful nature of the protests and the observation of related rules.

The chief executive delegated Chief Secretary Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-nger to negotiate with the students' representatives.

I see this as an invaluable opportunity to narrow differences, given that the two sides have been poles apart. It will help to cool tensions.

I have faith in the Hong Kong government and hope it can lower these tensions in the next few days.

The world is watching and I hope we will see a peaceful end to the protest movement.

They stand tall, and the protesters should thank their lucky stars they faced such decent people as the policemen and women of Hong Kong.

Stuart McCarthy, Sheung Wan

### MTR striving to maintain passenger flow

I refer to the letter by I. Lam about escalators at Fortress Hill MTR station ("MTR ignored very sensible suggestion", September 30).

I would like to assure your readers that maintaining a smooth flow of passengers through stations is one of MTR's foremost priorities to maintain a safe, reliable and efficient train service.

In terms of the operating direction of escalators, a flexible arrangement is adopted at MTR stations to best suit the passenger flow at different times of the day.

At Fortress Hill station, there are four escalators connecting the platform and concourse levels. But, one of the escalators is out of service until mid-November to undergo major refurbishment works aimed at providing customers with a continued high level of service.

As your correspondent notes, during the morning peak period, two out of the three available escalators are set to run upwards from the platform to concourse level while the third escalator runs downwards from the concourse to platform level. This is because at that time of the day, there are more passengers arriving by train to exit the station than the number entering to take trains.

To switch the running direction of an operating escalator, station staff must first stop passengers from using the escalator and ensure all passengers on the escalator have been cleared, before the switch can be made.

The whole procedure will take several minutes and cause more inconvenience to passengers during peak periods.

We did try and explain these points to I. Lam and apologise for any misunderstanding.

When the escalator being refurbished is put back into service, we will go back to having two up-running and two down-running escalators to connect the concourse and the platform levels at Fortress Hill station during the morning peak period.

Osbert Kwan, senior manager – corporate relations, MTR Corporation

### Ebola virus warrants global concern

I am very worried about the outbreak of the Ebola virus, which is affecting people in West Africa.

This is something that should be of concern to people beyond the borders of the affected countries.

Experts in this field of medicine have a very heavy responsibility and we have to hope that they can help end this crisis.

Also, all countries must be willing to help those nations in West Africa having to cope with this deadly disease.

This is not a time for governments around the world to be selfish. If they fail to do enough to deal with this serious crisis, it will get worse.

Jessie Chan, Kowloon City

# OPINION

**South China Morning Post**

## One battle does not settle a war

**I**t has been almost three weeks since the Occupy Central movement began. The aspirations for "true" democracy expressed by the participants remain strong and clear, but doubts are growing as to what can realistically be achieved. It has become increasingly clear that neither Beijing nor the Hong Kong government is prepared to make any concession. Meanwhile, disturbances to businesses and people's livelihood are increasingly being felt; clashes with anti-Occupy opponents and the police are also more frequent. So high are the stakes that the campaign may end in a manner that no one desires. It is perhaps time the protesters considered retreating and reviewing their strategy.

The overnight violence in Admiralty is regrettable. In what appears to be a tit-for-tat action, protesters extended the occupation to a road near the government headquarters, after the barricades they had put up to block traffic were removed by the police during the day. This prompted police officers to use pepper spray and other means to subdue the crowd. While police operations have, by and large, been restrained so far, news footage showed a protester, later identified as a Civic Party member, apparently beaten up by a handful of officers in a nearby park. The matter is now being investigated.

The confrontations over the past two days are not the first. Ever since tear gas was fired to disperse protesters outside the government headquarters on the first day of Occupy Central, further clashes were to be expected. The emergence of men in masks rippling up barriers over the past two weeks has added fuel to the fire.

Genuine democracy is a laudable goal. That explains the sympathy shown by the public towards the student-led campaign in the early days. But as it enters a 19th day without any sign of a breakthrough, patience is wearing thin. Increasingly, more negative consequences have surfaced – schools suspended, shops closed, traffic diverted. As grievances mount, support for the civil disobedience movement is waning.

However much we share the democratic aspirations, there is a limit to people's tolerance. Without any sign of success, there is no end to justify the means. What's more worrying is that as Occupy continues, the final outcome will leave no one satisfied.

The pro-democracy fighters have vowed to soldier on. If losing one battle is the way to sustain a war, there is no reason why they shouldn't vacate the streets for the time being and continue the fight in a more constructive and pragmatic way.

## The patron saint of regulators

**N**ightclubs hold regular nights for ladies. Some newspapers and most online news services are free. Everyone uses Google and Facebook without paying a cent.

One of the many enduring insights of French economist Jean Tirole, who won this year's Nobel prize for economics, is to discern the common feature of these phenomena as a type of "bait and switch", applied not just to single products but to entire industries.

Economists call them two-sided markets, where the profit-making potential of one market (advertising) depends on another (internet search engine). When you are using a service for free, someone, somewhere, is monetising your activities. In the age of the internet and social media, Tirole is especially relevant in understanding the economics of online services.

But the committee for the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel especially cites the importance of Tirole's work on market-dominant behaviour. It is in the regulation of markets where a few players dominate that his insights have influenced regulators, especially those in the European Union.

Traditional economics presupposes either perfect competition or monopoly. In real life, you often have players who dominate a market but don't control it. Sometimes, this can benefit consumers; sometimes not. Tirole argues there is no one-size-fits-all regulatory system. Between heavy regulation favoured by bureaucrats in Brussels and free-market evangelists from the US, Tirole cuts a middle path. Every regulatory framework has to address the defining features of an industry rather than imposing simple rules like capped rates of return to avoid unintended negative effects.

He was critical of the lax regulation of banks and financial markets long before the global financial crisis. Neither does he favour excessive and knee-jerk regulation. But since the financial crisis, we are witnessing a revenge of the regulators. And Tirole may well be their patron saint.

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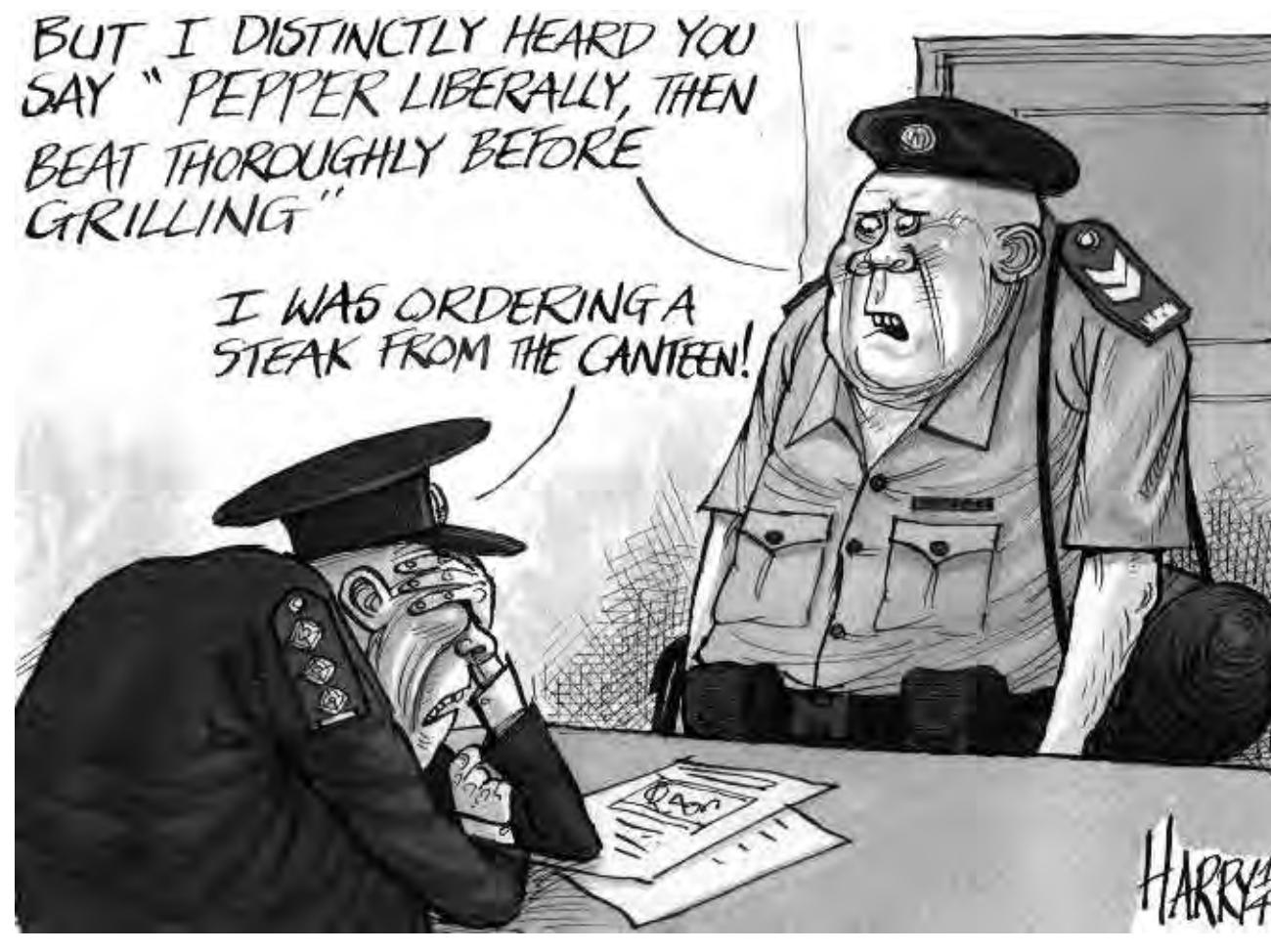
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### US does not want to see chaos in China

I refer to Su Yuen-ching's letter ("America should stop interfering", October 7).

I can hardly regard a few words from Washington calling for Hongkongers "to be given a genuine choice in elections" as interfering.

Over the past three decades there have been more dramatic wars of words between the United States and China, but they have never resulted in any serious confrontations.

During the 1992 presidential election, Bill Clinton was adamant about getting tough with China over its most-favoured-nation status. After being elected his reversal on this issue was simply stunning.

The US has consistently created conflicts in many parts of the world.

These concern smaller nations with resources the US needs. But China is simply too big for Washington to mess with in military terms.

What good is it to the US if China is in a state of chaos?

It would have everything to lose.

First, you don't mess with your largest creditor.

Second, China is still – through its economic links with the US – able to keep inflation in America in check. Therefore, you don't interfere with such a large business partner.

Third, a democratic China, with less rampant corruption and more equitable distribution of income to its people, will truly unleash its economic power and will replace America as the world's dominant economy.

Fourth, the US has already invaded China culturally, with Nike, Coca-Cola, Apple, Starbucks, McDonald's, KFC, Walmart, Kobe Bryant and even Disneyland. I don't think American companies want to see chaos in China.

The two nations have to engage in frequent wars of words. The US has to please some voters, Beijing has to show its toughness.

Amid the current disputes in the East China Sea, when the two nations showed their strength with military drills, they were just that – a show of strength.

So don't listen to our pro-



Bill Clinton made U-turn over MFN status for China. Photo: AP

establishment camp mouthing off about America's attempt to destabilise China.

The two economies are too inextricably linked to engage in any real conflict. Washington has every intention of ensuring the Chinese Communist Party stays in power.

Tony Yuen, Mid-Levels

### Communist Party decides what is correct

Regina Ip Lau Suk-yeo in her column ("Defying Beijing, to what end?" October 12) can always be relied upon for clear thinking, but in referring to the "three inherent contradictions" recognised by Beijing she has two too many.

The PRC government is Marxist.

A central tenet of Marxism is that "the party" decides what is "correct" and Communist Party members can only "hear and obey". Any questioning must be "incorrect thinking".

Our legitimate, Marxist government has defined what constitutes democracy in Hong Kong: what is there to question?

In short, democracy has evolved as a means of managing dissent while Marxism suppresses dissent.

As the students' "passion, chasing ... ideals" (as Mrs Ip reminds us, it is the only contradiction that matters).

How can the contradiction be resolved without tears?

R. Coates, Lai Chi Kok

### Taxi drivers ripped off passengers

I found it a bit rich to read the reports this week of taxi drivers staging protests against the protesters occupying key points in Hong Kong because it was hurting their income.

As someone who works in Lan Kwai Fong, I noticed that when the Occupy Central movement started its protests, as soon as the MTR closed for the night, every single taxi driver became "Out of Service".

This meant that a trip to say, Kennedy Town or Wan Chai had an automatic charge of HK\$500.

To get from Lan Kwai Fong to Tsim Sha Tsui, they have been charging a flat rate of HK\$500.

This blatant thievery, which must have the tacit nod from the authorities, is not only scandalous from a tourist point of view, but it also reinforces the general public's view that the taxi profession is a bastion of scoundrels.

It is no easy task to fight against and attempt to negotiate with a Hong Kong government backed by the bosses in

### Protests exposed the shortcomings of government policies

The Occupy Central protest has, with one simple action, comprehensively proved the point that we need a new system of choosing our leaders. We require this, not necessarily for any high-minded principles of "freedom", but because the current system has been a total failure and we have no faith in any new proposed system.

Perhaps it was inadvertent but the protesters' actions have shown the administration's failures in all major areas, that is, planning, transport, the environment and the economy.

Starting with planning, our leaders have been busy filling in our beautiful harbour to create a massive six-lane bypass because Central's roads are overcrowded.

Over the past two weeks Hong Kong Island's major artery has been shut and yet people still got to work. So if we can survive with eight lanes missing why do we need another six? One of the ways people coped was by using Harcourt Road as a pedestrian walkway, an innovative, practical, healthy and low-cost solution our rulers could never have come up with in a million years.

Regarding transport, the protests halved the number of buses on the roads. So people either took healthy options or used the MTR. This clearly demonstrates the government's policy of licensing more buses was not required and has been bad for us. Your readers noticed how much clearer the air has been?

For years our leaders have been wringing their hands agonising over what can be done about air quality in Hong Kong. Well, our brave protesters have solved the problem overnight: halve the number of buses and private cars on Central's roads.

Then there is waste management. Apparently Hong Kong's people are so irresponsible and selfish they could never sort waste and do real recycling. So the only solution is a massive HK\$18 billion incinerator. Well the streets occupied by the demonstrators never looked cleaner. It seems Hong Kong's youth, at least, can easily manage waste and recycle.

As for the economy do you think if some of Hong Kong's brightest students felt they had a promising future they would jeopardise it all by taking part in illegal and potentially career threatening protests? No they wouldn't.

I think one reason they have been willing to risk all, is desperation. They probably feel they have very little to lose – and that is the saddest condemnation of all.

Mark Parlett, Lantau

### Students have shown political maturity

From national education to universal suffrage, teenagers' socio-political participation has reached an unprecedented level.

Some people have criticised them and said that they are too naive to get involved in Occupy Central.

However, it is encouraging to see that our youngsters in Hong Kong are no longer politically indifferent. They have stepped out of their ivory towers and become actively involved in civil movements for the sake of democracy and because they want to see a better Hong Kong.

Recent civil movements have nurtured many leaders who are well-organised, rational and intelligent. Leaders of Scholarism and the Hong Kong Federation of Students are cases in point.

When organising the class boycott, they discussed things thoroughly with representatives of tertiary institutions and launched the movement at Chinese University.

They recognised the boycott would affect the studies of the participants and so invited university teachers to give lectures.

They will be future leaders of Hong Kong in an era when we merely enjoy genuine universal suffrage.

Barry Law Ming-chak, Tsing Yi

### Officials put stop to green Scheme in DB

The government, through the Lands Department, has reacted with remarkable speed with an apparent knee-jerk reaction to an apparent complaint.

Discovery Bay management had a wonderful new initiative which was to allow families to participate in growing their own organic vegetables.

Due to the huge interest, allocation of these gardens was by ballot with a HK\$500 fee to cover the cost of a landscaper who would tend these gardens (three metres by one metre), for a period of four months.

This was not rent, but salary. Worked out it equals a princely monthly salary of HK\$5,500.

Within three days of this initiative being implemented, the government received the complaint and contacted Hong Kong Resort Co. demanding that these gardens be destroyed within a month. There was no inquiry into the facts, just the demand to destroy.

I think I speak on behalf of 44 lucky ballot winners, in saying that we are indignant, saddened, and extremely disappointed that the Lands Department has acted in such a way, when this initiative is giving a very healthy community activity to families. Hong Kong Resort Co. is to be commended on what it was achieving.

When we see all the blatant illegal structures around Hong Kong, one has to wonder why the department has reacted in this way without first gathering the facts.

Deirdre Stratton, Discovery Bay

### Food scandals hurt economy on mainland

There has been discussion of food scandals on the mainland.

I find it difficult to understand why the central government has not done more to crack down on these incidents of tainted and fake food, given that they keep being repeated.

It should surely recognise the importance of ensuring its citizens can consume safe food.

When food is mixed with additives that can be harmful to health, hospital bills increase as more people are forced to seek medical attention.

There are cases of mainlanders, including young children, who are victims of these scandals, ending up with chronic conditions, which of course will require long-term medical care. This obviously proves costly for the government and if food from China acquires a bad reputation this is not good for the economy.

When it comes to food, public trust is crucial. It is bad for the mainland if shoppers are scared off from buying a product because it is marked "Made in China".

The government must recognise the importance of getting the right regulations and monitoring in place so that manufacturers bring out products that are safe to eat.

Jasmine Chan, Diamond Hill

Stuart Brookes, Shek Tong Tsui

Barry Law Ming-chak, Tsing Yi

# OPINION

**South China Morning Post**

## PLA must stay loyal to party

**O**fall the quotations attributed to Mao Zedong (毛澤東), "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" is one of the best remembered. The earliest record of it predates a historic congress in Gutian, Fujian (福建省), in 1929 that established the principle that the Communist Party leads the army. The words remain relevant to this day. Evidence of this was seen at a conference last week also held in Gutian – a venue believed to have been chosen by President Xi Jinping (習近平), in his capacity as Central Military Commission chairman, to link himself with the Mao era. In pledging allegiance to Xi, two of the PLA's top brass reaffirmed the rule that "the party controls the gun". This reflects Xi's effort to emulate Mao by consolidating the political and military legitimacy of his leadership, which faces resistance stiffened by fear and loathing of an anti-corruption campaign that has taken down senior PLA figures.

Rampant graft in the military is linked to calls from within and outside the PLA for its loyalty to be redirected from the party to the state, a reform dismissed by some top generals as a disaster for China. At the Gutian meeting, according to the *PLA Daily*, two CMC vice-chairmen, generals Fan Changlong (范長龍) and Xu Qiliang (許其亮), said "enemy forces" were trying to move the PLA away from the party's leadership. The newspaper said the army should "rebuild its military spirit" in order to guard against "incorrect political ideas" such as making the PLA an instrument of the nation, instead of one devoted to the party.

Xi's summons to top generals to meet at a venue linked historically with loyalty to the party is part of his efforts to cleanse the PLA of the residual influence of disgraced former CMC vice-chairman Xu Caihou (徐才厚). Graft in the PLA may have predated Xu, who had a political rather than combat background, but he exploited weak party control to corrupt it from the lowest leadership ranks upwards with a system of patronage that yielded a fortune in bribes for promotions.

Xu's supporters are now under investigation. This may enable Xi to promote his own followers. But he still faces an uphill task in neutralising Xu's legacy, instilling discipline and eradicating systemic graft from the PLA. Nothing less will suffice if loyalty to the party is to remain a respected pillar of communist rule. For the sake of Xi's authority in pursuing his wider reform agenda, it is to be hoped he prevails.

## Pay rise for top earners hard sell

**T**he news of a second pay rise for thousands of civil servants this year has understandably got many people hot under the collar. Not only is it costing taxpayers some HK\$100 million extra a year, it is only awarded to those who are already earning up to HK\$103,190 a month.

Unreasonable as it sounds, the pay rise is justified, according to a government-appointed commission. Currently, civil service pay is adjusted annually according to the trend in the private sector over the previous year. Separately, a pay-level comparison is conducted every six years to ensure the employees are paid more or less the same as their private-sector counterparts. According to a recent study, the top salary band was found to be underpaid by 8 per cent, whereas the gap in four others fell within the 5 per cent allowed. The commission therefore only recommends a 3 per cent rise for some 3,400 staff at the top. The remaining 160,000 employees are understandably upset.

There are good reasons for keeping civil service salaries on par with those in the private sector. If the levels are too high, businesses will be under pressure to raise wages. If the levels are too low, a brain drain may result. The review is therefore a step in the right direction to keep the salaries broadly comparable.

Whether the reality has been faithfully reflected in the study is a matter of concern, though. Our civil servants are known for their generous perks and benefits, which are not taken into account in the study. It is good that the commission also agrees that it is time to review the mechanism.

A pay rise on taxpayers' money is difficult to sell, even more so when it is loaded with queries and emotions. The proposed increase is still subject to approval by the Executive Council and requires funding approval from the legislature. Tough questioning from lawmakers is inevitable. The government has to explain clearly why only top civil servants deserve the rise. The methodology should also be reviewed to ensure that it is not only fair, but also seen to be fair.

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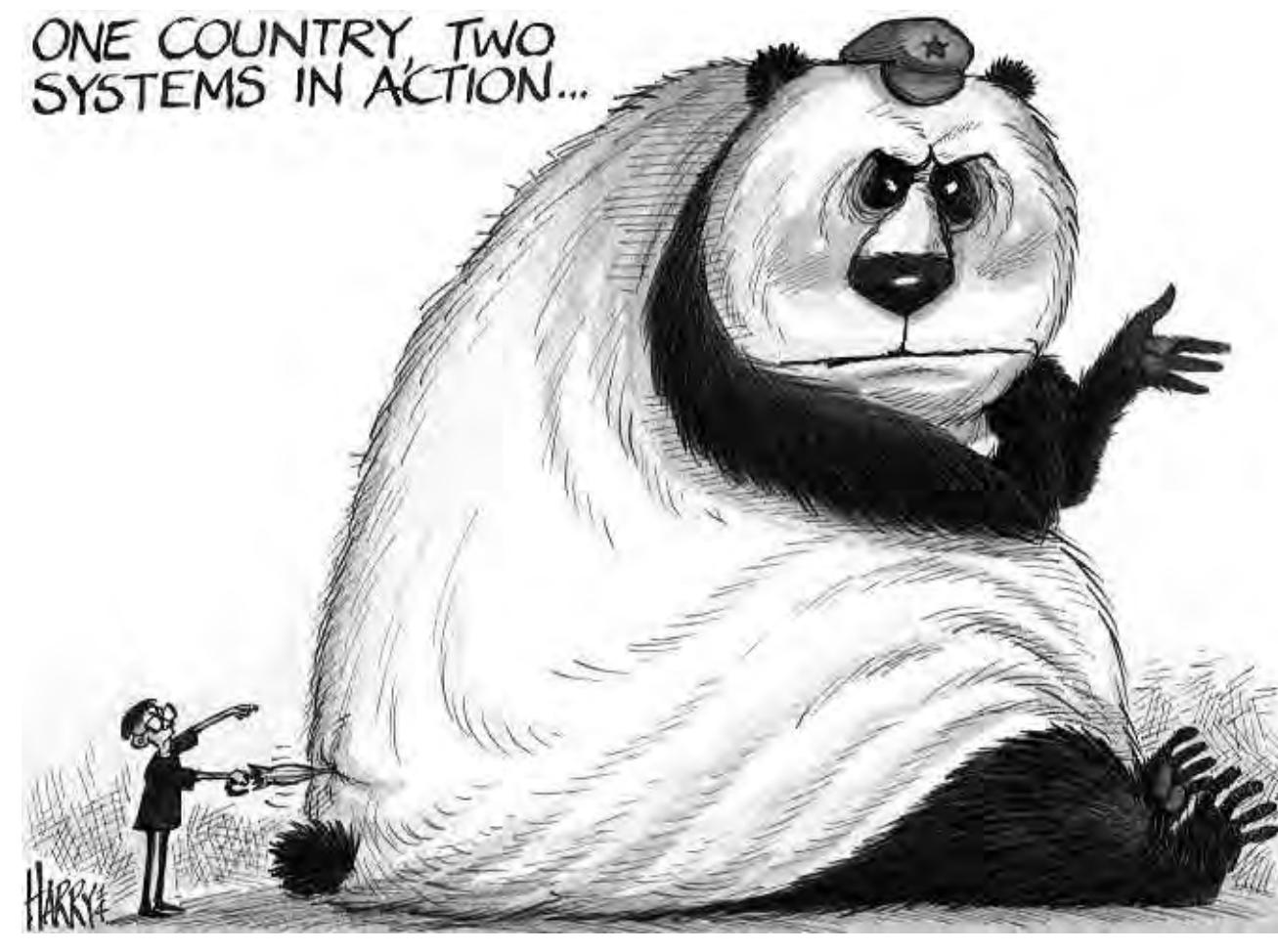
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ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS IN ACTION...



## LETTERS

**We welcome all letters.** Include your full name, address and telephone number, not necessarily for publication. Please keep letters to a maximum of 400 words. Email [letters@scmp.com](mailto:letters@scmp.com) Fax 2250 3242 Post 22 Dai Fat Street, Tai Po Industrial Estate, Tai Po, Hong Kong.

### Pessimistic forecasts prove unfounded

I agree with Stephen Vines ("Spreading the gloom", October 30) that the establishment are tripping over themselves to present a pessimistic view of Hong Kong's economic prospects as a result of some stalwart students barricading a few major roads.

Following on from former chief executive Tung Chee-hwa's press conference, we have received an apparently orchestrated barrage of similar doom-and-gloom announcements from present and former senior officials, including Norman Chan Tak-lam, head of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, and his predecessor Joseph Yam Chi-kwong.

What has happened to Hong Kong's famous can-do spirit when such senior figures are essentially crying wolf?

Central district is not now occupied and business has continued there as normal, and our stock prices are higher than they were when the protests started. Banks and finance houses cannot honestly state that their businesses have been seriously affected. Contrary to their views, the World Bank says that confidence in Hong Kong appears intact ("Occupy hasn't hit business climate", October 30).

Rather than cajoling the students, these establishment figures should consider that despite the absolutely massive funds under their control, they have done little to respond to directives from former Premier Wen Jiabao (溫家寶) to handle Hong Kong's "deep-rooted" economic problems.

I also agree with K.Y. Leung ("Governments created a 'class struggle'", October 29) that the outdated land policy is the most stubbornly rooted problem,

and that due to our self-centred elite, the students' economic future is poor.

Perhaps these public figures should venture into the streets and talk to the students. They should take a leaf out of Wen's book; he was never slow to address ordinary members of the public face to face.

**Charlie Chan, Mid-Levels**

Time for 'little mosquitoes' to go home

The Occupy protesters have made their voices heard; there is nothing more to say, so now it's time for them all to pack up and go home.

It might be that the belligerency of the protesters is encouraged by the romanticism attributed to the illegal debacle that they are focused on – whether it is the "umbrella movement",

the yellow movement or people power.

I would like to suggest that the protesters be addressed as "little mosquitoes" – as with the insect, they serve no purpose whatsoever and are extremely irritating.

Karl Hurst, Chung Hom Kok

### Ending protest does not equal failure

It has now been more than one month since the start of the Occupy Central civil disobedience movement.

As far as the implementation of the movement is concerned, there have been ongoing 24-hour sit-ins. From this point of view, the movement has been a resounding success. However, in terms of achievement, the movement is at a standstill. From this point of view, it is a failure.

What will be the future of our "umbrella revolution"? No one knows.

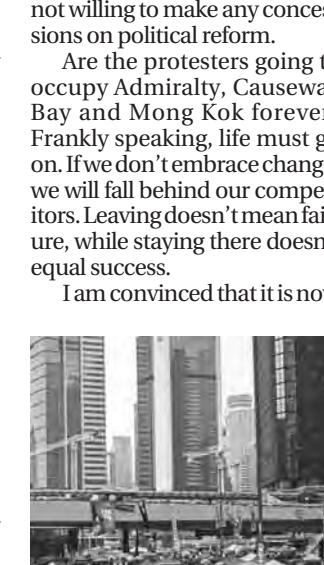
On one hand, the impact of the movement has been extremely negative. For instance, the incomes of taxi drivers have dropped sharply due to traffic congestion and inaccessibility created by the Occupy barricades, and revenues of shops near the protest sites have been badly affected. In short, the movement has hit parts of our economy and has affected the livelihood of citizens.

On the other hand, the protesters have shown immense dedication in pursuing their fight for democracy. While many of Hong Kong's core values have been eroded in recent years, this dedication to a just cause shows that the Hong Kong spirit is alive and well.

I fully support the "umbrella movement" and appreciate the unwavering determination of protesters as well. It is sad to see that the central government is not willing to make any concessions on political reform.

Are the protesters going to occupy Admiralty, Causeway Bay and Mong Kok forever? Frankly speaking, life must go on. If we don't embrace change, we will fall behind our competitors. Leaving doesn't mean failure, while staying there doesn't equal success.

I am convinced that it is now



Occupy has been going on for more than a month. Photo: AFP

### Police must work to restore public trust after tear gas attack

There was a time when the Hong Kong Police Force was regarded as Asia's finest. Many would have argued that it was the best in the world, but that is no longer the case.

All the good that has been done over the years was undone by the deplorable events of September 28, when officers fired tear gas at protesting students exercising their democratic right to free speech.

The world's media and internet users transmitted those brutal images within minutes of the tear gas canisters being fired into the crowd. The force's image and public trust built over the years were, understandably, destroyed.

It is now time for the police to demonstrate to the doubting public that they are the defenders of the people; not the political tool of the government.

The force needs to show that it is there to protect the rights of individuals. That is the only way it can regain the trust it has lost.

There have been claims police colluded with triad members and anti-Occupy Central people to stir up trouble within the Occupy Central movement.

The fact that there is a suspicion that the countermovement to Occupy Central has been orchestrated by the government and police, or at the very least condoned by them, is a reason to further divide and polarise our society.

The latest incident on October 15, with the alleged assault by officers on a protester after clearing Lung Wo Road of demonstrators, has thrown further oil on the fire.

I am a well-known local singer, gay rights activist and convenor of a new organisation, Hong Kong Shield. It comprises cultural, entertainment and academic sectors to promote democracy and prevent any form of violence used against the public during this "umbrella movement" period.

We not only condemn the unnecessary force the police have used against protesters, we condemn any form of violence, tangible or intangible, used against any individual in a free and open society.

The police investigation into the alleged attack on October 15, and previous alleged attacks, must be independent and thorough. The report on the findings of the investigation must be made public as soon as possible.

We further demand that the police publish the guidelines the force follows for the use of pepper spray, tear gas and rubber bullets, and insist any future use of these weapons must follow international standards.

**Anthony Wong Yiu-ming, convenor, Hong Kong Shield**

time for the protesters to leave the protest sites. If not, they should at least concede one lane to the public with a view to minimising the impact.

**Tszkwan Chung, Tseung Kwan O**

### Speed up Tesla deliveries to fight pollution

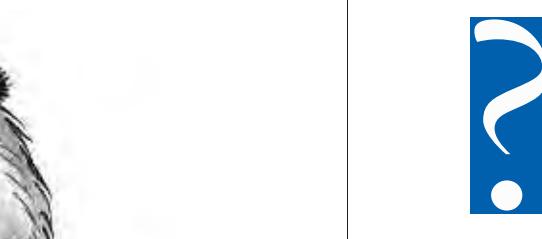
While our environment gets worse by the day, we suffocate on filthy air. Now the government is standing in the way of progress by obstructing Tesla S deliveries with red tape.

Some deliveries have been made, but now the latest model, with advanced new collision-avoidance features, is being held up as it is put through the wringer by the Transport Department.

What's going on here? Every day a Tesla is prevented from running on our roads is a day in which more pollutants and carbon dioxide are pumped into our air.

Of course, if you ask them, the Transport Department will tell you they are protecting road safety, but, honestly, does anyone in the Transport Department know more than all the experts in the US who have put this vehicle through its paces and found it to be safe?

**Malcolm I'Anson, Wan Chai**



**Frank admission.**  
 In light of former governor Chris Patten's comments to a parliamentary inquiry into Hong Kong's political development, do you think the British government could have done a better job in introducing democracy to the city before the handover?

### Provide more school places for minorities

In the past decade, the ethnic minority population in Hong Kong has grown significantly, and many have settled here permanently. However, there is still a lack of high-quality education for ethnic minority children in Hong Kong.

The high fees charged by the English Schools Foundation place it out of reach of most working class families, many of whom are from ethnic minorities. There are good schools where the medium of teaching is English; however, there are only a few of them.

Competition for primary school places is stiff and ethnic minority children find it very difficult to compete against local Chinese children. This problem is compounded by a lack of space in the city to build new schools, making existing institutions hopelessly overcrowded.

Disappointingly, there is little guidance provided by the Education Department on which schools ethnic minority children should apply to and which schools they already attend.

The worst scenario is when minority children end up in schools were most students are from ethnic minorities. This reduces their chances to interact with local Chinese students and often results in many of them failing to complete their secondary education.

The Education Department is largely to blame for the situation. They should force schools whose medium of teaching is English to allocate a certain number of places to ethnic minority children.

I am afraid that if this gap continues to grow, ethnic minority children will be left behind and will not be able to integrate into Hong Kong society. They will become isolated and the problem will be compounded.

Jurge the Education Department and the Equal Opportunities Commission to address this problem to give ethnic minority students a chance to get a good education in Hong Kong.

**Muddassar Iqbal, Mei Foo**

### Prevent Ebola from reaching Hong Kong

I could not agree more with Wong Hiu-kwan that the outbreak of Ebola may have a more serious impact than severe acute respiratory syndrome did in Hong Kong in 2003 ("We must all stay alert to Ebola risk", November 4).

Ebola has not yet reached Hong Kong, but it has killed more than 1,000 people so far and is now affecting the US.

The Hospital Authority does not know how to prevent this virus from affecting Hong Kong, apart from trying to stop infected people landing at the city's airport.

I still remember how suffocating it was to wear a surgical mask all day long, including while working in an office and walking in the street. Hong Kong was like a deserted town in a film, with empty shops and streets, and a constant stream of bad news on television.

It took a very long time for Hong Kong to recover from the negative impact of Sars. Coming out of the trough brought on by Occupy, Hongkongers may not have the stamina required to fight against a second viral attack in barely 10 years.

We must take steps to stop the first case of Ebola in Hong Kong from ever happening.

**Pang Chi-ming, Fanling**

### Teenagers must support the elderly

I am writing in response to Elaine Yau's recent article ("Running on empty", October 27). Nowadays, many teenagers do not understand why it is important to take care of the elderly.

Teenagers should volunteer with charities that organise visits to old people's homes. Community service can be a rewarding experience and can provide much needed emotional support for old people.

In addition, teenagers can encourage their peers to do charity work too.

Young people in Hong Kong should not sit back and do nothing when there are members of society who need their support.

**Macy Leung, Tseung Kwan O**