

Friday, March 8, 2013

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 Fax 2250 3242 Post 22 Dai Fat Street, Tai Po Industrial Estate, Tai Po, Hong Kong.

Tsang should use surplus to help the poor

With his sixth budget, Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun-wah failed to alleviate the problem of the wealth gap in Hong Kong. Tsang obviously feels it is important to be cautious, but there are times when you can be over-cautious.

Citizens from low-income families will not have been happy with the budget.

Despite having a large surplus, Tsang failed to announce measures that would help the poor.

Again we had one-off hand-outs, when long-term policies were required which could mean significant changes to the lives of people living in poverty.

While the tax concessions he announced might help the middle class, they could have been more generous.

Middle-class citizens are finding life very hard at the moment and the tax concession cap of HK\$10,000 could have been raised to HK\$13,000.

Also, the increase in stamp duty [announced ahead of the budget] is a measure that needs fine-tuning.

There could be levels of duty depending on a person's income level, with the rich paying the highest rate and the poor the lowest.

Also, I was unhappy with the financial secretary's comments that he was middle class because middle class people drank coffee and liked French films, and he liked "movies and tea" ("Price of entry to middle class..." March 1).

This is not an accurate definition of the middle class. As a top government official, he should choose his words more carefully.

We do not need a financial secretary who feels his only role is to help the government save money.

What we need is a financial chief who is both capable of relieving the financial burden of the poor and ensuring

being so wide, looking at how members of the middle class live and how much they earn may not be an indicator of the standard of living in our society.

Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun-wah talks about the middle class as drinking coffee and watching films. They are also likely to be citizens who have to bear the heavy financial burden of a mortgage. It is quite ridiculous to link social status with leisure activities.

It is also important to look at the problem of upward social mobility in Hong Kong. If we see society as an escalator, then the trip on that escalator, from university undergraduate to a member of the working middle class, is not an easy one.

As someone who will graduate in June, I think part of the problem is to do with Hong Kong's economic structure.

Business graduates will expect high salaries. Graduates in social sciences and subjects such as journalism and history will have lower financial expectations.

This perennial, unhealthy phenomenon makes most arts faculty graduates sad and frustrated. This is an issue which Mr Tsang has failed to address.

Sally Wong, Mong Kok

Stop making a political issue of baby milk

The milk powder shortage affecting Hong Kong and the mainland should be solved by increasing the import of foreign packaged products to the SAR and not through draconian measures such as the threat of heavy fines and jail sentences.

Hong Kong's prosperity and survival rely on import and export businesses.

There is no reason why Hong Kong cannot swiftly increase the transshipment of milk powder to the mainland.

There is no worldwide shortage of milk and milk powder.

Let this Women's Day launch fight against abuse of migrants

Every year, Hong Kong hosts several initiatives to mark International Women's Day on March 8. It is an occasion to celebrate women's accomplishments and tackle gender equality issues.

However, the concerns of some of Hong Kong's most vulnerable groups - refugee and migrant women - are conspicuously absent from these conversations.

Refugee and migrant women arrive in Hong Kong looking for a safer or better life. Many come from countries with patriarchal societies where unequal treatment, oppression and violence against women are commonplace.

Yet on arrival in Hong Kong, these women are often the victims of multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination due to their gender, ethnicity, race, national origin and/or socio-economic status. Prejudice and lack of awareness are proliferating negative stereotypes.

Last year, the Hong Kong Refugee Advice Centre found that a staggering 38 per cent of the single refugee women it helped had experienced sexual and gender-based violence back in their home country.

These experiences are exacerbated once they arrive in Hong Kong. Christian Action finds that many women flee from persecution, only to experience violence here in Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, foreign domestic helpers are instrumental in enabling women in Hong Kong to maintain a work-life balance. Despite this, they are frequently subjected to exploitative working conditions, abuse and are denied their maternity rights when they become pregnant.

As we mark International Women's Day 2013, we urge Hong Kong people to have solidarity with refugee and migrant women. These women have experienced some of the worst forms of gender inequality and discrimination and urgently need more assistance and support.

We further call on the government to respect, protect and safeguard the human rights of all women in Hong Kong.

In doing so, we urge the administration to adhere to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's recommendations, in 2006, to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women. The government must ensure female foreign domestic workers are not discriminated against by their employers or subjected to abuse, while strengthening the avenues for redress available to them to claim their rights and extend the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees to Hong Kong.

Aleta Miller, executive director, Hong Kong Refugee Advice Centre;
Kylie Uebergang, executive director, PathFinders;
Cheung-Ang Siew Mei, executive director, Christian Action

We have a supply and demand problem which can be resolved quickly.

Don't politicise the situation any further. And don't further damage the reputation of Hong Kong as a shopping and tourist mecca.

Don't ruin the good relationship between Hongkongers and mainlanders.

Anthony Tung Kai-cheong,
Causeway Bay

Shostakovich's 9th Symphony was sheer heaven.

Beatriz Taylor, Cheung Chau

Praise for pope who tackled evil

I refer to Alex Lo's column ("Catholic scandals no mere footnotes", February 28).

The allegation that Benedict

Avoid E mistake recycling

As a European the environment to read, in your about calls in H glass recycling s

In Sweden we full glass recyc which was laur until the EU star incandescent lig

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I hope Hong and leaders can mistakes and choices than we

Inger Glimmerö,
Stockholm, Sweden

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