

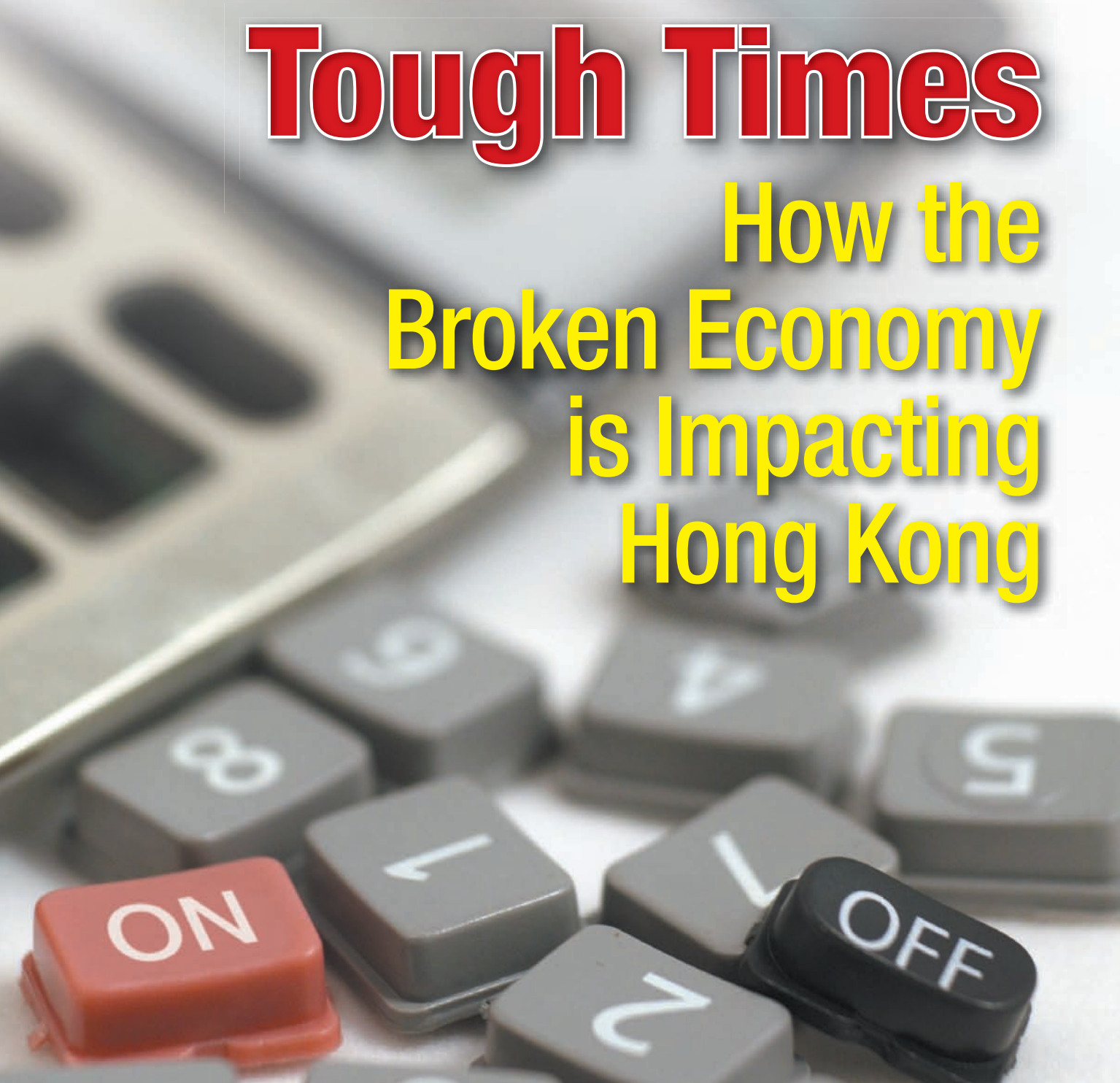
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BULLETIN

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Tough Times

How the
Broken Economy
is Impacting
Hong Kong





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Scholars Scoop Prestigious Prize

Three University academics have been awarded the prestigious Senior Research Fellowship and Senior Medical Research Fellowship, by the Croucher Foundation, in recognition of their groundbreaking scientific achievements and their contributions to the international scientific community.

HKU secured three of the six Fellowships awarded to four of the territory's universities.



The three academics are Professor Alfonso Ngan Hing Wan, of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, Professor Wang Jian, of Physics and Dr John Malcolm Nicholls, of Pathology.

Ngan's research focuses on discovering how submicron-sized materials behave mechanically, and on developing a theoretical understanding of this behaviour. He said he was thrilled to have his work recognized. He has previously received a Croucher Scholarship and a Croucher Fellowship. "So, to be able to receive the highest award from Croucher Foundation is indeed my honour."

Wang has worked on a number of different fields including critical phenomena and phase transition, localization of light and photonic crystals, as well as biophysics. His current research is on quantum transport in mesoscopic and nanoscale device systems. He thanked the University of Hong Kong and Physics Department for their continuous support.

Nicholls is investigating influenza receptor binding and novel therapies in an ex-vivo setting. In 2003, he was a key member of the University's research team that isolated, and characterized, the SARS coronavirus. Since then he has authored many highly cited publications on the interaction of viruses with receptors in the lung and respiratory tract and his work on SARS and avian influenza. He said he was honoured to receive the 'Senior Medical Research Fellowship'.

This award relieves winners from their teaching and administrative duties for one year, allowing them to devote more time to their research work. Each winner also receives a research grant of \$60,000. ■

Satellite Tracks Wild Birds to Study Link with Avian Flu

Wild birds are frequently blamed for the spread of avian influenza, even though little is understood about their migratory routes, or their connection to outbreaks of the virus.

Now, in an effort to gain a clearer picture of their role in the ecology and epidemiology of bird flu the University, the World Wildlife Fund and various partners have trapped, sampled and marked 24 wild ducks with satellite transmitters.

The project will track their movements to reveal new insights into the perceived link between wild bird migration and influenza outbreaks.

Previous studies have demonstrated that ducks – particularly the Northern Pintail and Eurasian Wigeon – migrate from Hong Kong to northern China and on to the Russian Far East in spring. However, little information exists about their actual route, stopover sites or final destination.

Small satellite radios attached to these ducks are now recording and transmitting GPS locations to provide detailed travel movements.

The study, launched by the Department of Microbiology, together with partners such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department of the Hong Kong government, is particularly relevant to Hong Kong as the territory provides both wintering and stop-over grounds for waterfowl, migrating along the East Asian Australasian Flyway.

Dr Connie Leung of the Department of Microbiology said: "This is very important because it is the first step in establishing where these birds fly to. From our initial results we know that their pathway is northeast, as far as the Chinese border with Russia.

"From the original 24 birds, one has been lost and we have not received satellite data on another three for almost a month, but we're hoping they'll show up."

Anyone interested can track the satellite-tagged ducks online by going to <http://www.werc.usgs.gov/sattrack/hongkong/index.html>. ■

Funding Approval for Centennial Campus



The Legislative Council has approved a \$2.03 billion funding request for the Centennial Campus, paving the way for the project to move ahead.

The approval was given in late April and construction will start very soon, with the aim of completing the work within about three years.

The Centennial Campus will be located to the west of the Main Campus and include three new academic buildings to accommodate increased student and faculty numbers when HKU and other local universities switch from a three-year to a four-year undergraduate programme in 2012.

Environmental features have been incorporated into the design, such as green rooftops and facades, a layout that promotes natural cooling and ventilation, and \$16.3 million in energy-saving measures. Three graded historic buildings are also being preserved on site.

Stakeholders such as district councillors, local residents and University members have been consulted extensively on the project, and four exhibitions were staged to raise public awareness of the project.

The new buildings will provide more than 42,000 square metres of new space for classrooms, teaching and research laboratories, libraries, learning commons/study areas, office facilities and amenities such as exhibition areas.

The Faculties of Arts, Law and Social Sciences are expected to move onto the new campus and their existing premises will be allocated to other faculties.

Further information about the Centennial Campus can be found at <http://www3.hku.hk/cecampus/chi/> (in Chinese) or <http://www3.hku.hk/cecampus/eng/> (in English). ■

HKU Launches the Territory's First Geological Museum

Earth Sciences education received a boost in January with the launch of Hong Kong's first Geological Museum. Named in honour of the late Dr Stephen Hui the Museum aims to boost public appreciation of the dynamic world of Earth Sciences. With a world-class collection of minerals, rocks and fossils and interactive displays, it showcases the Earth's development over the 4.5 billion years of its history, with examples relevant to the China region.

The opening of the Museum coincided with the launch of the Faculty of Science's 70th Anniversary Celebration.

Dr Stephen Hui was a philanthropist who, apart from constructing the Hui Oi Chow Science Building, in honour of his father, Mr Hui Oi Chow, also donated his extensive mineral collection to HKU which has formed the core of the Geological Museum's permanent Earth Material display.

Mr William C.L. Hui, Dr Stephen Hui's son told guests at the launch ceremony that the Museum had always been his late father's dream, and it gave him immense pleasure to see it come to fruition. "I would like to thank the staff of the Department of Earth Sciences for their painstaking efforts in setting up this Museum virtually from scratch," he said.

In thanking the Hui Family, Professor Richard Wong Yue Chim, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and

Provost, said: "Generation after generation of the Hui Family have lent their very generous support to the University."

Professor Kwok Sun, Dean of Science, added that the Museum provided an attractive object-based learning laboratory for the nature and evolution of the planet to visitors at all ages. "The museum is vital in driving the development of Earth Science education at Hong Kong schools." ■



Students at the University, and the Main Building during the Earth Hour event.

Lights Out for Earth Hour

The University participated in the Earth Hour event at the end of March by turning off lights across the campus, including a ceremonial switch-off at the Main Building.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, was joined by a group of students as he turned off the lights at 8:30 pm on March 28 – a time dubbed Earth Hour by the World Wide Fund for Nature, which organized the event to promote awareness about global climate change.

The lights were left off for 60 minutes and organizers said hundreds of millions of people participated in 88 countries.

Switching lights off was considered a vote for Earth, leaving them on a vote for global warming. A number of buildings across Hong Kong also dimmed their lights.

Apart from academic buildings, campus lights were also turned off in 15 residential halls.

The Earth Hour activities at HKU were promoted by the Centre of Development and Resources for Students. ■

The Review 2008 Scoops International Gold Award

The University's annual report, *The Review 2008* has won a Gold Award in the category Covers: College/University, in the prestigious ASTRID Awards competition.

ASTRID, an international organization based in the United States, honours the best in international design innovation.

The 2008 awards programme received over 400 entries from around the world. Entries were judged by an international panel of design professionals searching for the best in concept, creativity, message clarity and production.

According to MerComm Inc., which sponsors the Award, it "symbolizes the stellar qualities of creativity, craft, and originality in design".

Reni L. Witt, President of the ASTRID Award says: "We aim to promote design as a fundamental element of communications, a business imperative, and a powerful tool for commercial success."

Katherine Ma, *The Review's* Editor said the team was delighted with the award. The cover which is a snapshot of students totally immersed and engaged in class, succinctly presents the ambience of a vibrant University community. "It's a simple but striking picture," says Ma. ■



The Role of Youth in Colonial Empire

A HKU historian is providing a new perspective on empire by exploring how age shaped power relations.

David Pomfret, Associate Professor in the School of Humanities, and Associate Dean in the Faculty of Arts is comparing British and French colonial contexts from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. And he has unearthed some intriguing connections between age and empire.

For example, in the nineteenth century Europeans would have been considered too old to go out to the tropics at the age of 30. "The dominant view was that the tropical climate would degenerate white bodies," says Pomfret. "And going out to the colonies too old meant that one would not be able to live for too long in that environment." Hence, metropolitan governments made youthfulness a pre-requisite in selecting candidates to staff colonial administrations. The making of empire became, in effect, a pursuit of youth. And it was not uncommon to find, as in Hong Kong, that 50% or more of European residents were under the age of thirty.

Children and youth have rarely been discussed in histories of empire because "they were often seen as transient, unimportant and inconvenient elements of the colonial presence." Nevertheless, according to Pomfret, childhood was important to white communities' hopes that empire could endure. From the 1880s "as empire was invested with higher 'moral' purpose, the idea of bringing one's

family out became more acceptable and more closely linked to demonstrations of racial authority," Pomfret says.

Such was the importance of childhood that Hong Kong, for example, by the end of the nineteenth century came to be seen as a 'fairyland' for children. "There weren't many white children here ever, but children were critical to the achievement of the ideal of 'home' in an environment considered to produce spiritual and racial degeneration."

Bourgeois ideals of childhood lay at the heart of a series of controversial shifts in colonial policy. "For example, the creation of the Peak reservation proceeded from direct appeals to the idea that white children needed a separate living space. This was linked to the idea of creating a home. And this home was based upon an ideal of childhood that could not be achieved if white children were playing with non-white children."

"In the first decade of the twentieth century successive governors pursued policies segregating white and non-white children. Governor Matthew Nathan sponsored a whirl of child-centric sociability at the Peak, which led parents to refer to him as their children's 'fairy godfather'. The Peak, and sometimes even Hong Kong itself, was dubbed 'fairyland.' Tellingly, the first mention of Hong Kong as a kind of fairyland appeared in 1889, the year after the Peak Tram was set up, allowing wealthier European residents to relocate to higher altitudes, but the term remained in use until the Second World War.

"The children themselves contributed to this mythology in important ways. The daughters of Sir Francis Henry May, for example, governor from 1912-1919, were enthusiastic participants in 'fairy plays' and dubbed one part of the Peak, 'the fairy dell'.

In spite of the fact that early childhood was, statistically, a riskier period of life it was considered most important that British children be removed from the tropics when they got older. If they were not sent to school in Europe before adolescence they ran the risk of being perceived as 'degenerate'.

Such was the importance of childhood that Hong Kong... came to be seen as a 'fairyland' for children.



"These assumptions were closely connected to particular British ways of thinking about race and age." However, the challenge, for Pomfret, is to consider how ideas of childhood and youth more generally connected with empire. In other outposts of European empires, notably those of France, colonialists were somewhat more optimistic about the impact of the environment

upon their offspring, and more willing to countenance the extension of modern European ideas of childhood across race.

"What happened when these ideas were extended to Chinese children, Vietnamese children? Could these 'other' children achieve 'true childhood'? And if they were admitted to that category did that not imply that all sorts of other privileges should be accorded them?"

There was a constant battle to deal with this tension. Missionaries denounced the use of child labour. "Questions were raised about whether *mui-tsai* (妹子) were child slaves. Reformers contrasted ideals of childhood with what they saw as child slavery to advance imperial reform.

"There was a feeling, in Europe, that the improvement of the condition of children, irrespective of race, was critical to the building of a better world. In Europe, this became a cause célèbre. But it jeopardized carefully established racial hierarchies upon which colonial authority rested."

The working title of Pomfret's book is: *Youth and Empire: Childhood, Race and the Colonial Contest, c1880-1945.* ■



Professor David Pomfret

Hong Kong Triads Move North: For Markets and Recruits

As organized crime move across the border, Hong Kong enjoys a drop in the rate of triad gang homicide.

Dr Lee King Wa, a Honorary Fellow of the Centre of Criminology, says that with shoppers flocking to China for pirated VCDs and cheap entertainment Hong Kong is witnessing a displacement of organized crime.

"But a triad society is just one kind of organized criminal entity in Hong Kong," he explains. "The others are what the police call syndicates. They are not necessarily triad societies, they may hire

a triad society for protection or distribution of goods, or in other cases, the triads are the syndicates."

Triad violence, he says, is a specific kind of violence involving protection, or bouncership. "Triad members may be customers in bars that are protected by another triad group – this can lead to a clash. In general, triads fight on two fronts, first they fight for the right to distribute goods, or to work as bouncers in a club and, secondly, they fight off people who may stray onto their turf."

What he and his colleague, Professor Roderic Broadhurst, have found is that as Hong Kong people travel to China for cheap shopping and entertainment organized crime follows them.

"This trend started in the mid-1990s. The reason? Some say that triads have moved north because of the more stringent measures brought in by the Hong Kong government, like the Organized and Serious Crime Ordinance. That may have had an effect on organized crime but not necessarily on triad societies.

"What's actually happened is that the Hong Kong people who used to visit Mongkok now find it's much cheaper to go to China for karaoke, nightclubs, or massage parlours. And these outlets are declining in Hong Kong.

"Organized crime is very market driven, and this displacement of the market was one reason for Shenzhen's crime wave, from around 1999 to 2005, when it had the highest crime rate in China. We now have reports of Hong Kong triads tutoring the Shenzhen triads in how to operate drug smuggling rings, and so on."

Another reason for the decline in triad crime here is the drop in the number of teenagers. "In the past, a lot of the triad criminal cases involved teenagers, or people in their 20s or 30s, but now we have a very low birth rate, we have fewer and fewer teenagers. So there are fewer people to recruit," says Lee.

"In the 1960s and 1970s the triads dominated the public estates, and there were a lot of clashes between teenagers. Nowadays, the new estates are often designed in accordance with situational crime prevention to avoid gang turf wars.

"However, the problem is still very serious in the northern part of the New Territories. This is where the newcomers, and disadvantaged groups, reside and it's easier for them to become the prey of triad societies."

An aging society is having another unusual impact on triad groups. "They want to get into business, now, both legal and illegal. If they have made money they want to invest it. They have begun to move up the social ladder and may not want to engage in illegal activities any longer. The older triads may not want to risk everything by going to prison." So they set up legitimate businesses, like restaurants, and become respectable. ■



Dr Lee King Wa

The March of AIDS in China

A HKU AIDS expert says the country is at a critical stage in the HIV epidemic.

The virus that causes AIDS has a frightening ability to recombine and change its structure, making it that much more complicated to treat and vaccinate against. The consequences of this are starting to be felt in China, where AIDS arrived a little later than elsewhere, but where at least 700,000 people are now infected with HIV.

A study by the University's AIDS Institute, Wuhan University and Tsinghua University, found that therapy to control HIV failed in almost one-third of 339 infected rural residents, hastening the development into full-blown AIDS. A significant number of them had drug-resistant versions of the virus.

"China has a limited supply of drugs and only has generic drugs for first-line therapy. If drug-resistant strains of HIV become a problem, then it will be very difficult to control its spread," Dr Chen Zhiwei, Director of the AIDS Institute, says.

The findings were published in the *Journal of AIDS*, in January, and follow another collaborative study published in *Nature*, last autumn, that tracked the evolution of the HIV virus in China and the changing pattern of infection there.

The dominant form of the virus has evolved from being mainly the recombinant BC and B prime forms to the recombinant AE form. "This evolution is a dynamic process but it generates complicated situations for vaccine, therapy and other issues," Dr Chen says.

At the same time HIV infections are moving into the general population as sexual transmission has become the dominant mode of transmission, eclipsing intravenous drug use and blood donation. New infections are also increasing dramatically in number.

"China is at a critical stage in the HIV epidemic and we can expect more and more of the general population to be infected," he says.

One way to halt the spread would be a much hoped-for vaccine. The AIDS Institute, which was established 18 months ago to focus on the virus's spread in China and Hong Kong, is developing an HIV vaccine with partners from Wuhan University, the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and Tsinghua University. Their vaccine is mucosal, rather than injected, so it can attack the virus at the point of infection. This research is being

supported with a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and is currently undergoing trials on monkeys.

The Institute is also a key team member of the China AIDS Vaccine Initiative, which was established in March to bring together scientists from across China to share ideas, discoveries and resources, and reduce waste and duplication.

Hong Kong can expect to benefit from these efforts, but Dr Chen is concerned about the need to also track the evolution of the HIV virus here. Infections are increasing despite government efforts to prevent its spread and 2008 saw 435 new infections, the largest increase ever.

Dr Chen has started a pilot investigation to collect samples from doctors and track the virus's progression and hopes to secure additional funds for a proper study.



Dr Chen Zhiwei in the laboratory

"If we want to control the spread of the virus, we need to know what we're dealing with – we need to know the biological characteristics of the virus," he says. "Hong Kong has the resources and talented people. We hope AIDS research will receive higher priority for research funding."

In the meantime, the Institute is trying to get the message out through public education programmes to prevent infection. It has linked up with Harvard University, which has devised a video for secondary school and university students because many new infections occur in the 15-24 year old age group. A Chinese version is in production and will be distributed locally. ■

The Poor Hurt More on Bad Pollution Days

People in deprived areas have higher mortality rates from air pollution, says study.

People living in socially deprived areas in Hong Kong are more likely than their better-off neighbours to die from exposure to air pollution.

The finding was made in a study that links air pollution to a Social Deprivation Index (SDI), originally devised about 10 years ago to determine health care needs in the community.

The Department of Community Medicine and Department of Microbiology, in collaboration with the Hospital Authority and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, showed the excess risk could be more than double in high-versus low-deprivation areas, depending on the pollutant, after correlating the SDI with readings from the government's air pollution monitoring network and mortality rates.

"We know already that mortality is affected by air pollution but we wanted

to quantify it for those who are deprived. These people are not only economically deprived, they are also more vulnerable to environmental problems," Dr Wong Chit Ming, Associate Professor of Community Medicine, says.

The SDI incorporates data on unemployment, households earning a low income, people with no schooling, one-person households, people never married and households living as sub-tenants.

"People in high-deprivation areas

are more likely to smoke, they exercise less and their nutrition is not so good. These reduce their biological capacity to withstand environmental hazards that cause inflammatory changes and make them more vulnerable to the risk of air pollution," he says.

The study looked at levels of four different air pollutants and tracked readings for several days afterwards, to see if there was a lagged impact. It also considered respiratory and cardiovascular mortality separately, as these have both been linked to higher air pollution levels in other studies.

Mortality rates in middle and high-SDI areas were higher during pollution episodes, and high-deprivation areas suffered particularly when nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide emissions rose.

For example, the day after a high sulphur dioxide pollution episode, the excess risk of cardiovascular death was more than three times greater in a high SDI area than that for people in low-SDI areas (2.88 per cent excess deaths for every 10 micrograms increase of sulphur dioxide in high-SDI areas, against 0.89 per cent in low). This could translate into hundreds of deaths each year, depending on the frequency of pollution episodes.

"This is a social justice issue," Wong

says. "Air pollution is an important cause of injustice and this aspect should be given serious consideration by policy makers."

The study was conducted as part of an on-going regional project, Public Health and Air Pollution in Asia (PAPA), which was initiated in 2004 with funding from the US Health Effects Institute. It is quantifying air pollution risks in major cities, including Hong Kong, Shanghai, Wuhan and Bangkok.

Apart from looking at air pollution and social deprivation, Wong and his colleagues also led a study for PAPA to look at how influenza modifies the health effects of air pollution in Hong Kong.

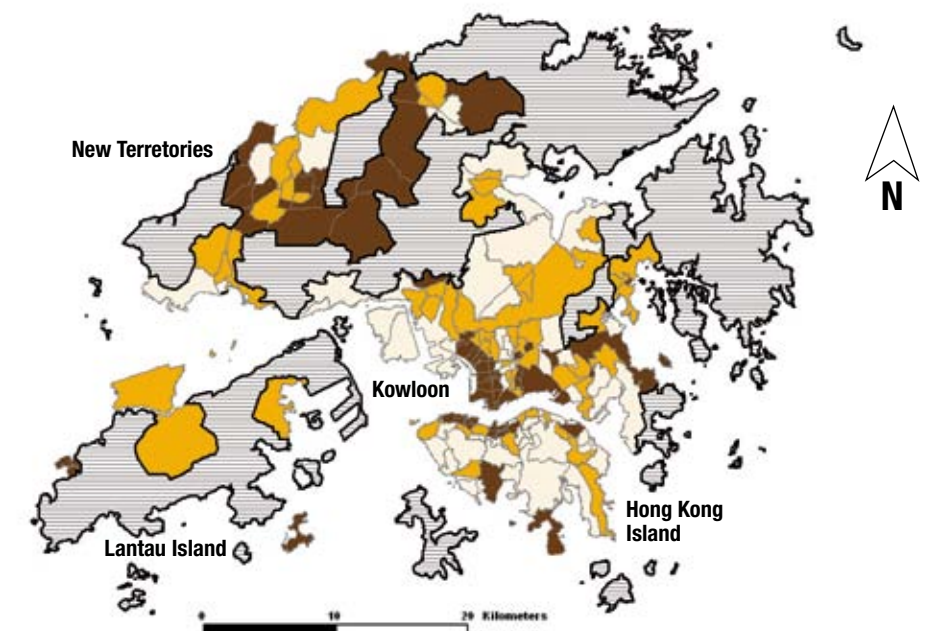
A significant effect was found chiefly for ozone, which, when combined with higher influenza levels, increased excess mortality for respiratory disease by 0.59 per cent and for chronic pulmonary disease by 1.05 per cent. The researchers also observed higher hospitalization rates. "These are substantial changes compared with the magnitude of air pollution effects of around one per cent estimated in most studies," Wong says.

Both the influenza and the social deprivation studies were published recently in *Environmental Health Perspectives*. ■

MAP KEY

SDI Categories

- 1 - Low social deprivation
- 2 - Middle social deprivation
- 3 - High social deprivation
- Sub-urban Area



Tough Times Ahead

But it's not all doom and gloom

We take a look at how Hong Kong – and the University – is weathering the financial tsunami.

Dr Alan Siu has become a familiar face on our screens and in our newspapers in recent months. As Executive Director of the Hong Kong Institute of Economics and Business Strategy of HKU, his opinions are sought by news networks hoping to make sense of the world's broken economy and analyse its impact on Hong Kong and the region.

What is clear, Siu stresses, speaking from his office in the Faculty of Business and Economics, is that this is no garden variety recession. "It's going to be a little bit more protracted. It might not be as bad as the Great Depression but the economy is not going to turn around in ten months time. We are already one year into the recession and we may have another year to go."

And Hong Kong's small economy has left it nowhere to hide. "Exports to the EU and North America are way down, and the situation in the US will get worse before it gets better. The deceleration is still nowhere in sight and our export machinery will stall. It was very bad in January and February, but things will pick up a bit because the US and Europe need to replenish their inventory, but the total demand for goods will be much smaller."

However, in the short term, life – and consumption – will go on, just not in the way that we know it. "Shoppers will shift away from expensive goods to buying cheaper, functional things. So you see this substitution effect where MacDonald's is doing well but Starbucks is hurting.

"Likewise, there will be a substitution of high end goods for low end ones. For example, the Italian garment industry will suffer, but the low end daily wear garment maker in the Pearl River Delta, controlled by Hong Kong manufacturers, will hold off.

"And in this process we will see the survival of the fittest. It will be brutal – the weaker firms will go under, and the stronger firms will be able to consolidate and pick up the assets of the weaker competitors and enlarge their activities. This is typically what happens in a downturn."

In the longish term, says Siu, the export machinery will slow down a gear or two because Americans are not as wealthy as they previously thought.



Professor Richard Wong Yue Chim (left) and Dr Alan Siu (right) announced the quarterly Hong Kong Macroeconomic Forecast in April, saying Hong Kong's real GDP was forecast to shrink by 5.1% on a year-on-year basis in the current quarter. Unemployment was also forecast to increase to 6.0%.

"Their assets have shrunk, the middle class and even the upper middle class, has seen its net worth evaporate by 30-40% and so Americans will need to save before they can replenish their goods. So, for the foreseeable future, the consumption power of America will be lower. And that will translate into a weaker demand for exports from this region."

But the biggest problem, according to Siu, is the lack of trust that is seizing up the credit channels. "We are facing a serious problem in trust," he says.

"Banks do not trust the borrowers and the borrowers do not trust the banks, and they do not trust the policymakers, and they do not know how the future is going to pan out. So here we are dealing with a serious problem in confidence. People are losing confidence in themselves, in others and in the system."

Keeping graduates gainfully occupied

To counter the projected rise in unemployment the University is unveiling a number of initiatives that may help keep

our students employed.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Richard Wong, says HKU students have traditionally fared well in the job market. "So I'm hopeful that they will be okay."

"But there are a number of things we are doing to help. We are expanding our postgraduate programmes and the government has been very helpful in facilitating the university to allocate more funding for research postgraduate places, so we will have some growth in that area."

"I should say we have done quite

well in securing UGC funded research postgraduate places, more so than any other institution. We are leading in the number of places we have secured, in part based on the very fine performance of our colleagues in the General Research Fund," he says.

Plans are also afoot to speed up curriculum reform. "Whereas the whole of Hong Kong will introduce the new four-year curriculum in 2012, the University Senate has agreed to roll out a new three-year curriculum, identical in many respects to the four-year curriculum, in 2010."

"There are many reasons for this – we think the four-year curriculum is a great curriculum so why not do it earlier. Of course, the only difference is that we don't have four years, so the options that students can choose from in certain areas will be constrained."

"For example, it will be very difficult to do a double-major in three years. Although the curriculum structure will be the same, students will not be able to select certain options. We are also ruling out the common core subjects. They will only be able to choose two courses instead of six."

"What it means is that teachers will be designing these courses in 2009-10, and they will be hiring teaching assistants to help them, so we will be creating jobs for more teachers or graduates as well," he says.

Loss of hope, a worrying sign

Meanwhile the most notable impact of the recession on society is a certain loss of hope, according to Nelson Chow, Henry G. Leong Professor in Social Work and Social Administration.

"For people in their late 20s, or early 30s, there is very little job security," he says. "Even if they have a university education it does not guarantee a successful career or long term security. A few years ago people could see many opportunities because China was developing, but this financial crisis

has made them aware that what they have pinned their hopes on is no longer certain. This is upsetting the lives of many people."

Food bank services, the traditional realm of the homeless and unemployed, are now attracting individuals in steady jobs. "These people are very embarrassed," says Chow. "A lot of them had plans for themselves and for their children. They had hopes for the future – higher salaries that would allow them to send their children to good schools – but the financial crisis has changed all that. If they have lost their jobs, they have to take their children out of the international school system and send them to local schools. Others may have taken substantial pay cuts. I'm not saying these people are poor but they are struggling and very uncertain about what lies ahead."

It's this sense of limbo that is affecting people's mental health. It is affecting everybody in one way or another, no-one is immune to it."

The elderly are amongst the hardest hit with many losing their savings and their livelihoods. "After HSBC announced a reduction in the dividend, I got a call from a 78-year-old Hong Kong lady, who has retired to the mainland," says Chow. "Over the years she had accumulated quite a lot of HSBC shares which at one point were worth over \$2 million, and these constitute more than two thirds of her savings. Now she is extremely worried about her future because she depends on her dividends."

"And she's not alone. Many retirees are suffering because of their savings are disappearing. People may have put their money in New Zealand, Canadian or Australian dollars and the value of these currencies have dropped dramatically. These people are really worrying about their future."

"Meanwhile," he says. "The poor are working from hand to mouth and the claims for comprehensive social security assistance are climbing."

"But the biggest problem is the lack of trust that is seizing up the credit channels."

"The poor are working from hand to mouth and the claims for comprehensive social security assistance are climbing."



Not all doom and gloom

However, there are positive. Siu says, "One blessing in Hong Kong is that our economy is quite stable. The typical household is quite rich because, after the last financial crisis, of 1997-98, we have had 10 years of building up our financial nest egg.

"Hong Kong people are used to this swing in the stock market and the economy, and many have been able to hold onto their assets, they still have their

homes. A lot have seen their investment portfolios shrink, but life goes on.

"There's hope here because we have China. The whole world may be shrinking but China's economy, based on projections, is still expanding - not at 13 per cent, but the latest forecast by the World Bank is 6.5 per cent. So there are still growth opportunities."

Another plus, he says is that Hong Kong's service economy depends on skilled workers, "And unless you are

absolutely desperate you will not want to lay off your workers, you want to hold onto them for as long as possible."

Chow also believes there's a lesson to be learnt from this economic turmoil. "The root of the problem," he says, "is greed. Obama has been saying this for months. We are all responsible.

"But, I think, we have placed too much emphasis on excellence and achievement. By all means we should try to excel but when you stress it so much people may use all sorts of means to achieve it, and sometimes those means are not so honest.

"Material achievement has become the epitome of achievement. A lot of people get into debt to try to present this image of achievement. This recession is an occasion for us to rethink our values. Perhaps, we have forgotten how to be responsible, fair and honest. We have put the emphasis on the wrong values. Now, we need to exercise the spirit of self-discipline.

"It's time to prioritize our values - what should come first? Happiness, mental and spiritual peace? Are these more important than material goods? We are talking about global health here - if we are less extravagant then this will have an impact on our global health. People say we have damaged the Earth so badly that nothing can repair it. But I hope not, I hope we can still do something for ourselves, our families and for the whole world." ■

Breaking the Boom and Bust Cycle

Academics try to find a new pattern for the construction industry.

If any industry understands the profits and pains of boom and bust cycles, it's Hong Kong's construction industry.

It experienced phenomenal growth in the 1990s, spurred by the airport development, then became depressed during the Asian financial crisis, in 1998. Mini booms and busts have become the norm but the industry, and those who study it, are anxious to achieve a more stable and sustainable pattern.

The Department of Civil Engineering and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University completed a 15-month joint study on this question, last November, for the Construction Industry Institute-Hong Kong, and called for better co-ordination of public and private construction activities.

"We need a better balance to help reduce the competition for manpower and materials and make the industry more stable," Dr Thomas Ng, Associate Professor in Civil Engineering, says.

"When the private sector plummets, the public sector should move projects forward more swiftly."

That is happening to some extent with the government's plans to build 10 major infrastructure projects over the next decade or so, but Ng said that horizon was still not forward looking enough. Currently, more than half of the local construction market is made up of maintenance and repair work, rather than new orders. Resources planning is also needed to meet market demand.

He suggested the government outline more transparent medium to long term strategic development plans and monitor the construction activities of the private sector systematically, as is done in other countries.

"The government has pushed forward quite a lot of construction projects to counteract the impacts of the recent financial meltdown and there will undoubtedly be a big surge in

volume, especially in public infrastructure works. But when that's completed, the prospects for the industry are still uncertain.

"We might go back to the case of 1998 when there was a severe drop in construction volume. This fluctuation would be most unhealthy for the Hong Kong construction industry, both in terms of prospective investment and manpower training," he says.

Ng has also been commissioned by the government's Development Bureau to conduct a separate study on construction and related engineering professional resources, and he predicts fewer young people will be willing to study in these fields in the long run if uncertainty persists. "With such a high volume of civil engineering works coming up in the next few years, there is a big question of how to meet this immediate demand," he says.

The industry and educational institutions could do more to sharpen the competitive edge of the local industry so as to attract new talent, he says. University research in areas such as energy efficiency, sustainable buildings, heritage preservation, innovative materials and novel construction technologies could help the industry to diversify.

Ng added that the timing was right for working towards achieving greater stability and sustainability in the industry. While other industries have been hit hard by the current recession, strong growth in construction activities is expected in the immediate future. ■

Helping Students Cope

Most students are still positive despite the economic downturn, according to the Dean of Student Affairs, Dr Albert Chau Wai Lap.

"There have been reports of more than a 40% drop in job vacancies, yet we are still very confident that HKU students will be successful in their job search. Of course we should never be complacent," says Chau.

Indeed, the Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS) has launched a number of reach-out programmes with this in mind.

A series on dealing with adversity is equipping students with the personal qualities and coping strategies necessary to face the hardships of economic recession, such as adopting a positive attitude, and exploring areas for psychological growth.

In May and June, the Leadership and Life Skills Training Programme will help students manage and face up to the challenges ahead.

"In terms of careers and placement, job finding is a major concern," says Chau. "So we are stepping up our support for students by engaging companies to come to campus and conduct recruitment talks and interviews.

"We have a wider careers education programme to direct students' attention

to some non-traditional areas such as social enterprise, or gaining jobs in NGO's."

CEDARS is also promoting volunteerism, or service learning, as one way to prepare for future careers. "This is a good way to develop different competencies and, in time, gain knowledge of the needs of the community. This will be useful in their job search, or even in the formulation of their career goals," Chau says.



EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH 2008

For the eighth year running HKU has saluted colleagues who have excelled in their teaching and research. This year, 49 awards were granted to distinguished faculty members in five categories, including outstanding teachers, researchers, young researchers, research student supervisors and faculty members who have produced outstanding research publications in the University's 10 Faculties.

Speaking to 200 guests at this, the eighth, annual ceremony, Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui reiterated the University's dedication to pursuing excellence. "Today we have come together to honour our colleagues who have demonstrated outstanding performance in teaching and in research. This ceremony provides the opportunity to give due recognition to these excellent individuals, to thank them for the positive impact they are having at HKU and beyond, and, hopefully, to also encourage others to accomplish such achievements."

Guest of Honour, Pro-Chancellor, Dr the Honourable David Li Kwok Po, said the high calibre of awardees revealed the University's solid foundation of achievement, and showed "that it has both the talent and determination to lift its high reputation even further". He was confident that these assets would enable the University to embrace the challenges ahead, and seize the opportunities presented by the imminent four-year new curriculum.

Here we feature the winners of the 2008 awards.

Outstanding Teaching Award

Every year the University recognizes teaching excellence by honouring outstanding educators. The Teaching Excellence Award Scheme signifies the University's commitment to recognizing and promoting excellence in pedagogy.

Professor Chan Li Chong *Department of Pathology*

Professor Chan Li Chong has been actively involved in the teaching of the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery programme and, in particular in the problem-based learning (PBL) tutorials. He has also played a key role in developing the PBL curriculum to promote effective student-centred learning.

Professor Chan describes his teaching philosophy as 'The medical student of today is the clinical teacher of tomorrow'.

"Implicit in this statement," he says, "is a responsibility to identify and implement ways to help students fulfill their potential to develop as self directed learners; to acquire critical thinking skills, and the courage to challenge scientific and medical dogma. At the same time, the teacher should help the student develop reflective practice and recognize the importance of humanistic values and teamwork in professional practice."

His former student, Philip Kam Ming Ho adds: "His commitment to and passion for teaching impressed me and made me feel he was an excellent and dedicated teacher both in and out of the classroom."

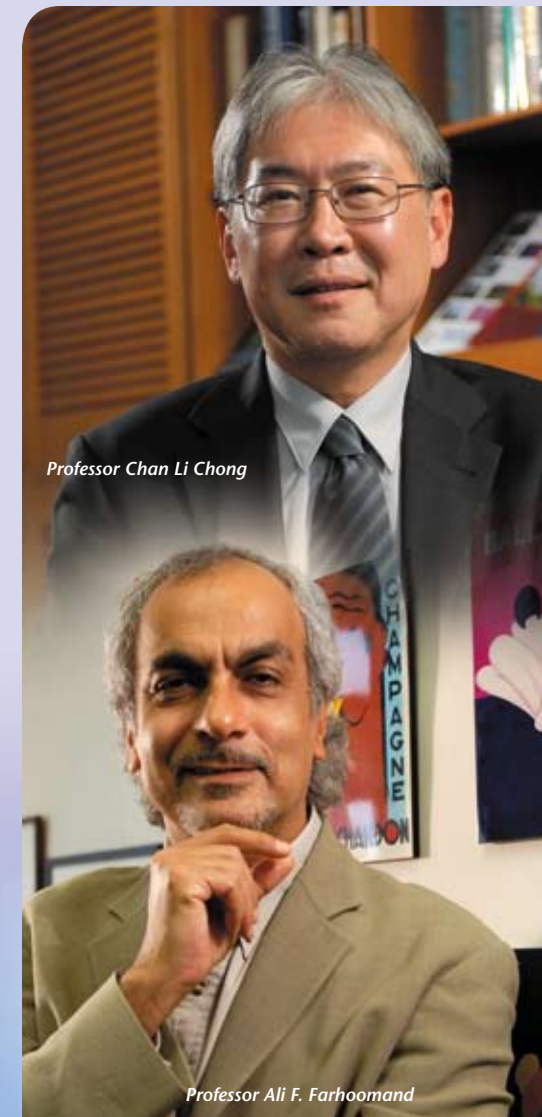
"I have had various chances to get to know Professor Chan in person and he has always been an approachable teacher out of the classroom."

Professor Ali F. Farhoomand *School of Business*

In the past two years Professor Farhoomand has received two teaching awards. In 2006, students in the Shanghai IMBA programme elected him their favourite teacher and, in 2007, he won the Faculty Outstanding Teacher Award for his use of unique and creative teaching pedagogy in training students to think creatively and critically.

Professor Farhoomand says: "In the last couple of years I have spent a fair bit of time reading, thinking and reflecting about epistemology, teaching and learning. It has led me to the firm belief that we need to shift our primary responsibility as educators from teaching to generating knowledge and facilitating student learning through introspection and cognitive engagement with what they aim to learn."

His former exchange student, Andrew Chang, offers this quote from Professor Farhoomand on the first day of class. "People don't resist change. They resist being changed." And Chang adds: "The best lessons are the ones that stay with you long after graduation; the tools that you apply in the real world and the gems that change the way you think. Professor Ali was more than just a teacher. He was a consultant and a coach; a mentor and partner; a philosopher and poet."



Professor Chan Li Chong

Professor Ali F. Farhoomand


Mr Richard Anthony Glofcheski *Department of Law*

Dean of the Faculty of Law, Professor Johannes Chan describes Mr Glofcheski as 'one of our best teachers' and adds, "I don't recall any other colleague who has achieved such highly positive ratings from students consistently for so many consecutive years. It is fair to say he is one of the most sought after teachers in the Department. Many students regard him as a teacher, a mentor, a counsellor and a friend."

Mr Glofcheski says he attempt to achieve deep and reflective learning through careful course design, a diversity of teaching and assessment methods selected to ensure that student interest is maintained and that students engage with the subject matter in a meaningful way.

"I strive for this goal in both my large (265 students) and small group (12 students) teaching, despite the inherent obstacles," he says.

Student Maria Li says: "If you think law is boring, go and attend Mr Glofcheski's tort lectures! His stimulating style of delivery has made law fascinating to the many legal minds he has cultivated throughout his years of teaching. He is very passionate about law and his astounding expertise has won him respect both from his fellow colleagues and the student body."

Dr Julia Christine Kuehn *School of English*

Dr Kuehn is described as a popular teacher. According to the Head of the School of English, Dr Tong Qing Sheng, students' responses to her teaching are nothing less than enthusiastic. "Her courses attract large numbers, her teaching evaluations are consistently at the top of the School's SET scores."

Dr Kuehn says the three educational goals at the heart of her teaching are firstly, to make her students enthusiastic and good readers; secondly, to help them read cultures different from their own; and, thirdly, for them to become lifelong readers in, and with an understanding of, a multi-cultural world.

"In today's increasingly complex globalized world, we need to equip students with tools to read this world: read information, read people, read people from another culture, read traditions, familiar and foreign, read relationships. We need students to become good readers."

Master of Philosophy candidate Mary Lo Ying Wa adds: "I do not believe there is a 'perfect' teacher on earth and indeed 'perfection' is not necessarily what we want from a teacher. But our teacher, Dr Kuehn, certainly comes close! Professional, responsible, knowledgeable, patient, helpful, kind – these are perhaps the adjectives commonly used to describe what a good teacher should be."

Dr Becky Loo Pui Ying *Department of Geography*

Dr Loo brings a synthesis of teaching and research to her classrooms and has applied that in her contributions to curriculum development and design at HKU.

"My teaching philosophy is this: research informs teaching, teaching inspires research," she says.

"University teaching is more than knowledge transfer. It is also the transfer of a researcher's quest for new knowledge, scientific and logical thinking, and passion. In teaching, I find talking about interesting research problems and the latest research developments to be the most effective means of reaching out to my students. The crux is not how well I am as a researcher but how much the students are getting from me as a teacher."

Her former student, Francis Chan Cheong Fai, says Dr Loo inspires students to think deeply and encourages them to discuss what they were learning.

"We had to spend quite some time in research and discussion before we could reach a conclusion. This created much interaction among classmates before class. I found that sitting in Dr Loo's class was not merely a transfer of knowledge, it was really fun and there was active learning in every class."

Dr Stephen Brian Pointing *School of Biological Sciences*

Dr Pointing has made continued efforts to improve his teaching and ignite students' interest, including obtaining an MBA in Education Management. "He is highly regarded by his students for his effective and innovative teaching and learning methods, and he is one of the pioneers in the Faculty in using an outcome-based learning approach," the Dean of Science, Professor Kwok Sun, says.

Dr Pointing believes in enabling students to learn how to learn and being willing to adapt his courses in light of student feedback.

"My overall philosophy is summarized by the word 'enthusiasm' and this is a recurrent theme in feedback comments from students. I have always strived to project and communicate my own enthusiasm for learning to students and am convinced that this has a positive reinforcement on their attitude towards science subjects (which can appear a little 'dry' if not taught well) and the overall learning process and experience in higher education," he says.

Student Christine Lo concurs. "He actively seeks opinions from students about the curriculum, and is always willing to push forward sensible changes to make the major more attractive. Additionally, he answers every question intensely and passionately, and that kind of enthusiasm has really inspired me and increased my interest in microbiology."



Dr Agnes Fung Yee Tiwari

Dr Ben Young

Dr Agnes Fung Yee Tiwari *Department of Nursing Studies*

Dr Tiwari has made significant contributions to the development and implementation of the nursing curriculum, in particular the MNurs (PT) programme, and has published extensively on problem-based learning.

She approaches teaching with the belief that students are enthusiastic, interested and driven, and her role is to help them develop these qualities further.

“As a teacher responsible for educating professionals, I aim to ensure that not only do students achieve professional competence on graduation, but they are also able to reason, integrate and apply their knowledge and skills in real-life professional situations in a humane, safe, competent and empathetic manner,” she says.

“The learning that takes place in the workplace is also integrated into the curriculum to ensure a holistic professional learning experience.”

PhD candidate Janet Wong Yuen Ha has found Dr Tiwari to be an inspiring and supportive teacher. “She is always creative in her teaching and she makes her lessons pleasurable and fun. She believes teaching is not only knowledge transfer but also how to keep the learning momentum going. Therefore, she tries her best to give students confidence and motivates them to be independent and have a lifelong-learning attitude.”

Dr Ben Young *Department of Civil Engineering*

The Head of the Department of Civil Engineering, Professor Albert Kwan Kwok Hung, describes Dr Young as ‘a devoted and enthusiastic teacher’ who is popular with students and always willing to spend extra time helping them outside classes. These qualities are among the seven ‘musts’ that Dr Young believes comprise teaching excellence.

“You must have a heart for your students; you must spend time to prepare for lectures; you must present well in lectures; you must always make students think in lectures; you must have two-way communication in lectures; you must get feedback from students; you must always think of ways to improve,” he says.

Dr Young normally devotes 10-14 hours per hour of lecture when preparing new lecture notes, and his use of models to illustrate complicated ideas has earned high praise from students.

Student Ng Ka Wai recalls how he helped his class visualize torsion in mechanics. “To show us how a bar fails in torsion and to reinforce the knowledge in our mind, he gave each of us a pretzel stick and instructed everyone to follow his procedures, and the pretzel broke in the way it was calculated to do,” he says. “Dr Young is very good at delivering his knowledge to us.”

Outstanding Research Student Supervisor Award

This prize is granted in recognition of supervisors of research postgraduate students whose guidance has been particularly helpful to their students in the pursuit of excellence. Award winners receive a monetary award of \$25,000 to further their research.

Professor Ricky Man Ying Keung *Department of Pharmacology and Pharmacy*

Professor Man’s former PhD student and now Assistant Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Pharmacy, Dr Susan Leung Wai Sum, was delighted to present a citation on her former supervisor. Here’s part of what she had to say:

“As a supervisor, Professor Man has fostered an environment for his students to be independent, while knowing that he is always there to provide guidance and support. He also gives enormous freedom to do what we want in our research, while keeping us on track with our research hypotheses. And his support does not end with the completion of the postgraduate degree. He has a tradition of taking the graduate out for lunch after the submission of his/her thesis and advising his students on their own strengths and weaknesses in preparation for facing the outside world. I consider myself very lucky to have had Professor Man as my supervisor.”

**Professor Irene Ng Oi Lin Loke Yew** *Professor in Pathology, Department of Pathology*

Professor Ng’s PhD candidate, Carmen Wong Chak Lui, was full of praise for her supervisor. She said. “She is not only a brilliant pathologist and scientist but also an excellent supervisor. She is a supportive and considerate mentor and has taught me that the training process is the most important thing for students in their studies.

“There is never a hierarchical atmosphere between Professor Ng and me. I remember her saying that it is very important to have mutual understanding between supervisor and student so that we can plan and work together for the best solution. What has touched me most is that she always regards her students as a priority and really hopes to see them shine in their careers. Despite her great achievements in research and teaching, she has always been a very humble and genuine person.”

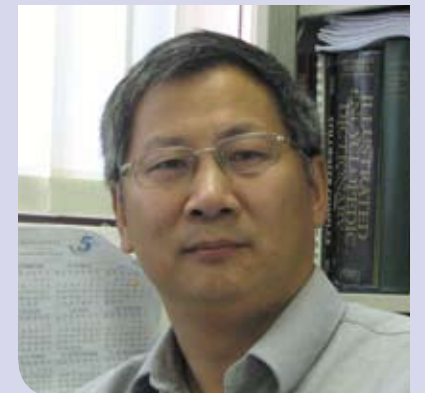
Professor Ng has formerly won the Outstanding Researcher Award, and the Croucher Senior Medical Research Fellowship.

Dr Zhou Mei Fu *Department of Earth Sciences*

Dr Zhou is a geochemist who received the University’s Outstanding Young Researcher Award in 2004. His former PhD student, Dr Pang Kwan Nang, shares his views on what makes Dr Zhou an excellent supervisor.

“He knows the strengths and weaknesses of his students very well and has reasonable expectations of them. He encourages students to try publishing one or more representative articles in the best possible journals. Over the past seven years, his students have published more than 25 peer-reviewed articles, as a first author, in international journals of geology and geochemistry. Among them, two students were granted Outstanding Research Postgraduate Student Awards by HKU.

“I had several opportunities to work in laboratories in the United States and China as part of my PhD studies, which were very useful in establishing links to researchers I am currently collaborating with. He also invested a great deal of effort in bringing his students into contact with potential employers.”



Outstanding Young Researcher Award

The Outstanding Young Researcher Award is bestowed on academics under the age of 40 who have shown great promise in their research accomplishments. Winners receive a monetary award of \$150,000 per year for two years to further their research.

Dr Chris Chan Tsun Leung *Department of Pathology*

Dr Chan has won numerous awards in his research career. In 1997 and 1998 he was granted the Young Investigator Award for two consecutive years from the Hong Kong International Cancer Congress. He also won the prestigious Scholar-in-Training Award in 2001 and the AACR-ITO EN Scholar-in-Training Award in 2004 from the American Association for Cancer Research.

He is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of Pathology and one of the key members of the 2007 Research Output Prize from the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine.

Dr Chan's investigations are committed to the genetic diagnosis of hereditary colorectal cancer (CRC). He has identified founder mutations (recurrent mutations descending from a unique origin) which constitute one of the key factors accounting for the high incidence of early-onset CRC in the local population. The most influential founder mutation has been identified in 30 unrelated families and is presumed to have arisen from the delta region more than 100 generations ago.

Dr Annie Cheung Shann Yue *Department of Law*

Dr Cheung is an Associate Professor in the Department of Law where she has twice been awarded the Faculty's Research Output Prize (in 2006 and 2007). Her work includes studies on the prevention of domestic violence, the changing concept of privacy, and freedom on the Internet. One of her current projects is on the increasing reliance on the Internet as a 'human flesh search engine.'

In 2004, she was awarded a Universitas 21 fellowship to study the mobilization of public opinion despite apparent tight censorship in Mainland China.

Because of her work on Internet free speech and governance she was invited to join the Open Net Initiative in 2008, an international project hosted by Harvard University, University of Cambridge and the University of Toronto.

Dr Edmund Lam Yin Mun

Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering

Dr Lam was intrigued by semiconductors from a very young age and he has focused that interest on imaging – specifically, using computation to enhance the quality of images for analysis and reduce the data acquisition in developing more powerful and cost-effective imaging modalities. He is investigating how these can be applied in semiconductor manufacturing and biomedical systems.



Dr Edmund Lam Yin Mun

Dr Chris Chan Tsun Leung

Dr Siok Wai Ting

Dr Patrick Henry Toy

Dr Annie Cheung Shann Yue

He brings both academic and business experiences to his research. In between obtaining a PhD from Stanford University and joining the University of Hong Kong, where he is now Associate Professor, he spent a couple of years working as an engineer in Silicon Valley.

This experience led him to undertake research on a highly successful hi-tech enterprise in semiconductor equipment manufacturing, as part of a book he co-authored. He emerged with a deeper knowledge of the technology and also better insights into leadership and management and an appreciation of the value of high technology in Hong Kong.

Dr Siok Wai Ting *School of Humanities*

Dr Siok and her collaborators identified a region of the human brain that plays a pivotal role in Chinese reading and also showed how reading disabilities can result in children learning to read Chinese when there are abnormalities in this area. Her work has been published in *Nature* and other prestigious journals and has attracted widespread academic recognition and mass media coverage.

Dr Siok is a specialist in neurolinguistics, reading and language disorders, and bilingualism, and uses magnetic resonance imaging to uncover the brain mechanisms involved in reading and language processing. She hopes to extend her work further to develop intervention strategies in developmental dyslexia.

She holds a PhD from HKU and completed two years of postdoctoral training at Stanford University. In addition to being Assistant Professor in the Department of Linguistics, she is also a principal investigator of the State Key Laboratory of Brain and Cognitive Sciences.

Dr Patrick Henry Toy *Department of Chemistry*

Dr Toy is working on developing new methodologies and technologies to improve and simplify the processes of organic synthesis. Since he joined the University in 2001 he has investigated such things as industrial wastewater treatment and new organic chemical reactions.

Dr Toy's work has been published in a number of prestigious scientific journals and, according to the *ISI Essential Science Indicators*, he has been among the top 1% of scientists publishing in chemistry-related journals over the past decade. His work has also been cited by the American Chemical Society Green Chemistry Institute Pharmaceutical Roundtable.

Dr Toy received his PhD from Wayne State University, in the United States, in 1998 and worked at Scripps Research Institute and Wyeth before joining HKU. He is currently Associate Professor of Chemistry.

Outstanding Researcher Award

The Outstanding Researcher Award is granted in recognition of exceptional research accomplishments of international merit. Award winners receive a monetary award of \$250,000 to further their research.

Dr Jin Dong Yan *Department of Biochemistry*

An Associate Professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Dr Jin's research focuses primarily on the molecular basis of viral oncogenesis. He uses a combination of biochemical and genetic approaches to conduct basic research on cancer-related genes and mechanisms with the aim of applying the knowledge gained to therapeutic interventions of human cancer. In his study of human T-cell leukemia virus type 1 oncoprotein Tax in 1998, he identified a cellular protein named MAD1, a key component of the mitotic checkpoint that guards against abnormal division of cells. In 2006, his group characterized another centrosomal target of Tax protein that contributes to the development of abnormal numbers of chromosomes in leukemia cells. More recent work from his team in 2008 revealed a new mechanism in which the Epstein-Barr virus uses a viral microRNA molecule to promote the survival of tumour cells in nasopharyngeal carcinoma.

Dr Jin has received a National Natural Science Award of China (2001), a Scholar Award from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, USA (2001-2006), and a New Foreign Investigator Award under the Global Health Research Initiative Program of the National Institute of Health (2002-2008).

Professor James Lam *Department of Mechanical Engineering*

Croucher Fellow and Scholar, Professor Lam is interested in researching model reduction, robust control and filtering of dynamic systems. He has developed fundamental stability and synthesis theories for different classes of dynamic systems including delay, singular and stochastic systems.

He has co-authored a monograph entitled *Robust Control and Filtering of Singular Systems* (Springer 2006) and many journal articles in these areas. His articles in stability analysis and system synthesis have been widely cited by researchers.

On the professional service side, he is currently serving eight SCI journal editorial boards, including *Automatica*, *IEEE Transactions on Signal Processing*, and the *Journal of Sound and Vibration*. He was editor-in-chief of the *IEEE Transactions on Signal Processing: Control Theory of Applications*. He is a member of the Engineering Panel of the Research Grants Council.

The forces that drive Professor Lam to conduct research are his unending curiosity about nature and his never-diminishing desire for knowledge. When working with young researchers, he holds to Confucius' words: "Now the humane man, wishing himself to be established, sees that others are established and, wishing himself to be successful, sees that others are successful."

Professor Luke Kang Kwong *School of Humanities*

Professor Luke's research spans a wide range of topics from Phonology and Syntax to Sociolinguistics, Computational Linguistics and Neurolinguistics. In spite of their apparent variety, these topics can all be traced back to a common theme – that of the interface between language structure and language function. Professor Luke has researched the complicated ways in which prosody and word order variation in different languages (including Chinese, English, French, German, Greek and Japanese) are employed to serve cognitive and social functions. He has also conducted groundbreaking work on the neuro-cognitive processing of syntax and semantics in Chinese and English bilinguals.

A firm believer in the importance of using new techniques and innovative methodologies to crack old puzzles, Professor Luke's research is characterized by a high degree of interdisciplinarity. He has a close working relationship with specialists in such diverse fields as Psychology, Sociology, Cognitive Neuroscience, and Natural Language Processing in many parts of the world.

Professor Luke gained his PhD on a Commonwealth Scholarship from the University of York in the United Kingdom, in 1988. He was appointed Founding Head of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hong Kong in 1997.

Professor Tse Hung Fat

*William M.W. Mong Professor in Cardiology,
Department of Medicine*

Professor Tse is a pioneer in stem cells and cardiovascular regenerative medicine, and produced the first randomized controlled study in humans on using bone marrow stem cells to treat ischemic heart disease.

Recently he has extended his investigations into the use of gene-based and embryonic stem cell-based therapy for cardiac regeneration. His research interests also cover cardiac pacing and electrophysiology and vascular biology, and he established the first animal laboratory in Hong Kong for research and training in cardiovascular medicine.

Professor Tse is keen to develop the potential of translational research and he believes the key to this is close collaboration and interaction between scientists, engineers and clinicians, as well as his enthusiastic research students. "My long-term mission is to develop novel gene and/or cell therapies that can potentially revolutionize the practice of cardiovascular medicine," he said.

Professor Tse was awarded the Outstanding Young Researcher Award in 2003 and is also Deputy Director of the Research Centre of Heart, Brain, Hormone and Healthy Aging at HKU.

Professor Wong Wing Tak *Department of Chemistry*

Professor Wong's work has had a seminal impact in the field of chemical imaging and received much attention from the global scientific community. His work on MRI contrast agents has also shown commercial potential and generated several excellent scientific papers. He has been granted three international and US patents and his paper citation is cited among the top 1% in the world by *ISI Essential Science Indicators*.

Professor Wong's research interests include metal cluster and nanoparticles, X-ray crystallography and lanthanide chemistry, as well as MRI contrast agents and luminescent probes for chemical imaging. He has published more than 350 research papers in these areas, at the same time training 30 PhD and four MPhil graduates, many of whom now work as academics or professional chemists.

Professor Wong obtained his PhD from the University of Cambridge, after completing a BSc and MPhil at HKU. He was named an Outstanding Young Researcher at HKU in 2001 and Outstanding Research Student Supervisor in 2003, and was awarded a Croucher Senior Research Fellowship in 2002. He believes the honours and credit he has received should be shared with his research students, because of their contributions to his success.

Dr Jin Dong Yan

Professor James Lam

Professor Luke Kang Kwong

Professor Tse Hung Fat

Professor Wong Wing Tak

Research Output Prize

Architecture

The first integrated comprehensive examination of China's urban development in a dynamic market has changed the prevailing view of state intervention in space commodification in China. The research was published in the book *Urban Development in Post-reform China: State, Market, and Space* by Professor Wu Fulong, Dr Xu Jiang and Professor Anthony Yeh Gar On, and has been praised by scholars in the field.

Arts

A biography of the Prussian top civil servant, Georg Michaelis, who became the sixth German Imperial Chancellor in 1917, offers a more balanced portrayal of this historic figure and his deeds, as well as a better understanding of his times. *Georg Michaelis: Prussian Official, Imperial Chancellor, Christian Reformer 1857-1936* (as translated from the German original) was written by Dr Bert Becker.

Business and Economics

'Having It All' No Longer: Fertility, Female Labor Supply and the New Life Choices of Generation X' sums up the changes Dr James Vere found among younger women in the labour force. This paper is the first to show they are exhibiting less labour force attachment and having more children, which has implications for policy-makers. The paper was published in *Demography*.

Dentistry

Puerarin is a common health supplement in dishes in Asian meals and new research suggests it can also stimulate bone formation. The discovery by Dr Ricky Wong Wing Kit and Professor Abou Bakr Mahmoud Rabie opens up a new area of research in bone tissue engineering. 'Effects of Puerarin on Bone Formation' was published in *OsteoArthritis and Cartilage*.

Education

A pioneering study on 'The Influence of the Language that Hong Kong Primary School Students Habitually Speak at Home on their Chinese Reading Ability in School' has received international honours and is having an impact on literacy curriculum design and development in the region. The paper was written by a team led by Professor Tse Shek Kam and published in the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*.

Engineering

Interdisciplinary work between engineers and scientists has resulted in a unique model to predict the spatial and temporal occurrence of red tides and algal blooms. 'A Simple Model for Forecast of Coastal Algal Blooms', by Dr Ken Wong Tse Man, Professor Joseph Lee Hun Wei and Professor John Hodgkiss, was one of the most downloaded articles in 2007 in *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science*.

Law

A comparison of the telecom-sector competition laws of Hong Kong and Singapore evaluates both regimes in the context of international practices and microeconomic concepts. The paper, 'A Tale of Two Competition Law Regimes – The Telecom-Sector Competition Regulation in Hong Kong and Singapore' earned a Young Writers' Award nomination for Mr Thomas Cheng Kin Hon from the journal *World Competition*.

Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine

A new treatment approach for demyelinating diseases of the central nervous system, such as multiple sclerosis, has been recognized by many international scientific organizations and had tremendous impact. 'LINGO-1 Antagonist Promotes Spinal Cord Remyelination and Axonal Integrity in MOG-induced Experimental Autoimmune Encephalomyelitis' was written by a team led by Mi Sha and published in *Nature Medicine*.

Science

Professor Vesselin Drensky and Professor Yu Jietai solved a long-standing open problem concerning free associative algebras and also produced algorithms that, together, will have a significant effect in the field for many years. 'The Strong Anick Conjecture is True' resolved this conjecture in combinatorial and computational algebra. The paper was published in the *Journal of the European Mathematical Society*.

Social Sciences

Five centuries of evidence was assembled to show how climate change affects human population dynamics, by changing regional food production which in turn leads to competition in the form of war. 'Global Climate Change, War and Population Decline in Recent Human History', written by a team led by Professor David Zhang Dian, has attracted global attention and was published in *The National Academy of Sciences of the USA*.

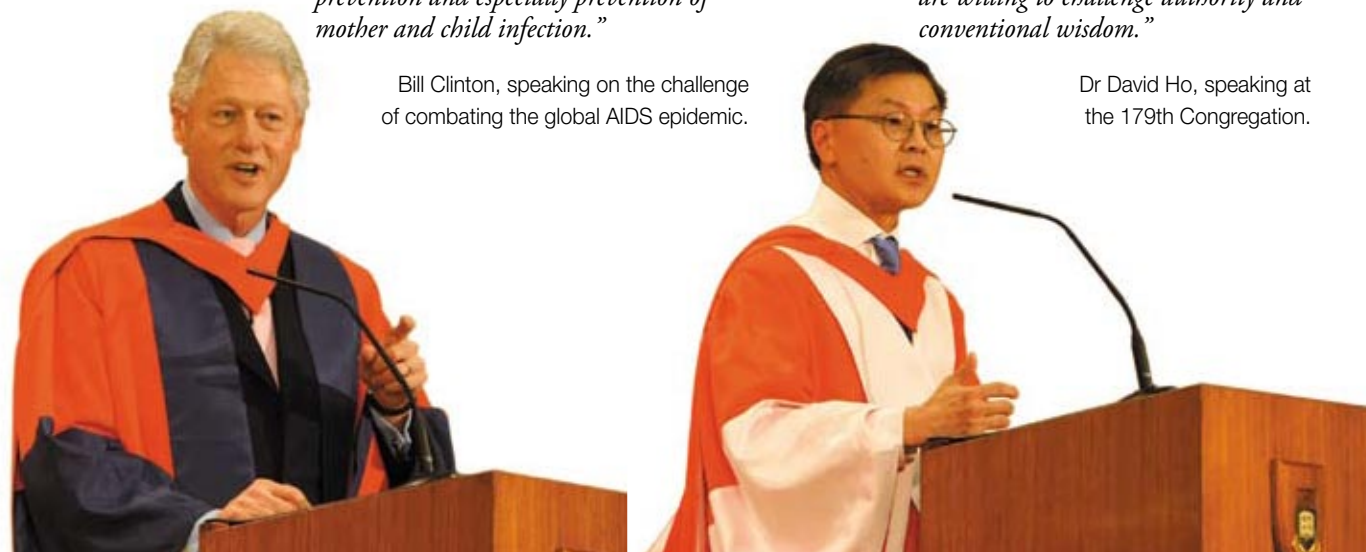
Honorary Degrees

"We need people who are trained to provide basic healthcare including the testing, prevention and especially prevention of mother and child infection."

Bill Clinton, speaking on the challenge of combating the global AIDS epidemic.

"Major advances in science have often been brought forth by individuals who are willing to challenge authority and conventional wisdom."

Dr David Ho, speaking at the 179th Congregation.



179th
Congregation
第一百七十九屆學位頒授典禮

The University has had the pleasure of holding two separate Honorary Degree Congregations this academic year.

In December, Chancellor of the University, Dr the Honourable Donald Tsang Yam Kuen, conferred honorary degrees on such luminaries as former President of the United States, Bill Clinton (Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*) and former *Time* magazine 'Man of the Year', Dr David Ho (Doctor of Science *honoris causa*), at the 179th Congregation, in recognition of their shared commitment to humanitarian causes and global leadership in HIV/AIDS research and advocacy.

Mr Clinton and Dr Ho spoke to over 800 guests at the University's Loke Yew Hall. The Honourable **William Jefferson Clinton** was the 42nd President of the United States of America, and under his leadership, the country enjoyed the strongest economy in a generation and the longest economic expansion in US history, including the creation of more than 22 million jobs.

Following his time in Office, he established the William J. Clinton Foundation with the mission of strengthening the capacity of people around the world to meet the challenges of global interdependence. The Foundation includes Clinton HIV/AIDS

Initiative, which is helping 1.4 million people living with HIV/AIDS access lifesaving drugs.

Mr Clinton said: "We now have pots of money available, even in this economic downturn, that can be used to purchase most of the medicine for most of the poor people in the world. But with AIDS medicine, you can't simply fly over a remote village and drop it out of a parachute, and pretend that everything will go right."

Dr David Ho is the Scientific Director and CEO of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center, and Irene Diamond Professor and Physician at the Rockefeller University, New York. He has been at the forefront of AIDS research for three decades and is credited, worldwide, with fundamentally changing the way scientists look at the AIDS virus, initiating a crucial shift in the treatment paradigm to hitting the virus early and hard with a combination of antiretroviral drugs.

Dr Ho said: "As our world is becoming smaller in the era of globalization, I strongly believe that we must adopt the best core values from each culture, East or West, North or South. The real decision in front of us is not to which nationality we belong, but how we can become better citizens of the world."

180th Congregation

第一百八十屆學位頒授典禮

At the 180th Congregation, in March, five outstanding individuals were conferred honorary degrees in recognition of their distinguished service and commitment to the University, to the community, and to academia.

The recipients were Dr Evgeny Igorevich Kissin (Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*), Dr Rita Fan Hsu Lai Tai, Dr Robert Ho Hung Ngai, Dr Lam Shan Muk, and Dr Mok Hing Yiu (all Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*).

Dr Evgeny Igorevich Kissin was born in Moscow in October 1971 and began to play the piano at the age of two. He entered the Moscow Gnessin School of Music at six, and came to international attention in 1984, when at the age of 12, he performed Chopin's Piano Concertos at the Moscow



Conservatory with the Moscow State Philharmonic. Since his first appearance outside Russia in 1985, he has performed in the world's greatest halls. In 1994 he was named Musical America's youngest 'Instrumentalist of the Year', and was the youngest awardee of the Triumph Award in 1997, for his outstanding contribution to Russia's culture.

Dr Rita Fan Hsu Lai Tai was born in 1945, in Shanghai, and attended the St Stephen's Girls' College in Hong Kong. She is a HKU graduate and was appointed a member of the Legislative Council in 1983 and, in 1989, became an Executive Councillor and the Chairperson of Education Commission.

She served as a member of the Preliminary Working Committee for the HKSAR and the Preparatory Committee for the HKSAR, and was elected President of first the Provisional Legislative Council, from 1997-98, and later the Legislative Council for three terms – the first woman to be elected to the post, and also its longest-serving. She is currently a Member of the Standing Committee of the Eleventh National People's Congress of the PRC.



“University education is the training of one's mind, the process of developing the potential in each student, the formation of positive attitudes, the gaining of insight into one's own strength and weaknesses, and the ability to understand the needs of others.”

Dr Rita Fan Hsu Lai Tai in her address delivered on behalf of the recipients.

Dr Robert Ho Hung Ngai, Chairman of the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation, was born in 1932 in Hong Kong. He obtained his BA from Colgate University and his Master of Science degree in Journalism from Columbia University, in the United States.

He worked as a reporter with the *Pittsburgh Press*, before returning to Hong Kong, where he joined the *Kung Sheung Daily News*, established by his late grandfather, Sir Robert Ho Tung, where he served until his retirement. Dr Ho has contributed enormously to the local development of journalism and was Chairman of the Newspaper Society of Hong Kong for several years.



Dr Lam Shan Muk (more commonly known by his pen names, Lam Hang Chi and Shih Wei De) was born in 1940, and raised on the Mainland. After coming to Hong Kong, he joined the *Ming Pao Daily* in the early 1960s. After studying Economics at the Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology, he returned to Hong Kong in 1969 and joined the *Ming Pao Evening News*, leading its financial section.

Dr Lam founded the *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, in 1973, and the *Hong Kong Economic Journal Monthly*, in 1977. For 25 years, he wrote a daily column, 'Politics and Economics Review', in which he analysed Hong Kong and international affairs. His writing has been anthologized in over 100 books in Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Mainland.



Dr Mok Hing Yiu was born in 1923 and is the great-grandson of the first comprador of the British firm Butterfield & Swire (Taikoo). He joined HKU's Medical Faculty in 1939, as a King Edward VII Scholar, but his studies were interrupted by the outbreak of war. He received a wartime MBBS degree from HKU in 1947 and was awarded the Hong Kong Defence Medal and the Auxiliary Medical Service Medal for his wartime service.

He served in the Government's Medical and Health Department, as Acting Medical Specialist, and started his own practice in 1953.

Dr Mok was Honorary Lecturer in Medicine, at HKU, from 1951-52, he has served as Vice-President and President of the HKU Alumni Association, and supported the endowment of the Mok Hing-Yiu Professorship in Respiratory Medicine, in 2007, and the Mok Hing-Yiu Distinguished Visiting Professorships, in 2008.

Nine Honoured as University Fellows

Nine distinguished individuals were awarded Honorary University Fellowships in recognition of their contributions to the University and the community, in December.

The recipients included Mr Robert Allcock, Mr Chung Po Yang, Ir Dr the Honourable Raymond Ho Chung Tai, Ms Leonie Ki Man Fung, Mr Colin Lam Ko Yin, Dr Sarah Mary Liao Sau Tung, Dr Lawrence Ng Ming Loy, Ms Esther Suen Chi Lan, and Dr Allan Wong Chi Yun.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, said the fellowships were a means for the University to salute those who have made important contributions in their own unique ways and to reaffirm the links between town and gown.

In honouring these individuals, Professor Tsui praised the newly-awarded fellows as 'true examples of courage and leadership, because they themselves lead by example.' ■



A Dialogue with Hong Kong's Last Governor



Hong Kong's last Governor, Chris Patten spoke to over 800 students, members and friends of the HKU community at Loke Yew Hall in November, in his second visit to HKU since 1997.

In the one-hour forum Lord Patten explored imminent global issues facing our world today with five HKU student panelists and members of the audience. Drawing on his new book, *What Next? Surviving the Twenty-First Century*, the discussion revolved around globalization, energy, international crime, weapons of mass destruction, nuclear proliferation, small arms proliferation, climate change, water shortage, migration and health epidemics.

Lord Patten was warmly welcomed by HKU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, together with Court members, staff, students, alumni, donors, diplomats and journalists. His last visit was in November 2005 when he spoke about the rise of Asia.

Lord Patten was the last Governor of Hong Kong and also former Chancellor of The University of Hong Kong from 1992 to 1997. He is currently the co-chair of the International Crisis Group and of the Anglo-Indian Round Table, and Chancellor of Oxford and Newcastle universities. ■

Let There be Light: UK Government Science Advisor Talks at HKU

The UK Government Chief Scientific Advisor (GCSA) and Head of the Government Office for Science, Professor John Beddington, delivered a Distinguished Lecture on scientific innovation at the University, in April.

In *Let there be Light! How science, innovation and technology offer hope for emerging from our current economic turmoil*, Beddington showed how a new era of innovation will be essential for all countries to maintain their competitiveness in the midst of our current economic crisis.

A former professor at Imperial College, London, Beddington shared his view on Britain's science, innovation and technology strengths, and how these can contribute to helping the UK, Europe and the rest of the world recover from the current economic and financial turmoil.

Beddington's main research interests are the application of biological and economic analysis to

problems of Natural Resource Management including *inter alia*: fisheries, pest control, wildlife management and the control of disease. ■



Masters to Groom Artistic Sense

A visiting artists scheme brings masters to campus.

Artistic university students in Hong Kong are getting a chance to learn from world-renowned masters of their crafts, under HKU's University Artists Scheme.

The scheme is the first of its kind in Hong Kong and was launched last year to bring together young and established artists in an intellectual environment. The artists offer workshops, screenings, exhibitions and/or performances, and some of the sessions are credit-bearing.

Several artists have already held sessions on campus, including film directors Ann Hui On Wah and Peter Chan Ho Sun, theatre director Dr Vicki Ooi, and virtuoso violinist Yao Jue.

Students from other universities can participate in the scheme and in February, Ms Yao held a master class for four students from HKU, Baptist University and the Academy of Performing Arts, who had to submit audition tapes.

"This is the first time I have done a master class at a university in Hong Kong and it is very good and generous that it was not limited to HKU students," said Ms Yao, who also runs her own music school and has an intense interest in education.

She believes there are some things young artists can learn only from other artists, such as how to progress to the next stage of their craft – something she gained from master classes at Juilliard and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

"Artists have to be constantly maturing and taking in more things so they can communicate the music to the audience. If you don't grow yourself, your music will be dull. The teacher can give you so many things, then you have to make it your own, you have to think about it and get your own understanding so it's not a copy, it's something that develops in you and sooner or later it becomes yours."

Ms Yao's enthusiasm inspired Bill Chan, a fourth-year HKU LLB student who attended her master class and has played the violin for more than 15 years.

"She was energetic and passionate in her teaching and she had so many things to say that the class ran over time. She looked at all the basics and fundamentals of our playing and gave us very useful feedback," he said.

Ms Yao also performed a recital on campus in November and participated in a multi-media event with students in April, during which she did much of the learning.

"The multi-media concert was really interesting. It was not just teachers and music students, there were others, like poetry students, who were connecting between each piece. And all the media that was involved. One piece was based on the original Nokia ring tone. You would never come across this kind of idea in the classical field. I have worked with pop stars, too, but I've never done anything like this before," she said.

The University Artists Scheme, which is hosted by the Faculty of Arts and supported by the Wah Ching Fund, will soon present percussionist Dr Lung Heung Wing, and other artists are being lined up. It is hoped the scheme will link HKU to the global network of visiting artist programmes. ■



Yao Jue performs at HKU

Hong Kong's Oldest Museum: A Well-Kept Secret

Curator Yeung Chun Tong and his team operate the University's 53-year-old Museum with both strategy and passion.

Established in 1953 in the Fung Ping Shan Building, the University Museum and Art Gallery is a little gem of Chinese treasures.

Over the last five decades it has proved a pioneer in many respects, being the first art gallery in Hong Kong to see the value of contemporary Chinese oil paintings, and the first to collaborate with museums on the Mainland.

Museum Director, Mr Yeung Chun Tong, has spent almost his entire career at the Museum, joining in 1976 as Assistant to the Curator. He recalls that after 1977, the Museum started to hold more exhibitions and educational activities then, in 1979 became first museum in Hong Kong to collaborate with a museum in China.

"That exhibition displayed ceramic sculptures from Shiwan, near Guangzhou. After its success we, and the other government museums, started to do more projects with Mainland China.

"At that time we had a quite comprehensive collection of Chinese ceramics, but only a few of them were masterpieces, so we tried to acquire more study pieces for teaching – that was our acquisition policy."

But poor funding has always been an issue and has limited the scope of what the Museum has been able to achieve. "It takes a lot of money to mount an exhibition of ancient Chinese art," says Yeung. "If we borrow an exhibition from China we have to pay a loan fee, transport costs, insurance, hospitality for Chinese visitors."

But he is philosophical about their limitations. "All museums suffer from a lack of funding – even the British Museum has this problem. We have to be realistic, we have to work our programme and build up our collection within a limited budget."

Strong public support, from the likes of Dr Annie Wong and Dr T.T. Tsui, has helped enormously in building up collections and also expanding into a new building.

"In the mid-1990s we entered a new phase, we had more funding, recruited more staff and I was lucky enough to become the Director in 1997."

Unfortunately, he has discovered that Hong Kong

people, and local schools, have little interest in museums. "When I ask the teachers and principals why they don't send their students to our museums they have many reasons – not enough time, too much preparation to organize – but I think the government should do more to promote museum visits, it should be part of the regular school programme.

"Traditionally we study text books. Most schools have libraries so students can learn from books, but libraries collect only written works, all thoughts are in book form. In contrast, museums contain a different type of information, it's visual. This information is firsthand, made by ancient peoples.



"All the works here are historical records. When you think about it, almost all students study history – architecture students, medical student – history is a compulsory subject. I am not just talking about a museum of art, we should also have museums of medical history, natural history and so on. That's why museum education is so important, but unfortunately it is neglected here."

Earlier this year the Museum displayed over 100 artifacts, spanning a thousand years, from the Ningxia region of northern China. Held in collaboration with the Ningxia Cultural Relics Bureau, the exhibition showed the vast cultural exchange between China, the Middle East and the rest of Asia with Muslim, Buddhist and Han influences on display.

"It takes about a year to organize an exhibition like this," says Yeung. "And we can only afford to mount one of this type every two years, because of the expense, which must be covered by donations alone."

The rest of the time the team works very closely with local consulates and, last year, attracted seven thousand visitors to the Picasso exhibition, held in conjunction with the French Consulate.

The efficiency of Yeung's team is such that their exhibit hall is fully booked two years in advance.

"The consulates bring travelling exhibitions here and we provide a free venue and manpower. People realize that we can do the work within a tight budget and in very little time which, in turn, attracts new exhibits.

"We can also produce books, organize seminars, present talks, and teach art courses. We have the expertise, and this is our strength. We have many constraints, of space and budget, but we believe in working hard and learning more.

"For me, a world class museum is a memorable, impressive museum, it all depends on the quality of the activities. Not all the best movies, for example, are the ones with the biggest budget." ■

Mr Yeung Chun Tong



Getting the Green Message Across

Geologist Chan Lung Sang partners with TV programmes and celebrities to reach out to the public.

To visit Iceland and Greenland is a 'sacred imperative' for geologists, according to Earth Sciences Professor Chan Lung Sang.

To do so with TVB stars and a film crew on hand is to achieve that goal with a touch of glamour rarely seen in geological circles.

Chan was invited to be the resident expert on a TVB documentary, 'Vanishing Glacier: The Arctic Circle' in the company of actor Sammul Chan Kin Fung, actress-singer Bernice Liu and TVB general manager Stephen Chan Chi Wan.

They travelled to volcanic Iceland and stood on a plain where the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates meet, then ventured to the barren Greenland mass where they were treated to a daily northern lights show.

"There's a lot of emphasis on science outreach these days and making science more accessible and visible. But we

scientists often talk in a very technical manner and sometimes it's inscrutable. That's why this partnership with the media works very well. They have the gift to explain complex things in simple terms and they can relate to the general audience," Chan says.

The trip was part of his ongoing effort to promote public awareness of geological heritage and encourage preservation of sites and their environments. It is a message that is being eroded even in these remote places.

In Greenland, for example, people live a comfortable, modernized life, but are paying a price through lost traditions and growing piles of waste.

"Greenland is a land with no soil. The rubbish that can't be burned, like old computers, plastic waste and other non-combustibles, is just left out in the open on the ground. That's what modernization has brought there," Chan says.

Greenlanders have an unusual take on global warming, too – they welcome it because they believe it will bring farming to their land. "This was unexpected. What do you say? Everyone else in the world



Professor Chan Lung Sang on his travels



despises the idea of global warming," he says.

And yet, his heartfelt desire to venture to Iceland and Greenland was not without environmental impacts. Did he feel like an intruder?

"Yes," he admits. "That's why for some places, it's best to visit through photos or documentaries. And if you do visit, don't expect them to modify the land for you."

It is a message he would like Hong Kong to heed. Chan has spoken to schools and on radio and given seminars and talks to learned societies and the

general public, including a series at the Science Museum in May titled *Hong Kong Geology 360*, about such topics as Hong Kong's mineral resources, mining history, landscape and slope stability.

"The aim is to bring geology to the public and make people aware of the need to preserve Hong Kong's geological heritage. It is under threat from construction and tourism," he says.

"A lot of times people don't understand the difference between preservation and conservation. Conservation is managed development and that can involve theme parks, visitor

centres and modifying the landscape with concrete paths and the like.

"For me, I would like to see things preserved in a more pristine manner. Nature is best left untouched. This is a difficult argument to make in Hong Kong. It takes tens of millions of years for the landscape to become what it is and we shouldn't change nature to suit people by building an escalator or road at picturesque places. I strongly believe there should still be places in Hong Kong that are difficult or even impossible to get to." ■

Award-winning Poet Inspired by a Science Talk

Poet and academic Agnes Lam Shun Ling has become the first Chinese to win a Special Mention in the prestigious Nosside International Poetry Prize.

Lam, an Associate Professor and Acting Director in the University's Centre for Applied English Studies, impressed judges of the Italy-based prize with her poem, *Vanilla in the Stars*.

It explores the relationship between cosmic dust and life on Earth and, owing to her heavy workload, was the only one she managed to write in the last academic year.

"It was a busy time," she says. "We were joining Arts and there was curriculum reform. So I could not sit down to write a poem apart from that particular one."

Despite this, she possesses the soft-spoken serenity of one who spends her days in far calmer pastures, and talks warmly of her inspiration for the prize-winning poem.

It carries a line with reference to Professor Kwok Sun's (the Dean of Science) book, *Cosmic Butterflies*, and was prompted, unusually, by a conference organized by the Faculty.

"I was wondering about the connection between organic life in outer space and human life. Professor Kwok invited people from NASA to come to HKU in January 2008, and I had already been thinking about the poem for a few months. After attending the conference, I thought about it for another few months before I actually wrote it."

She also read two of Professor Kwok's books to discover more about the life and death of a star. "If you ask me what inspires me," she says, "it's not just other people's poetry. It's also any knowledge. Any knowledge is eventually imagination. Poets take information and experiences from different sources and synthesize them into something that is meaningful. Writing is a way of making sense of human experience, making sense of my own life experience and of the experiences of people around me, and trying to learn something from all this, and trying to transcend that experience."

She says her greatest inspiration comes from the lives of the people around her, but adds, "I have been interested in different things at different times in my life. I don't want to repeat myself because there isn't that much time to repeat oneself and you don't want your readers, or you yourself, to be bored."

She started writing in her teens and never planned to become a poet. "It just happened." But to date she has produced two



volumes – *Woman to Woman and Other Poems* and *Water Wood Pure Splendour* – and is currently working on a third. Her poetry is known for its accessibility and she says, "I think good poetry should be accessible. If it's not, then it's not reaching a wider audience. I do not believe in esoteric poetry. Maybe I feel that way because I am a learner of English myself, and I still feel that I'm learning the language even as I use it, and I really hope that my poems can be understood by anyone with a certain level of English. You shouldn't need literary training."

Her advice for young poets is that they should be themselves. "That's very important. If you try to be someone else, you will lose your own voice. To be yourself, you must find out what you are like, and writing may be part of that process. Reading is also part of that process. They should read as much as they can, and continue to be interested in many things because there is inspiration everywhere."

"I feel that poetry, like most forms of literature, is not just for one group of people but for people everywhere." ■

The University's School of English has launched a new Poetry Prize for unpublished writers with a winner's award of HK\$2,500 and the opportunity to have a collection of poems published by The Hong Kong University Press. Submissions are invited internationally and must be at least 48 pages in length. For more information go to www.hku.hk/english/hkupoetryprize.

Developing China: The Clash between Urban and Rural

China's rapid conversion of rural land into urban use has caused repeated social unrest in recent years. Now a new book looks at the underlying causes of these problems, and challenges the traditional view that uncontrolled, and inefficient, land use is the result of ambiguous property rights.

Professor George Lin Chu Sheng, former Head of Department of Geography, claims this over simplifies the problem and goes on to trace the root causes of this massive uncontrolled land development.

According to the constitution, China's land includes two components – land in the city is owned by the state, while in the countryside it is owned by the collective.

"Nobody actually knows who owns China's rural land," says Lin. "Even after economic reforms, land in the Chinese countryside is owned by the collective, not by individuals. But, in reality, who actually claims ownership of this rural land? It's the local cadres. Let's say you have a Hong Kong investor who wants to set up a factory in the Chinese countryside, where the land is relatively cheap, he needs to sign a contract to lease this land but the question is with whom? He negotiates with the local cadre."

"There's an ongoing battle between the central government, in Beijing, and municipal and local governments all over the country over land development."

"The Central government is very concerned about food security," he says. "In 1995, the well-known western scholar, Lester Brown, published a book, entitled *Who Will Feed China?* His argument is that if China continues with this conversion of rural land into urban use then it will not have enough land to feed itself. If this happens China will have to buy food from the international market driving up demand and food prices, and exacerbating hunger and starvation in



The Pearl River Delta where rural meets urban.

Latin America, Africa and other parts of the Third World."

Brown's book created a tremendous impact, not only in the global community but also amongst top Chinese leaders. "So the Central Government wants to protect China's farmland. But local and municipal governments have an interest in facilitating the conversion of rural land into industrial and commercial usage, primarily for the profit that can be made. This has become one of the main sources of municipal finance in recent years," says Lin.

In contrast to the existing literature, which focuses either on the rural or the urban landscape, Lin has discovered that it is precisely in the interface between urban and rural that massive development occurs and where social conflict has been so intense.

"From time to time you read news reports of social unrest and riots – and this is where they frequently occur because this is where urban extension encroaches upon rural land."

Surveys show that land taking has increased 15-fold in ten years with an estimated 40 million farmers displaced.

"I think only when you are able to identify the root causes can you find an answer to the problems. Obviously, if you follow the previous perception that the problem lies in an ambiguous definition of land use then the answer is that you have to give a clearer definition. But if you feel that this is an oversimplification, then you need to take the changing political, fiscal and land system and find the answer in further reformulations of the system." ■

Developing China: Land, Politics and Social Conditions. George C.S. Lin