

OPINION

South China Morning Post

China is meeting its responsibilities

Claims that China is not doing enough to live up to its great-power status have been all but laid to rest with President Xi Jinping's (習近平) pledges to the UN. Billions of dollars of aid will go to the least developed countries, thousands of peacekeepers allocated for a new standby force and military support put forward for the African Union. This is how a responsible nation responds in times of need. It is about ensuring that there is equality and justice.

In his first address to the UN General Assembly on Monday and earlier at the UN sustainable development summit, Xi made clear China's intention to work with other governments to alleviate global poverty. Generous pledges were made: US\$2 billion for an investment fund to help poorer nations meet goals with the objective to give US\$12 billion by 2030; debt relief for the least developed and smaller nations; a US\$1 billion donation over a decade for a UN peace and development fund; 8,000 peacekeepers for the new standby force; and US\$100 million in military support for the African Union for peacekeeping missions over the next five years. Making the world a better place for all is the stated aim.

China has long been one of the biggest contributors to international peacekeeping efforts; with a total of 3,079 troops and police deployed, it ranks ninth among 124 countries. It is playing a vital role in anti-piracy operations along shipping routes in the Indian Ocean. Aid and investment to the poorer parts of the world have since the 1950s been helping alleviate poverty. Yet there has been persistent criticism in some developed countries that the nation is not pulling its weight in tandem with its growing economic strength and suspicions are rife that Beijing's aim is to tear down the US-led international order, including institutions like the UN and World Bank.

US President Barack Obama gave that impression after meeting Xi in Washington, saying China was no longer a poor, developing country and had responsibilities and expectations to meet. Beijing's launch earlier this year of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and its "One Belt, One Road" initiative give an impression of a shift away from traditional aid and development vehicles. But, as Xi said in Seattle at the start of his US visit, China is among nations that want to see "reform and improvement of the system to keep up with the times". The strategy of win-win partnerships without political strings attached is tried and tested and augurs a positive way forward.

MTR must apply its rules to all

It is common sense that MTR passengers are restricted from carrying bulky items onto trains. There are by-laws stipulating the size of luggage allowed on board. Each passenger can carry only one item with total dimensions not exceeding 170cm, and with no one side measuring more than 130cm. The rules are clear enough.

However, there are always those who pay little regard to regulations or who are simply not aware of the restrictions. This is not helped when millions of people pass through the turnstiles every day. The MTR cannot possibly monitor each and every entry and exit point across dozens of stations.

But that does not mean the MTR should selectively pick on passengers who do not follow the rules. Recently, the railway operator has come under fire for ejecting a schoolgirl carrying the Chinese musical instrument *guzheng*, whose dimensions were said to have exceeded the limit. Another student carrying a cello in a case was also threatened with a fine of HK\$2,000 before being denied entry onto a train.

If an item exceeds the limit, be it a musical instrument or a piece of luggage, it is within the MTR's right to reject it. But it can also be argued that enforcement should come with common sense.

The public outrage stemmed from what critics see as double standards in enforcement. A professional cellist said he had never had any trouble with his instrument on the MTR over the past 17 years. Unsurprisingly, the recent incidents hit a sour note in social media, with users bombarding the railway operator with pictures showing an array of oversized items seen inside train compartments, ranging from a double-bed mattress to a washing machine. Of particular concern is the East Rail, with cross-border parallel traders swarming the carriages with cartloads of goods.

The ban on bulky items is to ensure the safety and comfort of passengers. But in light of the criticism, a review is warranted. More importantly, the MTR should avoid giving the perception that the rules are selectively enforced.

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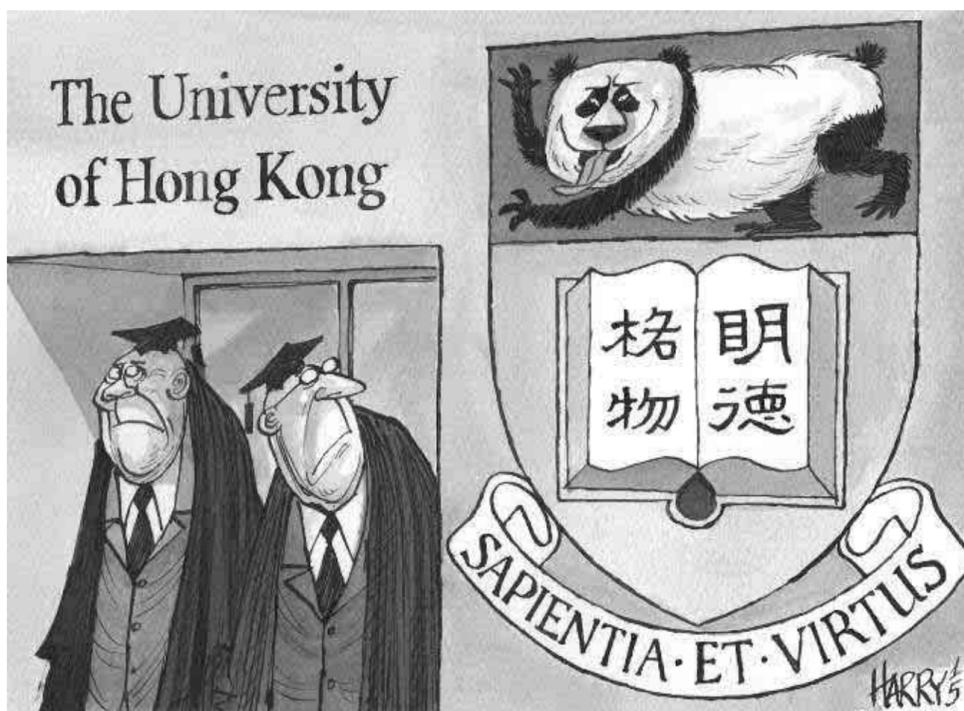
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Project charge.
 Could the fee (of between HK\$70 and HK\$180) to help pay for the third runway at Hong Kong International Airport, which will be imposed on all air travellers, put off some people and persuade them to use other nearby airports such as Shenzhen?

LETTERS

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

Stadium the perfect venue for big match

I was astounded and disappointed when I read the report "HK Stadium unlikely for World Cup clash" (September 24).

Football is by far the most popular sport in Hong Kong, and our footballers have recently been doing us proud.

How do officials have the nerve to even consider switching the highly anticipated World Cup clash between Hong Kong and China to a minor venue at inconvenient Siu Sai Wan? The turf cannot be the issue, and the local pitch will favour our players. Everyone should be rooting for our team in the match against China.

Our officials give the impression that they are worried about the response of 50,000 Hong-kongers (such as whistling at China's players) and that a fully supported Hong Kong team might win.

President Xi Jinping (習近平) is known to be a football fan, and will obviously wish that China gets to host a future World Cup.

If China cannot even make the finals in Russia in 2018, then a Chinese bid will be less than compelling.

Your report also prompts the question of what has happened to the sports stadium plans for the Kai Tak site.

The chief of the hugely popular English Premier League commented that Hong Kong is falling behind because of a lack of facilities, especially when compared to our rival Singapore ("HK losing edge to Lion City: EPL boss", September 24).

While our plans have been marooned on the drawing board, Singapore has fully implemented its idea and its similar design is now fully operational.

Since the handover, there seems to be inertia on the part of the government to move forward successfully with large infrastructure projects.

Take, for example, West Kowloon Cultural District, the express rail link, the Hong Kong boundary crossing facilities reclamation, and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge.

I would be interested to hear the view of the Legislative Council member representing the sports, performing arts, culture and publication functional

constituency, the taciturn Timothy Fok Tsun-ting, concerning the venues, both present and future.

K. Y. Leung, Shouson Hill

Poor living conditions in geopark

I refer to the report "Geopark tourism drive 'neglects needs of villagers'" (September 21).

I have not been to any of the Hong Kong Geopark sites. However, I have seen documentaries about them on TV. The geopark is famous because of its world-class rock formations. In 2011 it became part of the Global Geoparks Network. It was renamed Hong Kong Global Geopark of China and attracts a lot of tourists.

However, this popularity with visitors has not been of much help to indigenous villagers living on the island of Tung Ping Chau. The government has neglected their needs and villagers lack a sustainable electricity or fresh water supply. They have to rely on using generators.

The government must address the concerns of these villagers as soon as possible.

It must ensure they get a reliable supply of electricity and water.

If it wants to promote the geopark as world class, it must ensure that those living within its boundaries enjoy decent living conditions.

Kitty Leung, Hung Hom

Traditional festivals are still important

We have seen the development of a strange phenomenon in the city.

There is a tendency now for many Hong Kong people to celebrate Western festivals more than traditional Chinese festivals.

Halloween is at the end of this month and our two big theme parks are already promoting their events for it, through television, online and in newspapers. Why did they not do something similar for the Mid-Autumn Festival last month? How many of us know about our traditional festivals and what they really mean?

It is not only Halloween that is marked here. Other Western-oriented festivals, such as Easter and Christmas, have grown in popularity.

We are Chinese and we should be enjoying our traditional festivals more.

I think one of the reasons we don't do this is because of the effects of globalisation.

The influence of Western

At greater risk from reckless drivers than walking on escalator

On a safety scale of one to 10, walking on an escalator would surely rate below one.

By contrast, the woman driving her car in the next lane to me through Tai Po one morning last month with her dog on her lap would surely rate a seven or an eight.

The car in front had two adults strapped into the front seats while four unrestrained children leapt around on the back seat as though they were on a bouncy castle. Surely this would be another seven or eight.

Despite all modern cars now being equipped with a Bluetooth function, just about everyone driving through Tai Po that morning had one hand on the steering wheel and the other one holding their mobile phone, which was stuck to their ear for what must have been a highly important conversation.

Why don't these people use the hands-free function to talk? Is it arrogance or stupidity that makes them do this?

This would be another seven or eight on the safety scale, and three points for a traffic offence.

On another day last month, I was forced to endure a white-knuckle ride by the driver of the green minibus from Tai Po to my village. He hit the pavement very hard on two occasions and also drove at 75km/h on a 50km/h section of road. While doing so, he went straight through a red light on a section of road undergoing maintenance. He was well off the top of the safety chart.

Being angry about this terrible driving, I called the hotline number that was clearly listed inside the bus, only to be told that I needed to call a different number. Why should I call a different number to report such bad driving? What was wrong with the so-called hotline?

Some 25 years ago, the MTR launched a campaign to stop people "flicking tickets".

This was in the days before the convenient Octopus card, and someone in the MTR Corporation decided to make it an offence to flick the ticket, and it was punishable by a fine of several thousand dollars.

Walking on escalators is about as dangerous as flicking a ticket, and the campaign to prevent it was no doubt thought up by the same person who dreamed up the flicking tickets fiasco.

Richard Castka, Tai Po

countries and their cultures spread around the world with the development of globalisation after the end of the second world war.

Also, commercialisation has had an effect. Companies try to exploit these festivals to get consumers to spend.

I feel that the intrinsic value of festivals is diminishing as they become more materialistic.

Hongkongers should pay more attention to their traditional festivals, so that they live on and are celebrated by future generations. I think they have more meaning than Western festivals. They can teach us important lessons.

Polly Lo Ching-in, Yau Yat Chuen

Money not the only issue for elderly citizens

I agree with your correspondents who have said that it is not enough just to give elderly citizens more money.

When we are discussing the elderly in society, we tend to focus on their financial needs and whether they are getting enough to live on and pay for their medical bills.

They also need love and care and this is an area which seems to be neglected in Hong Kong. I seldom see studies which look at their mental health and happiness.

Many pensioners feel isolated, because they have no children and live alone. Citizens

need to be aware of this and visit an elderly neighbour who lives alone. Children need to make sure they regularly see their pensioner parents.

We must remember the important contribution these citizens made to the prosperity of Hong Kong during their working lives.

Caroline Wong Tin-ching, Tsing Yi

HK officials should listen to top judge

In a speech during the opening ceremony of the new Court of Final Appeal, Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma Tao-li highlighted the importance of the rule of law and judicial independence.

I urge officials from the Hong Kong and central governments to respect the Basic Law and take heed of his words.

It reminded me of the 79-day Umbrella Revolution, when officials accused protesters of damaging Hong Kong's core values, including the rule of law.

I believe the officials and police distorted the meaning of the rule of law and the Basic Law. It is a huge problem when senior officials try to mislead the public.

I understand that the Chinese government seeks to maintain Chinese-style socialism. But I would be concerned about any efforts to brainwash Hong Kong people.

Dong Ng, Sha Tin

Pushy parents can be good for children

There has been a lot of debate about those parents in Hong Kong who are pushing their children to succeed academically, by doing a lot of homework and going to after-school classes.

In discussions online, many netizens say this kind of parenting kills children's interest in their studies, because they are not allowed to grow free of extreme pressure.

Although they are often seen in a negative light, the attitude of pushy parents can be good for children especially in an environment like Hong Kong.

I do not think children are born with a love of learning. They benefit from being put under some pressure in their studies. This is especially the case when there is so much competition for a Hong Kong university place and a good job.

Young people with these parents develop good learning habits at an early age. As they mature, they find they are capable of self-study. They become independent learners.

I do not see after-school classes as adding to the pressure. They give students an insight into the subject they may not get in school. They can also help them realise their own potential and find out what interests them and what career path they might follow.

Even without such parents, students face an enormous workload. What pushy parents can do is guide them in how to cope with their homework.

As long as such parents look at the comprehensive development of their children, they can help them to grow up able to deal with the city's highly competitive environment.

Wong Siu-yuk, Sham Shui Po

Teens need smartphone timetable

With advances in new technology, smartphones have become increasingly important to the daily lives of many citizens.

You see teenagers using their smartphone virtually all the time wherever they may be. A lot of teens spend an entire journey on the MTR looking at these smartphones. I think with such overuse, they are developing bad habits.

There is a risk that some of them will become addicted to their smartphones. They stare at the screens and do not care about what is happening around them.

These young people need to think about the health implications. Spending too long looking at the screens is bad for their eyes.

They need to learn to manage the time they spend on these phones, with a timetable that they stick to.

While they should be allowed to bring the phone to school, because they may need to get in touch with their parents, if they play with it in class, the teacher should confiscate it.

Oscar Lo, Teung Kwan O