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## More letters

Updated on *Mar 21, 2011*

### Officials can do more to help six economic pillars

I was excited when I read about China's 12th five-year plan ("Five-year plan devotes a full chapter to Hong Kong, Macau", March 6).

Hong Kong will be encouraged to become an offshore hub for renminbi business.

The plan also supports Hong Kong's development of its six pillar industries, namely, education, medical services, testing and certification, green industries, innovation and technology, and cultural and creative industries.

However, I am concerned that, despite support from Beijing, the SAR government might not be able to take the chances offered to it.

The global financial downturn showed that Hong Kong's economy is too concentrated in the financial sector.

This is why the chief executive announced the [knowledge-based] pillar industries [in 2009].

According to the Census and Statistics Department, in 2009, these six industries only accounted for 8 per cent of our gross domestic product and 11.3 per cent of total employment. It was clear the government had to do more to foster the development of those industries.

However, it is now 2011 and that strong support is not evident.

With mainland firms raising their profile globally, competition is fierce.

Shanghai is determined to become an international financial centre in China and Guangzhou is eager to develop as a city with vibrant high value-added industries.

Hong Kong will lose its competitive advantage if the government still adopts a passive role in economic development under the principle of so-called "Big Market, Small Government".

If the administration plays a more active role in helping with the growth of the industries that form part of the six new economic pillars, they will develop at a faster pace and be able to gain a foothold in the booming China market.

**Philip Hon Chi-ho, Tsuen Wan**

### **Departure tax not the answer**

I refer to the letter from Angel Cheung ("Impose tax on milk powder", March 10).

Your correspondent believes fewer mainlanders would come here to buy baby formula if there was a departure tax placed on it.

I do not think this would solve the problem of Hong Kong mothers not being able to get enough formula.

Many of those coming from across the border are well-off and, even if prices increase, they will still come to the city because they know that the quality and safety of the formula sold here can be guaranteed.

It is therefore important that the mainland authorities try harder to improve the quality control of products made there to ensure they are safe and are not fake.

If food quality does not improve, mainlanders will continue to come here to buy milk powder.

**Tammy Wong Wai-ting, To Kwa Wan**

### **Breastfeeding the best option**

I refer to Enoch Yiu's column ("Earthquake shakes up baby formula delivery chain", March 15).

There are better means to help mothers than ensuring formula supply. Breastfeeding is the biological norm to protect and nourish babies and young children.

Lots of mothers in Hong Kong continue to breastfeed their babies after going to work. It is possible to do so, even though there are challenges such as too-short maternity leave and lack of pumping or nursing breaks.

The public needs to know that formula is an inferior choice of nutrients. Research has shown that infant morbidity and mortality are higher in formula feeding. Babies fed with formula have more bouts of sickness and a lower IQ. And now with a supply threat of formula from Japan and an unknown threat of radiation, mothers are even more concerned.

It is time to think about how we can give our offspring better protection.

We already have what nature has given us - breast milk. For those mothers who want to keep on breastfeeding, there are mother support groups in the city, like La Leche League-Hong Kong, which will help them to achieve their breastfeeding goals. Human babies need human milk, not cows' milk.

The government must ensure mothers are given the support they need to breastfeed their babies.

**Heidi Lam, Discovery Bay**

### **Give police lighter guns**

I am puzzled as to how a policeman can drop his revolver ("Police gun falls to ground during rally", March 9). In my day, the gun was attached to a lanyard which was secured to the belt or shoulder.

Apart from this, the gun is heavy and carries six bullets, which is outdated. A lightweight automatic pistol is now used by police forces in many countries, but I believe a stun gun is more suitable, in most cases.

The police force needs to be brought up to date.

As a point of interest, if the gun had fallen and the hammer hit the ground first, I think it could have fired and hurt someone.

**John Fleming, Sheung Shui**

### **Discovery Bay ferries often late**

Residents of Discovery Bay are at the mercy of the ferry service

operators. There have been so many breakdowns and delays that we have lost count.

The price of a single trip is not cheap either, at HK\$31. We are paying a very high price for a service that is not punctual.

When other forms of public transport in Hong Kong experience a breakdown, there will be a statement and apology in the press. But the Discovery Bay ferry service operator does not provide information about such problems.

The operator has a monopoly and Discovery Bay's lawmaker has done nothing about this.

The ferry route between Central and Discovery Bay should be opened up to competition. It is very frustrating for passengers, especially during the morning rush hours.

### **Thomas Won, Discovery Bay**

### **Put incinerator at ash lagoon**

Stefanie Tsui Yik-sze wrongly states that Shek Kwu Chau is the best location because "the other place considered, Tsuen Mun, is densely populated" ("Island best site for incinerator", March 18). The opposite is the case.

Shek Kwu Chau is only three kilometres from Cheung Chau, probably the most densely populated spot in Hong Kong, and just across open water.

The other proposed site for the incinerator, the Tsang Tsui ash lagoon, is more than twice as far away, as the crow flies, from the nearest population centre, Tuen Mun town.

The ash lagoon is on the extreme western edge of the New Territories and is screened from any population areas by three mountain ranges.

There is already infrastructure with Black Point power station and road access. It requires no reclamation and will be much quicker and cheaper to build than at Shek Kwu Chau.

If we must have an incinerator, Tsang Tsui ash lagoon is the better location.

### **John Schofield, Lantau**

### **Island will be suitable spot**

I strongly agree with the proposal to build a solid waste incinerator on Shek Kwu Chau.

Shek Kwu Chau has a small population and the incinerator would affect fewer people than if it was located in an urban area.

Hong Kong's population is growing and we have to find ways to deal with the refuse we generate. A solid waste incinerator offers one of these solutions.

I believe Hongkongers will ultimately benefit from this plant being built on this island.

I also think it could be of benefit to people in the surrounding area.

**Sharon Lo Suet-ting, Hung Hom**

### **Real problems with e-learning**

In recent years, more schools have introduced e-learning in the classroom. I have misgivings about students being taught with the use of their laptop computers.

Some pupils who spend long periods looking at a screen suffer from myopia.

I am also worried about the possible health effects of radiation from the computer.

Also, pupils from low-income families may have trouble paying for an expensive laptop computer.

Some schools may not offer subsidies and there are also maintenance costs to consider.

Pupils who lack motivation may fall behind in class and could begin to feel isolated from the teachers and their fellow classmates. Also, some young people might use their computers to surf the internet when they should be concentrating on their lessons.

I think the disadvantages of

e-learning outweigh the advantages and I do not believe it is good way for pupils to learn at school.

**Christie Lam Man-ting, Kwun Tong**

### **US dollar peg is fuelling inflation**

Almost all of our daily necessities are imported from countries whose currencies, including the yuan, have been appreciating substantially against the US dollar.

By pegging the Hong Kong dollar to the US dollar, the strength of our currency has been greatly dissipated with the constant decline of the greenback, thus creating import-led inflation.

To arrest inflation, the government should abandon the peg.

In fact, the peg, having served us well when it was first enforced, should have been abandoned long ago and the most opportune time should have been during the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

**Alex Ng, Sham Shui Po**