



EDITORIAL

大公社評

Aging Hong Kong needs a comprehensive population policy

The SAR Government yesterday released the Steering Committee on Population Policy Progress Report 2012. The Report details the short- and long-term demographic challenges that Hong Kong is facing, and **sets out** 10 recommendations accordingly.

Hong Kong is running into an aging society. According to the latest population census results released last year, the population has kept aging in Hong Kong society. Last year, the number of people aged over 65 exceeded 940,000, accounting for 13% of the total population.

Consequences of population aging **speak for themselves**. For example, population aging leads to a shrinking labour force and reduce productivity, making the economic burden increasingly unbearable to the young and middle-aged generations. As the Report points out, the elderly dependency ratio in Hong Kong society will exceed 1:1 in 2020. That is, by then 1,000 persons in the working population will have to support 1,042 elderly people.

After the release of the Report, some lawmakers, social workers and academics criticized the government for not taking any action in advance but letting the problem increasingly **loom large**. Such criticism may be said only half true. After Hong Kong's return to the Motherland in 1997, the SAR Government has not overlooked the problem of population aging. Several policy addresses by Chief Executives Tung Chee-hwa and Donald Tsang Yam-kuen devoted special chapters or sections to talk about setting a population policy and tackling the problem of population aging. The Steering Committee on Population Policy, which issued the Report yesterday, was set up as early as in 2007. However, as Chief Executive-elect Leung Chun-ying put it, "time is wasted with nothing accomplished" year after year. Stormed by politicised issues, there is incessant antagonism in society, so much so that the government often cannot perform its duties in accordance with the law. Under such circumstances, the urgency of the population aging problem has been "diluted", hence it has not been given sufficient attention or discussed either in the legislature or in society. As a result, Hong Kong society becomes "older and older" as time goes by.

Losses caused in the delays in construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and Guangdong-Shenzhen-Hong Kong high-speed rail are in time and money. Spending a few billion dollars more and an additional couple of years, they will be built eventually. But when people become aware of the seriousness of the delay in dealing with the problem of population aging, overdue "debts" **have already piled up**. This is yet another example showing how the opposition's antagonistic "armchair" politics **holds Hong Kong up**.

Of the 10 recommendations set out in the Report, the first is to set a "zero quota" for pregnant Mainland women married to non-Hong Kong permanent residents to give birth in Hong Kong. One of the "starting points" is exactly to ease the pressure brought up by Hong Kong's population aging. Local couples in child-bearing age didn't want to give birth to children, so Hong Kong had no choice but to "seek help" from the Mainland in this regard. But it was unexpected that, once the door was open, pregnant Mainland women would pour in like a flood. As a result, delivery rooms in hospitals become overcrowded, and the burdens of education and medical care in future will become unbearable. Seeing this, Hong Kong is now rushing to close the door to keep them out. Thus, the

ides of relying on children born here to Mainland parents to play the role as the "fresh army" in Hong Kong's population proves infeasible and unrealistic. Even born here, children from Mainland parents may not necessarily live and work in Hong Kong. And their number is difficult to ascertain.

Instead, in terms of filling up the future labour force gaps, raising the retirement age for the working population seems more feasible. With improvement of living standards and advancement of medical care, Hong Kong people's average life span is remarkably prolonged. At present, the average life span of men is 80, and that of women is even as long as 85. As such, the retirement age of 55 or 60 set by most public and private institutions looks quite out of date. Raising the retirement age no doubt will increase the ratio of the labor force to the total population, but will also bring up problems such as fewer promotion opportunities for young people and greater expenditure in retirement funds. It cannot be ruled out that some people may prefer to retire earlier so that they could claim their pensions to live a retirement life. It is not easy to settle the controversy evoked by this issue. For the time being, the most important thing is to work out a better policy on elderly people, so that aged people at grass-roots who are retired or about to retire could be better taken care of. For example, Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) for elderly people and Old Age Allowance should be made "portable", so that if some elderly persons go back to their home towns (on the Mainland) to live a retirement life and they can present documents to prove it, their rights must not be deprived because they no longer live in Hong Kong. In addition, Leung Chun-ying had once promised that, if he was elected, he would increase the Old Age Allowance to \$2,000 a month from the current \$1,000. Another candidate Henry Tang Ying-yan had even promised to upgrade the scheme into a monthly pension of \$3,000 with an assessment mechanism. From the viewpoint of temporarily meeting a pressing need, both proposals are worth considering.

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WORDS AND USAGE

- ① **Set sth out** (phrasal verb) - To present ideas, facts, etc. in a clear way, in speech or writing. (陳述, 闡明)
Examples: 1. This document sets out our objections to your proposal. 2. All the reasons are well set out in this chapter.
- ② **Speak for itself/themselves** (idiom) - Be so clear and obvious that no explanation or comment is needed. (不言而喻)
Examples: 1. The design speaks for itself. 2. Your results speak for themselves. You need to work harder.
- ③ **Loom large** (idiom) - Appear imminent in a threatening, magnified form. (日益凸顯 (加劇))
Examples: 1. Trifles loom large to an anxious mind. 2. The possibility of civil war loomed large on the horizon.
- ④ **Pile up** (phrasal verb) - To form a pile; to increase in quantity or amount. (堆積, 增多)
Examples: 1. The newspapers began to pile up after a few days. 2. The bills were piling up and we had money to pay them.
- ⑤ **Hold sth/sb up** (phrasal verb) - To block or delay the progress of someone or something. (阻礙, 耽誤)
Examples: 1. I don't want to hold you up. 2. An accident inside the Lion Rock Tunnel held up traffic for three hours.

中文基本功

不知所終這成語見於正史 寫成不知所踪是同音之誤

五月廿三日看湖南衛視連續劇《如意》，看（聽）到劇中人修老爺這麼說：「不相信這個玉佩不知所踪！」字幕和對白，互相配合，這句話最後的「踪」字，是「終」字的同音之誤。

這個小欄影響不大，因為《辭源》《辭海》都不收錄這成語，報刊編輯未必相信。稍後，我再經考證，指出「不知所終」一語典出《晉書》和《陳書》，正史所載，又加引宋、元、明、清用例。此後，香港各大報和暢銷報紙紛紛改正；儘管今天仍有人用「不知所踪」這個誤例，但不多

了。湖南衛視的字幕用簡化字。按照《簡化字總表》，終字並未簡化，可見該電視台的字幕以「踪」代「終」，就像香港報刊在六十年前已發生的同音之誤。

同音之誤每見於成語，原因是成語屬於文言文，而今天的用者一般只重白話文。重大的辭典，遲遲不收此成語，也未嘗無責任。你不收，人家查無可查。這句話雖則耳熟能詳，如果多聽而少見（或未見），就難免犯錯！

不知所終的「終」字是動詞，是「去了」的意思。「不知所終」，就是「不知道去了什麼地方」，那是有點動感的，不僅是不見踪跡而已。若然改成「不知所踪」，由於助動詞「所」字後面的「踪」字不是動詞而是名詞，既在語法上犯錯，於詞理也不通順。

湖南衛視犯此錯誤，同有關人等輕視文言文，實在也同輕視中文有關。容若

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SOHO DIARY



How to Make the Grade? (3)

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To nourish the body, one needs nutritious food. Staying healthy is important during exams. Being sick is the worst way to meet the challenge.

It is no good to have junk food and eat too heavy. Fish is good. It is protein (蛋白質) rich. Vegetables and fruit are necessary. You need vitamin C to keep your body strong.

If you feel that the challenge is too much, try to have mushroom. It is said that mushroom can help. It is generally agreed that chocolate can bring good mood. Some fruit, like grapes, can also bring good mood.

Some people have rose tea or rose candy. One kind of rose candy you can get in Hong Kong is similar to Turkish delight. It is soft and sweet. But make sure you don't have too much of it before going into the examination hall. I

tried it once and I felt so relaxed after having it that I wanted to sleep.

If you have a cold or flu, take some Korean Kimchi. It might help. In fact, treating yourself to a Korean meal before your exam is quite a good idea. We all know that Koreans are generally very hardworking. It might having something to do with their food.

Recently I went to Tsimshatsui and visited a street with a lot of Korean restaurants. There are also shops selling foodstuff from Korea. The shops have many different kinds of Kimchi. And the restaurants there are not expensive at all. I saw some secondary school students there in their uniform. They went there to have lunch. In a small restaurant I ordered soup with fish egg. I was told that the soup was cooked in the most authentic Korean way.

香港老矣 人口政策亟須全面制訂

特區政府昨日發表《人口政策督導委員會二〇一二進度報告書》，詳述了本港正面對的短期和長期人口挑戰，提出了十項應對建議。

本港正以跑步的速度進入老齡化社會。據去年發表的最新人口普查統計，本港人口結構過去十年持續老化，去年，六十五歲以上的人口逾九十四萬，佔了全港人口的一成三。

而人口老化帶來的後果已不言而喻，如勞動生產力下降、醫療及各種福利需求大增；中青年一代亦不勝負荷，報告書提到，本港人口的「經濟養老率」到二〇二〇年將會突破「一對一」之比，即一千名勞動人口要供養一千零四十二位老人家。

報告書發表後，一些議員、社工、學者批評政府未有早為之計，以至今日問題叢生。這一批評，可以說只對了一半。九七回歸後，特區政府不是沒有注意到人口老化問題的存在，董、曾兩位特首的多份施政報告都有專章專節談到要制訂人口政策、解決老化問題，昨日發表報告書的「人口政策督導委員會」早於二〇〇七年已經成立，但年復一年，正如候任特首梁振英所說的「蹉跎歲月」，在大量政治化議題衝擊、社會爭拗不斷、政府經常不能有效依法施政的情況下，人口老齡化的迫切性被「沖淡」了，問題在議會內、社會上都沒有得到充分的重視和開展討論，而香港也就這樣一天一天的「老」下去。

港珠澳大橋、粵港深高鐵被拖延，損失的是時間和金錢，多花幾十個億、多耗一兩年時間總可以追回來；但人口老齡化的緩解被拖延，到各方真正覺察到問題的嚴重性時，「欠帳」已經累累了。



▲政府發表《人口政策督導委員會2012進度報告書》提出十項建議，紓解人口老化帶來的社會壓力

反對派對抗政治、空頭政治之誤港，於此又可見一斑。

報告書中提出的人口政策十項建議，第一項就是「雙非」孕婦「零配額」。當日容許內地孕婦到港產子，「出發點」之一，正是為了紓緩本港人口老齡化的壓力，本地適齡夫婦唔肯生，唯有求諸「內援」。但想不到門一打開，內地孕婦如潮湧到，醫院產房「爆棚」，未來教育、醫療也將無法負擔，如此才又急急關門「落閘」，不再歡迎。看來，以內地嬰兒充當本港人口「生力軍」的想法，既難以推行，也並不實際，內地嬰兒即使在港出生，未必就會留港生活和工作，人數上也難以預計。

在未來勞動人口的補充上，反而報告書提出的延長在職人口的退休年齡，具有較大的可行性。隨著生活改善、醫療進步，港人平均壽命已大大延長，目前男士的平均壽命是八十歲，女士更高達八十五，如此目前大部分公私營機構五十五、六十的退休年齡已有不合時宜之感。延長退休年齡無疑可以提高勞動人口比率，但同時也會衍生年輕人「上位」機會減少、退休金開支龐大及部分人士寧願早日收取退休金回家養老等問題，爭議也是不易解決的。眼前最重要的是先制訂更完善的長者政策，把一大批已屆或將屆退休年齡的基層長者照顧好，如老人綜援及生果金的「可攜性」，老人家如願回鄉養老，只要有文件證明，不應因為人不在港而剝奪他們應得的權利。此外，老人每月生果金，梁振英曾承諾當選後會由一千元增至二千元，另一位候選人唐英年更將之提升為有一定審查機制的三千元養老金，從暫解燃眉之急來說，不失為一項可以考慮的建議。

2012/05/31 大公報社評

通識記憶體

聯合國規定，一國或地區65歲以上人口佔總人口一成以上，即標誌該國家或地區進入老齡化，2011年香港65歲以上人口已達一成三。解決老齡化的方法之一是提高勞動人口參與率。

勞動人口指15歲及以上陸上非住院人口，並符合就業人口或失業人口定義的人士。在統計前7天內，有做工賺取薪酬或利潤，或有一份正式工作的15歲及以上人士為就業人口；無職位且隨時可工作、在統計前30天內有找尋工作人士為失業人口。香港目前無法定退休年齡。

2018年勞動參與率料降至56.3%》》》

2011年人口普查顯示，香港勞動參與率由2001年61.4%降至2011年59.7%，預計受人口老化影響，老齡人口減少投身勞動市場，到了2018年，勞動參與率將降至56.3%。從影響勞動參與率的

未來7年勞動人口降半成

因素看，可通過延長退休年齡、增加女性及青年工作機會、適當引進高質素外來人口，更要鼓勵港人生育等。歐美及日本都面對人口老化問題，部分國家以延長退休時間來處理，如日本65歲退休養老金比63歲退休多達四成；芬蘭退休年齡亦由56歲延長至60歲。

影響勞動參與率的因素	
性別因素	勞動參與率女性低於男性，因社會分工、歧視等
教育因素	教育程度高，勞動力較晚進入市場，降低勞動參與率；反之提高
收入增加因素	加大閒暇的機會成本，提高勞動參與率；或使收入水平較高家庭勞動者退出勞動力隊伍，降低勞動參與率
產業結構因素	第三產業增長快，勞動力需求大，總體勞動參與率上升
養老保險制度	部分老年人需工資維持生活，使勞動參與率上升