

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

One Dream

Hong Kong has proudly claimed itself to be “Asia’s World City” – a nod, in part, to our racially diverse population. Not long ago, I had the opportunity to chat to a few bright and eager ethnic minority girls at an event in Yuen Long. They were fine examples of a world citizen: multi-lingual and multi-cultural. Speaking in Cantonese, they talked about their efforts to integrate into Hong Kong society and their career aspirations. Despite their efforts, they wondered aloud if they could get into the academic disciplines of choice at university, since their written Chinese is not strong. Would they ever be able to build a career in this City, they asked.

The future of our young people is an issue that concerns the entire community. We as a society must do more to ensure that our young people, regardless of their different backgrounds, have equal opportunities to pursue their dreams. For ethnic minority youths, the problem is made more difficult by cultural differences and lingering prejudices. In a 2009 Government survey, almost one in four local respondents, almost all Chinese, said offering a job to qualified applicants of South Asian and Middle Eastern descent was unacceptable. Nearly half do not think it acceptable to send their children to a school where the majority of students are South Asian, Middle-Eastern, or African.

In difficult times, the ethnic minority community is also more affected. South Asian men, according to a 2009 survey by the Hong Kong Christian Service, were particularly hard hit by the most recent financial crisis. Unemployment rates rose, while those who kept their jobs put up with worse conditions and less pay.



Given this scenario, it is no wonder that a young man chillingly told his interviewer during a recent TV programme on ethnic minorities, “Do not talk to me about aspirations.”

Mother Teresa once said, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

As one community, we must do more to rekindle the hope of these youths, our young people. And the government must lead the charge to level the playing field.

To begin with, the government should review the civil service’s language proficiency requirement and its implementation across different departments. Some departments still oblige applicants to take additional written test in Chinese above the basic entry requirement. Such extra conditions put ethnic minority applicants at a distinct disadvantage.

I have spoken to a number of South Asian youngsters who harbor ambitions to become a member of Hong Kong’s disciplined forces. The cultural background and extra language skills they can offer would be invaluable. The government has pledged its commitment to respect diversity, and I know some bureaus and departments are proactively seeking solutions. In May 2011, for instance, the police announced revisions to the language requirements for recruitment, which can make it easier for ethnic minority candidates to apply. This policy, if successfully implemented, would let ethnic minority youngsters know that their talents are valued and their dream of serving their home city is not a false hope.

“工作憑實幹”
“Performance knows no colour.”



We must learn to embrace our differences and understand that diversity fosters innovation and creativity – the keys to Hong Kong’s progress. Too often, we remain mired in unfair stereotypes. Such biases only reinforce the arbitrary segregation of this city’s many ethnic parts, and prevent us from coming together as a whole.

In truth, we share a common experience: most of us are immigrants ourselves, or children of immigrants, who came in search of a better future. Despite our differences, we all experience struggles and hardships in pursuing our dreams. In this sense, we are one.

As one, we must encourage the youths of Hong Kong to believe that with hard work, the Hong Kong Dream is possible. With this goal in mind, the Equal Opportunities Commission launched a new mentorship programme, called “Uniquely Me”, in December last year for ethnic minority young people. The programme aims to empower them to break down stereotypes, pursue their aspirations and embrace their individuality.

We need to ensure that everyone, irrespective of ethnic background, has a voice and equal access to services and support. To this end, the EOC has set up a Working Group, spearheaded by our Commission Members, to identify and facilitate targeted responses to issues faced by the ethnic minorities, especially on education opportunities and related issues.

In addition, those who face discrimination due to their race in the areas protected by the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) are urged to seek redress through the EOC by filing a complaint.

American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, “If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.”

Those girls from Yuen Long and many others like them deserve hopes and dreams, and they want to believe that those hopes and dreams are possible in this great city. It is up to all of us to do better to make sure that everyone has a future they can aspire to.

LAM Woon-kwong
Chairperson, Equal Opportunities Commission



(Note: This message was adapted from the article “Different But Equal” originally published in the South China Morning Post on 21 March 2011.)

- [Subscription Form\(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

The Code of Practice on Employment under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (2011) Comes into Effect

The Code of Practice on Employment under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (2011) Comes into Effect

The Code of Practice on Employment under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (the Code) gives practical guidance on how to implement equal opportunities between persons with disabilities and those without in the workplace. It has been in effect since 1996/1997. Over the last decade and a half, there have been a number of changes relating to its implementation. Both local and overseas jurisprudences have expanded. In addition, the public has gained better and wider understanding of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO). Meanwhile, the nature of disability-related complaints in the workplace has also evolved, and the EOC has seen a widening in the number and complexity of complaints we have received. Given such changes, the EOC has undertaken a revision of the Code based on our accumulated experience over the past years, to ensure that the Code remains a useful tool for employers, employees, human resource practitioners and other stakeholders.

The EOC conducted a three-month public consultation on the Code from 8 April to 8 July 2010. During this period, the EOC held 23 meetings to help advance public understanding of the content of the draft Code. In addition, the EOC received a total of 48 submissions from individuals, employees' unions, human rights and community organizations, disability NGOs, employers' groups, government departments, public bodies and professional associations. The views and comments collected from the consultation process were carefully considered in the revision of the Code.

The Subcommittee on the Revised Code of Practice on Employment under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance was formed under the Legislative Council to review the revised Code. The EOC made further amendments to the Code based on comments received from the Subcommittee and it became effective on 3 June 2011.

Commenting on the coming into force of the newly revised Code, Mr. LAM Woon-kwong, the EOC Chairperson, said, "By updating this Code, the EOC puts to use the experience and knowledge we have gained in the past years. The revised Code continues our effort to promote good workplace practices and help employers advance equal employment opportunities between people with and without disabilities."



- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

The EOC's Latest Annual Report Receives International MERCURY Award

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The EOC's Annual Report 2009/10, under the theme "We As One", has been chosen for an Honors Award in the International MERCURY Awards Competition, which celebrates excellence in professional communications. This year, 750 competition entries were received from 30 countries, with only one Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Honors Award given in each classification. The Award recognizes the EOC's mission to foster an inclusive society, and reaffirms our commitment to transparency and effective reporting of our work to the public.

- [Subscription Form\(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

From Obstacles to Opportunities

Participants of Uniquely Me!, the EOC's youth development programme, learn from the sharing of guest speakers on how to turn challenges into opportunities.

On 16 April 2011, the EOC Conference Room was once again buzzing with excited chatter as over 80 students gathered for the second session of “Uniquely Me!”, our English programme for youths.

The afternoon’s programme was packed with sharing from two guest mentors and youth performances from the Anonymous Dance Group of Delia Memorial School (Hip Wo) and the Li Po Chun United World College Playback Theatre team. Additional participants joined via live teleconference from the Christian Action SHINE Centre in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long Town Hall Support Service Centre for Ethnic Minorities.

This session aimed to encourage young people, through the sharing of two guest mentors who were active advocates for racial equality in Hong Kong, to stand up for their rights. Mr. LAM Woon-kwong, opening the session with a video message, echoed this idea, “I hope this afternoon will show why it is important for you to take a stand against discrimination, and to believe in your own potential and abilities.”



Sharing of Experiences

The afternoon’s first sharing session featured Dr. Raees BAIG, the manager of the Centre for Social Impact of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. Discussing her experience of growing up in Hong Kong as a mixed-race, Muslim woman, her talk focused on the issues of identity, self-awareness, and using one’s experience to make an impact in the lives of others.

“Growing up in Hong Kong with a Pakistani father and a Chinese mother, I asked many questions in order to understand my identity,” said Dr. Baig. “It is through asking questions that I learned my potentials as well as my constraints. That is how you can understand what kind of impact you can make on society.”

Sometimes, one may face obstacles which may seem daunting. Dr. Baig encouraged youths to take both positive and negative experiences as a way to learn and try different opportunities. “I was not a brilliant student when I was younger,” shared Dr. Baig, “so I could not be a doctor like my sister, who was very strong academically. However, I was not defeated by this, and I feel that it actually led me to get involved in the social sciences and the community, which led to my advocacy work today.”

Dr. Baig advised the participants to “grab every opportunity, and prepare yourself well” for whichever path they may end up choosing. And they can advocate for change in any line of work, as long as they “speak up and voice out” their concerns. “Think Big, start small,” said Dr. Baig, “everyone can make a difference.”



Following Dr. Baig, the youths heard from the experiences of Mr. Rizwan ULLAH, who is the Educational Advisor of the Pakistani Students Association and a teacher by profession. Mr. Ullah opened his talk with the quote from martial artist Bruce Lee, "Using no limitations as a limitation", to encourage the youths to change their mindset when they meet obstacles.

To emphasise this point, Mr. Ullah told the youths of an experience he had as a teenager. "I entered a magazine's idol competition in 2000 as the only non-Chinese. During the competition, the event's organizer only arranged lunch containing pork products, which I could not eat as a Muslim," shared Mr. Ullah. "But I did not let such issues deter me from trying my best and making friends with the other participants."

Another benefit resulted from his entry into this competition. "Because of my participation, the organizers were exposed for the first time to cultural needs of other ethnic groups, which allowed them to be better prepared and more culturally sensitive in the future," said Mr. Ullah.

Such experiences taught Mr. Ullah that if one refuses to be defeated, positive outcomes can result from situations that appear negative. He told the youths, "Limits are self-induced. If you push yourself to do more and learn more, you will find that little can hold you back."

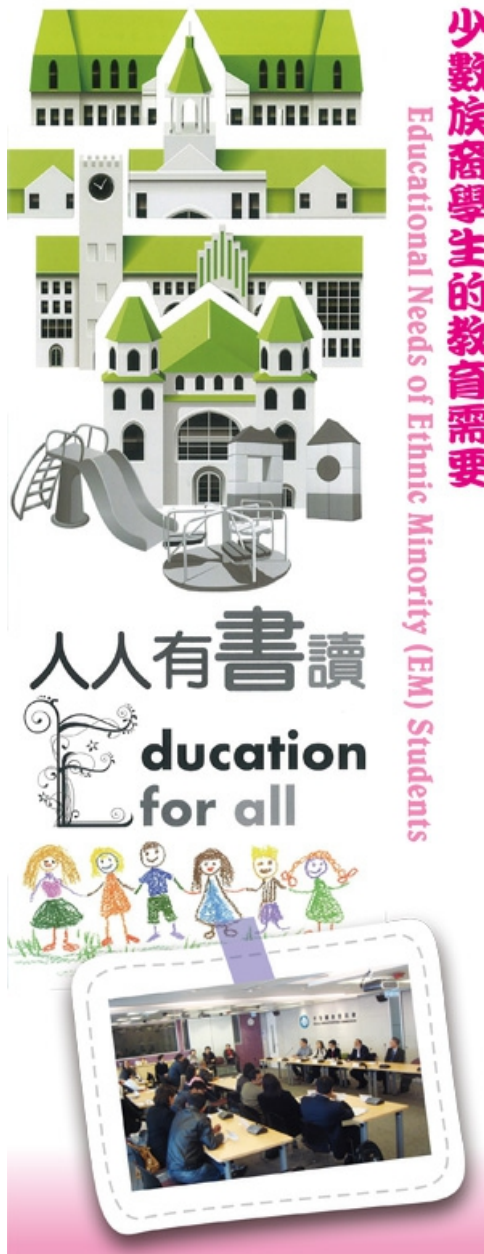
Mr. CHONG Chan-Yau, EOC Co-opted Member, delivered the inspiring closing remarks. He shared with the youths his experience of fighting discrimination when he was unjustly not permitted to fly due to his visual impairment. He invited students to also share their own encounters with discrimination. An ethnic minority youth spoke of an occasion when he tried to play basketball with local Chinese youths at the public park, but was told that he was not welcome. In response, Mr. Chong urged the youths "not to be defeated by other people's discriminatory attitude. You should always see yourself as the problem solver and that you are the one to change others' attitudes."

Concluding on this positive note, the afternoon was a motivational experience for many participants. One youth said, **"I love the whole event and hope that I will be the guest speaker one day."**



- [Subscription Form\(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Education For All: Educational Needs of Ethnic Minority (EM) Students



A working group was set up under the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to discuss issues related to the specific educational needs of ethnic minority (EM) students in Hong Kong. The Working Group also organised sharing sessions with different stakeholders including parents, students, educators and non-profit making organisations to seek their views on how to ensure equal educational opportunities for EM students.

In these sharing sessions held earlier this year, the discussion largely focused on the difficulties faced by EM students in coping with the Chinese language curriculum in local schools. Parents and teachers pointed out that ethnic minority students fall behind academically mainly due to language barriers. In addition, without good grades in school, the students' options for higher education are limited, which in turn may adversely affect their future.

Various suggestions in addressing the educational needs of the EM students were put forward, including the drawing up of an alternative Chinese curriculum and the provision of support services such as the provision of language and cultural programmes for EM students at pre-school level, after-school tutorials and extra support within the class. The EOC welcomed the suggestions and has made recommendations in writing to the Education Bureau for follow-up actions.

- [Subscription Form\(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

A Long Battle for Dignified Access



This case was settled in the pre-trial review hearing after the EOC had granted legal assistance to the Plaintiff.

The case

Ms X, the Plaintiff, uses a wheelchair as a result of cerebral palsy and global developmental delay. Now in her 20s, she has resided in the building since birth.

Each time the Plaintiff entered or exited the building, her elderly mother must pull both her and her wheelchair up/down a total of five steps. Ms X's mother had made requests to the Incorporated Owners (IO) of the building (the Defendant) in writing for accessible facilities for wheelchair users. Although the building had undergone renovations twice, her mother received no response from the Defendant regarding the installation of facilities for wheelchair users.

The Plaintiff's mother complained to the EOC, requesting a ramp or a stair-lift. The resulting conciliation was unsuccessful. The Defendant later installed a stair-climber at the building's entrance. However, the stair-climber provided by the Defendant was not suitable for Ms X's needs. The Plaintiff tried the stair-climber on three occasions. She found the machine to be, respectively, out of battery, out of order, and unsuitable due to its backward tilt and potential for loss of balance.

Ms X's mother sought technical advice, and was told that a ramp or a stair-lift would also be a feasible solution which may be better than a stair-climber in providing access for the Plaintiff. Ms X and her mother requested legal assistance from the EOC, which was granted.

The trial was scheduled for mid-2011. During the pre-trial review hearing, the Defendant consented to install a ramp or stair-lift within the agreed timeframe after the Incorporated Owners of the building held a meeting on the issue. The Plaintiff welcomed the arrangement following a long battle of more than four years for dignified access to her building. The case was therefore settled.

What the law says



Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO, Section 25), it is unlawful to discriminate against persons with disabilities in relation to the provision of means of access to a premise. This case illustrates that the wheelchair user should be provided with an independent, unassisted and barrier-free means of access in and out of a building. Accessible facilities, such as access ramps, also benefit other residents, such as baby pram users or those who use wheelchairs due to aging.

In this case, the IO's claim of unjustifiable hardship is not reasonable, given that it had sufficient reserve to undergo two major renovations. In addition, the addition of a ramp is not, comparatively speaking, considered a major renovation work, as its cost could be covered by the building's reserve. The EOC reminds all property owners and facilities managers to be mindful of the different needs of their residents, and provide reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access for all.



Stair-climber:

Generally, a stair-climber is a device with chain tracks attached to the wheelchair in order to move it up or down steps.

Stair-lift:

Generally, a stair-lift is a platform that can hold a wheelchair and is attached to a railing. The wheelchair can be wheeled directly onto the platform in order for the wheelchair user to move up/down the stairs.



Photo Courtesy:
"Caring" by To Sheung
Yuen, "Accessibility and
Social Inclusion" photo
competition

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

The Struggling Single Parent



The complaint

What would you do if you have to take care of a family member with a chronic illness and earn a living at the same time? Mrs. Lee is a single mother with a son who has congenital heart disease and requires constant care. Her son would return home at around four in the afternoon after school. Mrs. Lee managed the dual role of mother and breadwinner well for about a year while working as a morning shift security guard as she could take care of her son after her shift ends at about three in the afternoon. Mrs. Lee's routine changed when her supervisor began to assign her to work afternoon shifts and night shifts, as well as to occasionally cover for security guards working in other districts, in order to meet the operational needs of the company. Mrs. Lee informed her supervisors about her family status and requested her supervisor to arrange morning shifts for her, but her requests were not answered. She struggled to meet the work requirements for about a month but had to give up when her son needed to undergo a surgery. She lodged a complaint with the EOC and began a new job soon after quitting her old position.

What the EOC did

Upon receiving the complaint, the EOC case officer contacted the employer to explain the provisions of the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO). Initially, Mrs. Lee and her employer could not agree on the reasons behind the change in her work schedule. The EOC made further efforts to persuade the two parties to reach an agreement. Finally, the employer was willing to settle the case and agreed to provide monetary compensation to Mrs. Lee.

What the law says



"Family status", in relation to a person, means the status of having responsibility for the care of an immediate family member. The FSDO makes it unlawful for anyone or any organization to discriminate against a person on the basis of his/her family status. Under Section 8 of the FSDO, it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against an employee on the basis of his/her family status (i.e. the duty to take care of an immediate family member) by dismissing that employee or subjecting him/her to any other detriment. Shift work arrangement is an area from which disputes often arise, so it is important for an employer to ensure that shift work arrangements are free from direct or indirect discrimination. Though the law does not require employers to accommodate every request from employees, it is good management practice to arrange work so that employees can both care for the family and fully achieve their potential at work.

Online Programme to Prevent Sexual Harassment

Online Programme to Prevent Sexual Harassment



Sexual harassment is not a joke and is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. It is also unlawful to engage in acts of a sexual nature that create a hostile or intimidating environment in an education setting. The EOC has been working with 12 local tertiary institutions to promote “A Matter of S/HE”, our online training course on preventing sexual harassment on campus, to students and staff. As a part of our promotional efforts, we distributed informational posters and plastic folders. We also awarded e-certificates to those who successfully complete the training module. Since its launch, around 4,000 university students have used this online training module.

Log on now at

www.eoc.org.hk:8080/shoncampus

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

"Mental Health First Aid" Seminar

"Mental Health First Aid" Seminar



Mr. Vincent Wong, Education Officer of the Mental Health Association Hong Kong, shared with the EO Club members his expertise in assisting employees with mental health issues.

As an employer, human resources practitioner, or line manager, you may have encountered employees with depression and anxiety disorder. However, you may have limited understanding of mental illnesses, or you may not know effective ways to handle a mental health crisis in the workplace.

A seminar was held for EO Club members earlier to introduce the practical skills of "Mental Health First Aid". Mr. Vincent Wong, Education Officer of the Mental Health Association Hong Kong, shared with us his expertise in assisting employees with mental health issues.

"Mental Health First Aid" is the immediate assistance provided to a person who is developing a mental health problem before appropriate professional treatment is available. The objectives are to identify symptoms of mental health problems and provide suitable help for persons involved before the situation worsens.

"Mental Health First Aid" skills are applicable to various mental illnesses, including depression, anxiety disorder, schizophrenia and paranoia.

It is not unusual for people to feel sad when they face difficulties in their life. However, if this feeling lasts for more than two weeks, it could be a sign of depression. Normally, persons with depression lose interest, energy, appetite and self-esteem. They often have sleep issues, and some have recurrent suicidal thoughts or behavior. People with anxiety disorder generally have uncontrollable worries about everyday events. Symptoms may include sweating, shaking, and chest pain. Approximately 30% of people with anxiety disorder also have depression at the same time.

Five Key Actions of "Mental Health First Aid"

1. Assess
2. Listen
3. Give
4. Encourage
5. Re-encourage

Q&A:

My colleague Mary seems to have uncontrollable worries, and sometimes she appears to be sweating and trembling. What can I do?

There are five key actions of "Mental Health First Aid":

Assess: To evaluate the risk of intervention, you should assess if the environment is safe for you, Mary and other colleagues. You also need to assess if Mary is showing suicidal tendencies. For example, does she blame herself too much? Does she have sudden changes to her character, appearance, and habits? Has she lost interest at work and in her future? Is she showing any suicidal ideas or plans? If it is a high risk situation, you should first make sure that you are safe. Then, you should stay with her, encourage her to talk about her problems, prevent her from using drugs, alcohol, or dangerous tools, and seek professional help as soon as possible.

Listen: Adopting non-judgmental listening skills can help you understand Mary's worries and feelings. You should be patient, empathetic and ask open-ended questions to understand the situation but not criticize her answers during the conversation.

Give: Providing continuous support, respect, hope and concrete assistance to Mary can assist her in recovery. Employers should arrange for a suitable distribution of duties and set reasonable expectations on the employee's work performance without blaming her just because of her mental illness.

Encourage and Re-encourage: Encourage Mary to seek assistance from professionals, family members, friends, and other patients. You should also encourage her to use self-help methods, such as reading and doing exercises, to assist in overcoming her mental health issues.

Through early intervention, serious mental health crises may be avoided. Management should learn how to offer immediate aid and support to their employees until appropriate professional assistance is available.

- [Subscription Form\(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Understanding Cultures 文化通識

香港約有百分之五人口為少數族裔人士。大家的長相或許不同，但他們與大部份市民一樣，以香港為家。現在，讓我們多認識這些可能彼此為鄰、共事或交往的朋友吧……

About 5% of people in Hong Kong are ethnic minorities. While our appearance may be different, they see Hong Kong as their home just like everybody else. Let's learn more about people from various backgrounds who could be our neighbours, colleagues or friends...

國名 COUNTRY NAME 尼泊爾 Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal	氣候 CLIMATE 南北部氣候差異很大。南部平原氣候炎熱潮濕，夏天溫度高達攝氏45度；北部山區氣溫寒冷乾燥，溫度可降至攝氏負30度以下。 The climate varies a lot from north to south. The southern lowland is hot and humid, with temperatures rising above 45°C in summer. The northern mountain region is cold and dry, with temperatures reaching below -30°C.	語言 LANGUAGE 官方語言為尼泊爾語，但於不同地區被使用的其他語言或方言共超過93種。英語在城市中廣為使用。 Nepali is the official language, with over 93 other languages and dialects used in various regions. English is widely spoken in the cities.
地理 GEOGRAPHY 尼泊爾為南亞內陸國家，位於喜馬拉雅山脈。國家總面積為147,181平方公里。地勢北高南低的尼泊爾是世上海拔差異最大的國家，其境內的世界最高峰珠穆朗瑪峰與南部低地相距8850米。 A landlocked country in South Asia situated in the lap of the Himalayas with a total area of 147,181 sq. kilometres. Nepal possesses the greatest altitude variation on earth, from lowlands near sea level to Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain, at 8850 metres.	首都 CAPITAL 加德滿都 Kathmandu	人口 POPULATION 少於三千萬人 Less than 30 million
國旗 NATIONAL FLAG 藍邊象徵和平；紅色是國花杜鵑的顏色。上下兩個三角形代表喜馬拉雅山，亦代表尼泊爾的兩個主要宗教－佛教與印度教，新月和太陽則代表守護尼泊爾的神明。 The blue border symbolizes peace, while red is the colour of the Rhododendron - Nepal's National flower. The two triangular portions represent the Himalayan Mountains and the two main religions of Nepal - Buddhism and Hinduism, while the moon and the sun are the Gods watching over Nepal.	政府 GOVERNMENT 聯邦民主共和國 Federal Democratic Republic	識字率 LITERACY RATE 約五成 Approximately 50%
經濟 ECONOMY 農業是尼泊爾經濟的主要支柱，佔國家生產總值的三分之一，全國約四分之三人口以務農為生。 Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, providing a livelihood for three-fourths of the population and accounting for about one-third of GDP.	宗教 RELIGION 印度教佔80.6%、佛教佔10.7% Hinduism - 80.6%, Buddhism - 10.7%	本港的尼泊爾人口 NEPALESE POPULATION IN HONG KONG 截至2010年底，居於香港的尼泊爾人約18,600名。 As of the end of 2010, there are around 18,600 Nepalese in Hong Kong.
文化 CULTURE 信奉印度教的尼泊爾人認為黃牛是神聖的動物，又助他們耕田，所以不吃牛肉。 Nepalese who are Hindu do not eat beef as cattle are considered sacred and help them in farming.		

資料來源：香港電台(平等機會多元共融行動)、香港入境事務處數據資料、尼泊爾政府網站(<http://www.nepal.gov.np/>)
Sources: Radio Television Hong Kong (EO Diversity Project), Facts and Statistics of Immigration Department, The Official Website of the Government of Nepal (<http://www.nepal.gov.np/>)

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Around the World

Australia

New Device Assists People with Visual Impairment to Read Graphics

The Faculty of Information and Technology of Monash University in Australia has developed a new device which allows people with visual impairment to have greater access to diagrams and graphical information. The device "GraVVITAS" is a touch-sensitive tablet PC. It guides the user to find an object using sound and vibrations. The device has small vibrating motors which are attached to a user's fingers via a glove. The motors buzz when an object displayed on the screen is touched. Touching the object again causes the sound to stop and a voice would explain the object and other associated information.



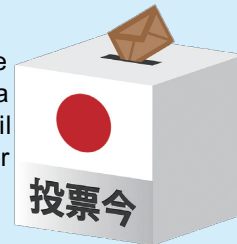
Information source:

<http://www.monash.edu.au/news/show/new-device-puts-vision-impaired-in-the-picture>

Japan

Tokyo's First Gay Male Politician Wins Election

Taiga Ishikawa, who disclosed his sexual orientation in his 2002 autobiography, is the first openly gay male politician in Tokyo to win an election. The result is seen as a victory for the rights of sexual minorities. Ishikawa won a seat in local elections in April 2011. As one of his goals after taking office, Ishikawa hopes to reinforce support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children at schools.



Information source:

<http://news.asiaone.com/News/Latest+News/Asia/Story/A1Story20110426-275780.html>

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)



“青健一小步
耆疾跨越難”

“A small step for many,
a huge barrier for others.”

通達無阻 全民受惠
Accessibility is everyone's issue.

平等機會處最近在香港的其中一個反歧視訊息
One of the EOC's recent campaign messages across the MTR network

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- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)