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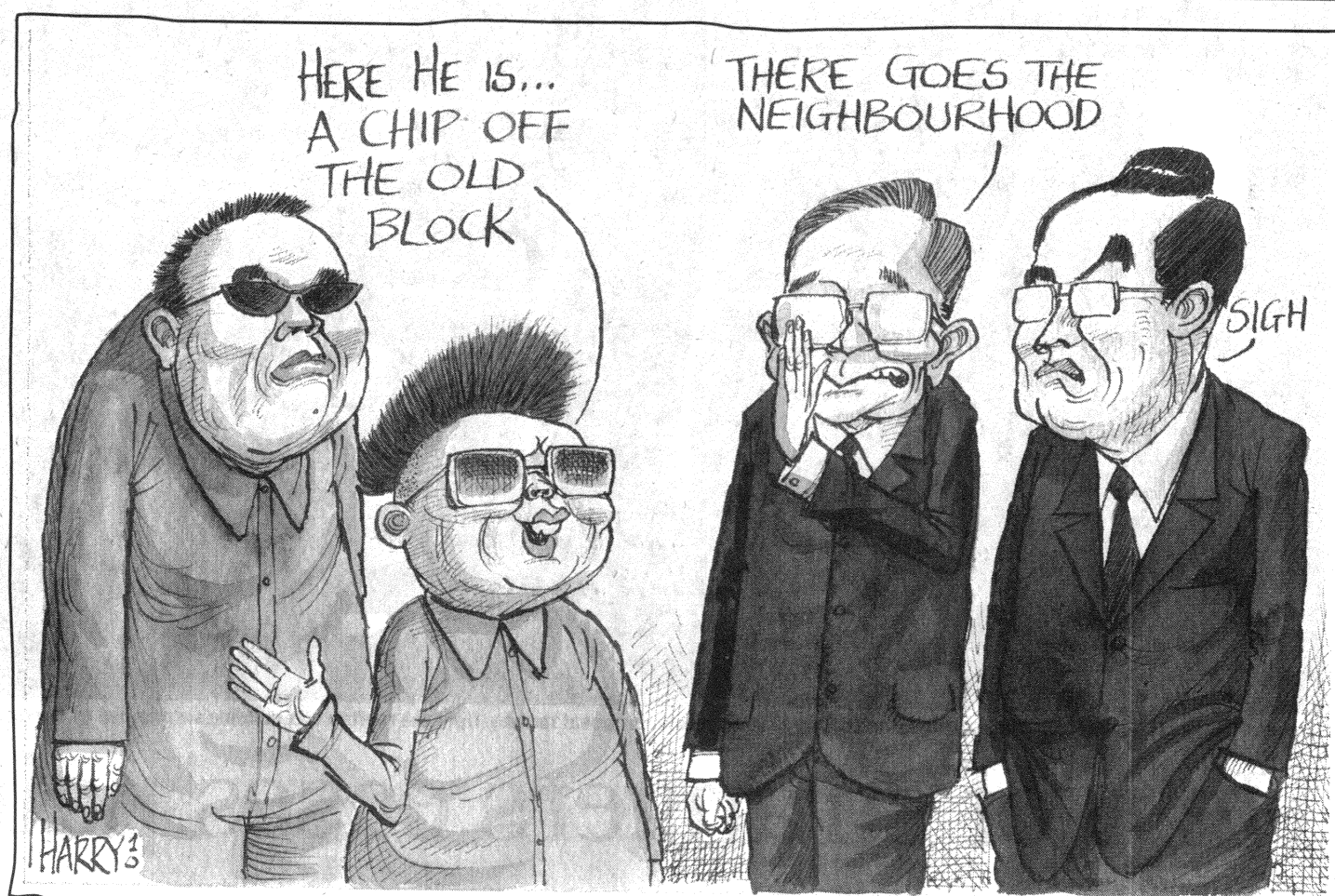
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## Hostage drama symptom of a sad nation

The way the Manila hostage saga was resolved – with the tragic loss of innocent lives and the unconcerned response of a president – did no more than remind us of the sadness of a nation that was one of the richest in Asia in the 1950s.

Substantial amounts of foreign aid have been consumed by corrupt, bureaucratic leaders. There has been no headway in its economic development throughout the years; and the country remains one with the greatest disparity of income and living standards.

Employment opportunities with decent pay are limited. Women have to toil away overseas, entrusting the care of loved ones to someone else. Meanwhile, an entrenched bureaucracy has continued, the ombudsman is ineffective and violence remains a way of voicing anger and grievances.

It is certainly inappropriate to retaliate against Filipino workers here. Their hard work deserves our respect, freeing many of our women to fulfil their career ambitions. It is certainly not time to blame our Chinese leaders for their inability to stop the bloodbath with a higher level of diplomatic pressure from the very beginning.

It might also be inappropriate to place an official sanction on the country as one of our tourist destinations. It is, however, an appropriate time for the international community, especially our central government and the United States, to rethink and scrutinise their various levels of support for the ineffective bureaucracy and the means whereby aid can be more effectively and meaningfully funnelled to the Philippine people.

William Cheng, Pok Fu Lam

## Don't blame all Filipinos

With regards to Albert Cheng

## City dwellers can learn so much from joining coastal clean-up

I refer to the letter by Simon Deane ("Clean beaches responsibility of everyone", August 21).

Mr Deane expressed his displeasure with the amount of trash piled up on Hong Kong's naturally beautiful beaches and coastlines.

The fact is, many of us city-dwellers never see the direct impact of our disposable culture and consumption habits.

We seldom feel any connection to the sea that surrounds us and – as Mr Deane says – it's a case of out of sight, out of mind.



Volunteers join last year's International Coastal Clean-up Challenge on Lamma. Photo: Dickson Lee

I invite your correspondent to take heart, and check out an event that aims to, among other things, raise awareness of the direct responsibility we as a community have to take care of our beaches and marine environment.

EcoVision's Hong Kong International Coastal Clean-up Challenge ([www.hkcoastalcleanup.org](http://www.hkcoastalcleanup.org)), now in its 10th year, is a large-scale community event that invites companies, schools and organisations to sign up a team and clean a beach.

Anyone can sign up a team at the above website, and EcoVision provides the necessary education and materials.

This year's coastal clean-up challenge will take place from September 25 to October 25.

Over the course of the month, thousands of volunteers will hit the beaches of Hong Kong to spend a few hours picking up litter and collecting data on what they find.

In doing so, participants gain a deeper understanding of how their actions affect the environment, while spending a memorable, fun and meaningful day outdoors.

The data collected by participants is later compiled to produce detailed annual local and global reports on marine debris, an essential step to finding solutions.

The message to take home from the event is that rubbish does not fall from the sky; it falls from our hands, and that rethinking, reducing, reusing and recycling are vital to minimising the vast amount of litter that washes up on our shores.

The clean-up challenge is part of a larger global event organised by Ocean Conservancy, the International Coastal Clean-up, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

In 2009, 500,000 volunteers removed 3.4 million kilograms of debris in 108 countries, making it the largest volunteer event of its kind in the world. I encourage *South China Morning Post* readers to get involved in this very relevant cause and sign up a team.

Lisa Christensen, CEO, EcoVision Asia

## Charities quiet on Pakistan

I am surprised that, given the magnitude of funds needed to deal with the recent flooding in Pakistan, few charity organisations seem to be giving it top priority.

We are talking about a country with a huge population already living with poverty, corruption and complicated religious problems, and now a quarter of its people are severely affected. Yet no Hong Kong charity organisations are making enough efforts to raise funds.

I contacted the Hong Kong Red Cross, and it has a fund only for Southeast Asia, not specifically for Pakistan.

I am a lifetime Catholic, and I see the urgent need for us all to pay special attention to aiding this troubled Islamic country, especially now.

This is a chance to prove to our Muslim friends that we are together in this world to help each other.

Eugene Wong, Tai Tam Road

## Crack down on telemarketers

Today, with so many different channels of communication, we are deluged with unwanted marketing. I wholeheartedly welcome the news that Hongkong Post is launching an opt-out sticker scheme for certain unaddressed circulars ("One way to stop some of that junk mail", August 25).

However, the real menace is not mail, but telemarketing calls. Telemarketing is the most inconvenient type of marketing because it requires active participation by the receiver, at a time that is convenient to the caller. Why should the public be expected to adjust to the schedules of telemarketers who are selling a product that they most likely do not want or need – and one which they certainly did not solicit?

A few years ago the telecoms watchdog OFTA launched the "Do-not-call" register for pre-recorded messages. It is now high time that it extended this register to include non-recorded – that is, live – calls.

This is hardly a novel idea: do-not-call registers in other countries typically make no distinction between pre-recorded and live telemarketing calls.

This would cause a hue and cry from telemarketers, who would claim they provide a useful service that brings benefits to consumers. Yet that is nonsense; the only beneficiaries are the telemarketers themselves and the companies they represent.

The theft of property is an offence punishable by a prison sentence. I wonder if telemarketers could provide a convincing argument why we should tolerate the theft of our time.

Ali Ebrahim, Mid-Levels

## An apology was called for

Grenville Cross gave a fairly comprehensive account of the factors judges consider when reaching a sentencing decision ("Checks and balances", August 19).

Knowing more about the process of sentencing, however, did not lessen my discontent with

**Green or grey?** A think-tank has proposed developments, such as malls, for one-quarter of the border zone due to be opened. Is that a good use of the green space?

**Fatal fall.** After a young girl fell to her death this week, there were calls for a law against parents leaving children unattended. Is this the right approach? Write to us.

## Anti-terror aid to no avail

In response to the Manila massacre, the question that needs

neglect, the country is sliding backwards on almost every measurable scale except population growth – a truly worrying proposition.

Now that tourists have fallen prey to the indifference of the

their leadership by calming the situation, as Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen did. Now is a time for sorrow.

In the coming weeks, we will need cool heads that can ask, and get answers to, difficult questions