

CITY

ALL AROUND TOWN

Handy flat-buying tips from tycoon's son

Overindulgence in movie-going or jaunts to Japan may be the reason why you still can't afford a flat, according to the son of one of the city's wealthiest property tycoons. Lau Ming-wai slid into his new role as chairman of the government-appointed Commission on Youth with ease, lecturing young people about how to save up more quickly to buy a home. "When you earn HK\$15,000 a month, if you spend all of it or have only HK\$1,000 left, are you willing to sacrifice a bit? Watch fewer movies or travel less to Japan?" he told online platform goyeah.com. "Are you willing to sacrifice HK\$500 or HK\$3,000?" One may recall Lau's father is Joseph Lau Luen-hung, convicted of graft in Macau. The younger man, who took over the reins at developer Chinese Estates from Lau senior, was mocked just hours after the video went viral. Net users pointed out a Chinese Estates project in Kennedy Town was put up for sale at about HK\$4.8 million. Assuming one saves HK\$3,000 a month, it would take 54 years to even meet the 40 per cent down payment on a flat, according to calculations by online media *Stand News*. Stuart Lau

Anson Chan's riposte to joker John Tsang

Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun-wah couldn't help poking fun at former government No 2 Anson Chan Fang On-sang while touting the government's electoral reform this month. At the Journalists Association's annual dinner, Tsang, seen as a dark horse for the chief executive poll, urged guests to support the package – otherwise people such as Chan and Democratic Party founding chairman Martin Lee Chu-ming would have to visit the United States and Britain to lobby politicians again. Chan gave as good as she got this week. "If John really cares about me and Martin, it's easy. Show us a proposal that will give us genuine universal suffrage. I've always wanted to take cooking classes in Tuscany. That's been my wish since I retired in 2001 [from the chief secretary post]," she said. Unfortunately, with all 27 pan-democratic lawmakers vowing to vote down the plan, it looks like Chan cannot retire to Italy any time soon. Joyce Ng

False alarm all it takes to lighten up Legco

Lawmakers enjoyed a sudden respite yesterday from marathon filibustering of the budget bill, thanks to a false alarm about fire at the Legislative Council. When the bell rang out of the blue, Legco staff were asked to leave alongside occupants in the chamber – including Civic Party lawmaker Dr Kenneth Chan Klok, who found his speech on the government's education policy unceremoniously cut short. "Maybe my speech has angered [Secretary for Education] Eddie Ng Hak-kim and triggered the fire," an amused Chan said. Ng, on his part, said "the meeting time is precious" but he was glad to see lawmakers were aware of what to do during a fire alert. The lawmakers were sent back to reality half an hour later as firefighters declared everything was all right. Well, at least they had a brief "jailbreak". Jeffie Lam



Save HK\$3,000 a month to buy a flat, Lau Ming-wai advises.

CULTURE



Veteran RTHK broadcaster Jonathan Douglas plays Ivor Gurney, a brilliant but tormented poet and composer who fought in the first world war. Photo: David Wong

TROUBLED WAR POET CONVEYS A MESSAGE THAT RINGS DEEP

A stage production about the torments of a writer 100 years ago touches on themes of belonging that have a new relevance in today's Hong Kong

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A play about one of the great poets of the first world war is shining a light on the suffering of Hong Kong's ex-servicemen and the mental anguish many endured.

Ivor Gurney, a prolific poet and music composer who served with British forces during the war from 1914 to 1918, died in a psychiatric hospital in 1937 after a lifetime of struggle with mental illness. His story is being told

through drama and song in four shows titled *A Voice Apart*, the first of which kicks off tonight at Fringe Underground, a new performing space at the Fringe Club in Central.

Gurney was hailed a poetic genius but was largely forgotten later in life as he struggled to fit in with society after returning from the front lines.

The play's producer, Karina Zabihi, says the "incredibly moving play" serves as a reminder of those who fought and have since been forgotten amid the bustle of modern Hong Kong life.

"I want to do this to give back to the local soldiers, and so all our proceeds will go to the Hong Kong Ex-Servicemen's Association," she says.

As a supplement, organisers are also staging an exhibition of memorabilia from the war and a short film about trench warfare.

Jonathan Douglas, a veteran RTHK radio host, plays Gurney in the production. He says the story also touches on the conflicting themes of people's need to maintain a sense of individuality while at the same time feeling a sense of belonging, lessons that are relevant to Hong Kong as it seeks to carve out its place in the nation under Chinese sovereignty.

"Gurney knows he is different from others and he feels isolated, but at the same time he wants to belong," says Douglas, who was made a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Em-

pire in 2008. "So there is this constant tension, and this is a universal kind of message."

It will be the second time Douglas has performed the play, the last occasion being two decades ago with a script by the late Piers Gray, a British dramatist and academic.

Following its first staging in Hong Kong, the play was taken to Edinburgh in Scotland for a two-week run, where it received critical acclaim.

In the same way, Hong Kong people feel a sense of belonging to Hong Kong

MICHAEL INGHAM, CO-DIRECTOR

Some 20 years later, the play has a new relevance as Hong Kong looks to forge a fresh identity, says the play's co-director, Michael Ingham.

"Gloucestershire [in southwest England] is as special to Gurney as Hong Kong is to people here. Gloucestershire was where he felt a sense of belonging," says Ingham, a professor of English at Lingnan University.

"In the same way, Hong Kong people feel a sense of belonging to Hong Kong and it doesn't have to be part of a much bigger entity. We are all citizens of the world."

David Booth, also co-director, says original songs were selected from 500 scored for the drama to convey the moods of the play.

Tenor David Quah and pianist Peter Fan will perform alongside Douglas in the play as it takes audiences through Gurney's experiences in the hospital.

"The play will be very powerful, being performed in a small space with limited lighting," Booth says.

COURTS

Man admits knife attack and robbery

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A construction worker repeatedly chopped a woman with a knife, causing her to lose her sense of smell and finger movement, before robbing her of items worth about HK\$99,000.

Three of Ye Xiaolan's teeth were knocked out during the sustained assault, prosecutor Lilly Wong said.

Yesterday, Liu Shing-fung, 44, admitted wounding with intent and robbery when he appeared before deputy High Court judge Mr Justice Woo Kwok-hing.

According to the prosecution, Liu entered Ye's flat in Sung Kit Street, Hung Hom, on June 4 last year and took a 38cm knife from his bag. As 42-year-old Ye shouted for help, he chopped her head above her right ear.

When Ye crawled to her friend's room inside the flat, Liu chased her and repeatedly chopped her with the knife.

The victim tried to fend off Liu and bite his hands. But Liu grabbed Ye's hair and dragged her into the bedroom, where he wrapped her in a quilt and repeatedly punched her face.

Liu later ransacked the flat and stole items including mobile

phones and a notebook computer. After he fled, Ye sought help from a neighbour who alerted a security guard and police.

Liu was arrested the following day. Under caution, he told police he went to the flat to look for his friend Chan Chun-yiu and seek revenge following disputes over construction matters.

As Chan was not at home, he took away the various items to ease his anger, he said. The court did not hear details of the relationship between Ye and Chan.

Woo asked the prosecution to prepare medical reports on Ye's recovery from her injuries. Sentencing was adjourned to July 8.

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