

# Slowly recovering from hangover of handover

It has been 10 years since Hong Kong was returned to its motherland, China, and because of this, the international spotlight is once again on it.

Perhaps some would prefer the July 1 occasion be termed as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's 10th Anniversary.

On Friday, Chinese President Hu Jintao arrived in Hong Kong to attend the celebrations to mark the 10th anniversary as well as the swearing-in ceremony of the third-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

The week before July 1, various celebrations and activities were held to mark the occasion in both Hong Kong and Beijing.

Hong Kong stars like Kelly Chan, Leon Lai, Tony Leung, Karen Mok and Alan Tam joined other celebrities – Taiwanese Shu Qi and mainlanders like Zhang Ziyi – to stroll down the red carpet at a gala event organised to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China's rule in Beijing on Monday.

And the *China Foto Press* carried a report about a young man in Kaifeng City who had the hair on his head shaved into the shape of eight Chinese characters saying “*Qing xiang gang hui gui shi zhou nian*” (Celebrate 10th anniversary of Hong Kong's return).”

The young man from Central China's Henan province told the media the new hairstyle expressed his excitement about the event.

Local Chinese television programmes have also been running shows on Hong Kong's handover since two weeks ago.

CCTV9's 400-minute documentary *Hong Kong 10 Years* went on air to present an updated picture of the *Oriental Pearl*. It's expected to be viewed by billions worldwide.

The station screened *Hong Kong Ups and*



**Heady excitement:** The young man in Kaifeng City who had the hair on his head shaved into the shape of eight Chinese characters saying “*Qing xiang gang hui gui shi zhou nian*” (Celebrate 10th anniversary of Hong Kong's return), according to a *China Foto Press* report.

*Downs* in 1997 but it focused on the history of Hong Kong starting with the Opium War in the mid-19th century and local people fighting against foreign invasion.

*Hong Kong 10 Years* is focused on today's Hong Kong under the “One Country, Two Systems” policy and is going to be aired in various languages like English, Spanish and French.

Watching all the television programmes and reading all the news centred on Hong Kong's return to China reminded me of one very distinctive expression, or rather a promise made by the late Chinese leader

Deng Xiaoping.

In his well-known remarks – *ma ziu pau, mo ziu tiu* (horse racing stays, dancing goes on in Cantonese) – Deng had pledged to keep Hong Kong's three capitalistic characteristics – horse racing, dancing and stock exchange – intact for at least 50 years after its return.

“Worry? Why worry! Fifty years later and that's 2047. I don't even know where I would be,” said a Hong Kong friend who is working in Beijing.

Over *dim sum* and *yam cha* (tea drinking) in a Cantonese restaurant here, she said the overwhelming development and progress

SUNDAY STAR

1/7/07 ms 33



on the mainland could be far greater by then and Hong Kong could benefit from it.

“China could be one of the world economic anchors by then,” she added, noting that the mainland could be the backbone to support and sustain Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's economy was badly hit during the Asian Financial Crisis (1997-1998) right after the handover and the SARS outbreak several years ago but the central government stood by Hong Kong, said HKSAR chief executive Donald Tsang.

And, of course, there are news reports questioning if the Chinese control is for better or for worse.

For example, *The Observer's* “Hangover from our handover status quo” article has pointed out things like air quality is no better, the harbour is still under threat of reclamation, streets are jammed with cars, landfill sites are reaching capacity, air-conditioners are at full blast, disposable plastic bags are ubiquitous and so on.

Both the Chinese and Western media, *Phoenix TV* and *Nanfang Daily* among them, carried stories of and interviews with the last British governor in Hong Kong, Chris Patten.

Britain's *Telegraph.co.uk* said people remember the day the former chairman of the conservative party left Hong Kong and how his three famously lovely daughters were in tears.