



The 30th Sing Tao Inter-School Debating Competition

Business as usual?

The girls of Heep Yunn School were crowned the champions in this year's Inter-school Debating Competition after beating St. Paul's College in a fierce debate over the proposal to develop East Lantau into a new business centre

THE evening of 15 May marked the final of the 30th Sing Tao Inter-School Debating Competition. Over the past six months, 56 schools have sweated it out in six rounds of heated debates, and it all came to an end with a **duel** between the girls and boys at Queen Elizabeth Stadium (伊利沙伯體育館) in Wan Chai. The opposition team from Heep Yunn School (協恩中學) finally emerged victorious against the affirmative boys of St. Paul's College (聖保羅書院).

The motion for the grand final was "Developing East Lantau into a new core business district brings more good than harm". It shed light on a proposal within the chief executive's policy address, which is currently being widely discussed and is still subject to government studies.

Captains kick off

CONFIDENTLY stepping to the microphone, captain of the affirmative Hysan Woo Hoi-sang (胡愷生) kicked off the debate by bringing in the government initiative against the backdrop of major infrastructure projects, including the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (港珠澳大橋). He asserted that it is expected to bring affluent companies to Hong Kong. "All these incoming companies will need office space and Hong Kong simply has none to spare," he enunciated in a deep and emotive voice.

Woo also stated, "It is why our side proposes today to build an artificial island in East Lantau in order to gain more office space while **capitalising** on the completion of the infrastructure projects."

The opposition captain, Juliet Leung (梁逸琛), did not even **flinch** at Woo's strong opening. Smiling and keeping her chin up, she threw out three questions in

her opening speech: "First, are they creating economic benefit through the model? Second, why should we set aside the doubts towards environmental and social harms to the project? Third, will such a large scale project bring more harm to Hong Kong's overall development?"

Leung raised her voice and injected emotion in her question as to whether it is necessary to build more space at an **irreversible** cost to the ecology since the **repurposing** of East Kowloon as a business area is already underway. She listed the damage to the seabed and the home of white dolphins, as well as the need to preserve traditional culture.

Weighing the pros and cons

TRISTAN Lau Chun-shing (劉峻承), the first speaker of the affirmative, denied Leung's warning by quoting the government as saying that environmental assessment will ensure the project will fulfil the international standard. He said East Lantau is the connecting point of the fast developing Pearl River Delta (珠江三角洲), which will **boost synergy** within the area.

"The government has a bad track of record of managing costs of large, complex projects," Cindy Kat Shun-shun (吉順順) – Lau's counterpart – retorted as she juxtaposed the heavy financial burden on taxpayers against the government's weak performance.

But the affirmative's second speaker, Bryan Ho Hok-him (何學謙), did not back down and declared that

the proposal was actually benefitting local people by bringing job opportunities and alleviating pressure on the urban centre. "Do you want Hong Kong's urban area to choke on its own density?" Ho questioned.

Unrelenting, Heep Yunn's second speaker Kelly Chan Chong-yan (陳昶恩) said only big companies can afford the expensive artificial island. "But what the big companies want is a prestigious place like Central, not East Lantau," she reasoned.

Wit and reason

BUT the debate was not all serious. Laughter erupted from the audience when Ho responded to doubts that the proposal was not environmentally

friendly enough: "There is no human activity that is 100 percent environmentally friendly; the air we breathe creates carbon dioxide. Should we not breathe?"

Team captain Woo maximised his time in his concluding speech, ending in a **quick-witted** manner:



Carrie Lam presents the First Runner-up trophy and book certificate to (l-r) Bryan Ho, Tristan Lau and Hysan Woo.



(L-R) Winners Esther Lo, Kelly Chan, Juliet Leung and Cindy Kat of Heep Yunn School.

"...Meanwhile ... (the bell rings) ... Well I of course have said enough already, and you are all capable to see why our motion must stand, thank you!"

Opposition captain Leung kept to the script in her conclusion, bringing her argument back to the three questions she raised at the beginning: "We don't want Lantau Island's tradition, culture and ecology to be destroyed." As well as leading her team to victory, Leung won the Best Debater award, the highest individual honour of the competition.

Judge's comments

BEFORE the end of the event, the proceedings were suddenly interrupted by dozens of protesters led by legislator Leung Kwok-hung (梁國雄), taking aim at Chief Secretary Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor (林鄭月娥), the guest of honour who had arrived to present the awards to the winners.

Amidst the wave of protests, judge Paul Shieh Wing-tai (石永泰), former chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association, struggled to make his comments heard. Shieh suggested that St Paul's relate the proposal more clearly to the three large constructions they mentioned at

the beginning, but praised their smooth delivery. He also spoke highly of the well-organised Heep Yunn, while advising them not to pack too much information in such a short time.



Paul Shieh

List of awards

Champion
Heep Yunn School

First Runner-up
St. Paul's College

Second Runners-up
St. Paul's Co-educational College
Shun Lee Catholic Secondary School

Best Debater
Juliet Leung (Heep Yunn School)

Best Motion Award
Diocesan Girls' School

Most Improved School Award
HKTA Tang Hin Memorial Secondary School