

Mr Ho Hei-wah *BBS*

Mr Ho Hei-wah was born of an affluent family operating a jade merchandising business. Having worked as an apprentice at his father's jade factory when he was young, he did not inherit his family business as his father had wished, aspiring instead to pursue further education and help people in need. The disagreement with his father brought him away from home, leading him to a self-reliant, work-study life. During this difficult period, Mr Ho experienced hardship and helplessness faced by the underprivileged and the injustice within society, which in turn had significant impact on his social work thereafter.

Mr Ho has participated in local social movements since the 1970s. As early as 1981, he joined the Society for Community Organisation, which mainly engaged in defending the rights of the underprivileged in society, including helping residents of shanty towns in Kwun Tong and Lam Tin to fight for a better living environment. Over the years he has helped and mobilised various peripheral groups to defend their rights, such as "brides on fishermen's boats", new immigrant families, elderly people living alone, mothers without right of abode, homeless and mentally rehabilitated people. Some movements were not well recognised. For example, the fight for right of abode on behalf of new immigrants and Mainland-born children of Hong Kong people has sparked worries among Hong Kong citizens about the resource allocation of society. However, Mr Ho persisted in his endeavours to strive for the legitimate rights of peripheral groups and to change local people's mind.

With 31 years of working experience at the Society for Community Organisation, Mr Ho now serves as the director of the Society. Despite his heavy workload, he is actively involved in the formulation of important policies in Hong Kong. For instance, he has served as a part-time adviser to the Central Policy Unit, and a member of the Commission on Poverty and the Commission on Strategic Development. Currently, Mr Ho also serves as a non-official member of the Steering Committee on the Community Care Fund and Chairman of Hong Kong Human Rights Commission.

Mr Ho's contribution to Hong Kong society over the years is evident. In 1997, he was ranked by *Time* magazine as one of the 25 most influential people in Hong Kong. In 1998, he was awarded a Bronze Bauhinia Star, "in recognition of the service he has rendered to less privileged groups in Hong Kong, particularly the elderly, the homeless and recent arrivals from the Mainland".

Mr Chairman, in recognition of his care for the poor, his dedication to helping the underprivileged as well as his enthusiastic pursuit of social equality over the years, may I now present to you Mr Ho Hei-wah for the conferment of an honorary fellowship.

Chinese citation written and delivered by Dr Francis Cheung