

OBSERVATION

THE FILIPINOS GET THEIR WAY

The Government of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been extremely lenient to the Philippine nationals who congregate in Central on Sundays and public holidays.

To the credit of the HKSAR Government, without complaint, it cleans up after the maids and their boyfriends leave, late on Sunday nights, scrubbing down areas, such as the ground floor of the Headquarters Building of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd, the public toilets, opposite this building and at Star Ferry, and pick up all the chicken bones, Styrofoam dishes and trash from Statue Square and surrounding areas.

The Philippine nationals, to their credit, do their best to assist the HKSAR Government with more and more Styrofoam dishes, left along the Star Ferry Concourse, urinate as regularly as is necessary (in order to keep the public toilets well operational, possibly?), and, generally, leave sufficient rubbish, lying around Central, to justify the HKSAR Government, bringing in a street-washing machine.

Of late, part of the Star Ferry Concourse, that part within spitting distance of the entrance to the ferry, has been turned over to Filipino maids to be used as a temporary shelter on Sundays and public holidays.

Pedestrians are refused entrance to the eastern side of the concourse, that area reserved as a temporary cooking area/card-playing area/pedicure and manicure '*shop*' area for the Filipinas.

This is not the only area where this takes place, of course, but the Filipinas have staked their claim to the eastern side of the pedestrian concourse; and, the HKSAR Government has tacitly agreed with the arrangement.

The logic of the Government must be that it is preferable that the Filipinas carry out their Sunday and public holiday trade in these locations since it would be a big improvement over having them cook in the middle of streets, outside Mandarin Oriental or the Legislative Council Building, for instance.

While ethnic Indians illegally ply their trade, selling wares to the Filipinas – towels, dolls, slippers, cheap clothing, etc – up and down the length of the streets of Central on Sundays and public holidays, it is nice to see members of the Hongkong Police Force, keeping their distances so as not to disturb the Filipinos and Filipinas as they gamble and trade with the illegal ethnic Indian hawkers.

In due course, one may imagine that the HKSAR will receive a petition from a group of Philippine nationals, who are intent on erecting more permanent shelters at the Star Ferry Concourse in order to protect them from the elements while they transact business on Sundays and public holidays.

What is not proscribed by law must be considered condoned by law. This is a well-established maxim, for a mandate not enforced must be a mandate abandoned.

This has always been the attitude of the HKSAR Government, in any event, and the previous British Government of Hongkong endorsed the concept in many ways.

It is comforting to learn that old colonial habits do not die, easily.

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