



ROMANCE BY NUMBERS

Capturing student interest by combining equally complex subjects – maths and love EDUCATION C2



DONGGUAN'S REVIVAL

Talented Taiwanese architect is helping transform a down-at-heel city into a tech hub LIFE BACK PAGE

University tests hi-tech surgical system

It aims for full clinical application of the 'single-port' method, which is less invasive

Ernest Kao
ernest.kao@scmp.com

By the time she was 76, Cheng Choi-yuk had had enough of hospital visits.

Cheng was diagnosed with nasopharyngeal cancer in 2005. Then she suffered a stroke. In July 2017, a malignant tumour was found under her tongue as a result of the radiotherapy treatment for her previous cancer. Again she was forced to go under the knife.

"I was nearly 80, had undergone so many surgical operations already, and suffered from cancer and a stroke. I was really on the fence on this one," she said.

That was when Cheng, now 78, was told she had a chance to be one of the few patients in the world to undergo minimally invasive surgery with a new "single-port" robotic system as part of clinical trials at Chinese University's faculty of medicine.

The one-year feasibility and safety trial between 2016 and 2017 – on 63 patients undergoing head and neck, urology or colorectal surgery – was successfully completed without complications. Cheng was one of these patients.

"The robotic arm of the new system allows truly minimally invasive access to previously more

TOURISM



Visitors from the mainland pack Bailey Street in Hung Hom yesterday, much to the frustration of local residents. Photo: Edmond So

CALL TO LIMIT NUMBER OF MAINLAND VISITORS

Groups and residents in districts inundated by tourists from across the border want government to set quota on how many are allowed into city

from picking up or dropping off tourists during rush hour at certain spots. But the residents said that had not been effective.

ECONOMY

Greater Bay Area leaders reach out to Japan for ideas

Tokyo's equivalent accounts for a third of GDP in the country and offers options for two-way trade

Kimmy Chung
kimmy.chung@scmp.com

It is often touted as an attempt to ape Silicon Valley, but China's "Greater Bay Area" is to look east for inspiration and collaboration, with political and business leaders set to visit the Tokyo Bay Area in April against a backdrop of warmer Sino-Japanese relations.

Jonathan Choi Koon-shum, chairman of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Bay Area Entrepreneurs Union, told the *Post* his group was organising a networking forum in Toyko Bay. The leaders of Hong Kong and Macau, Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor and Fernando Chui Sai-on, as well as Guangdong Governor Ma Xingrui would attend, he said.

Under the national development strategy, Hong Kong and Macau will integrate with nine Guangdong cities into an innovation powerhouse.

"We want to learn from the successful experiences of the Tokyo Bay Area," Choi said.

"The Tokyo one is very successful in building up a strong manufacturing supply chain and an industrial belt. Another goal is to promote the Greater Bay Area to Japanese companies and facili-

vanced robotics and AI technologies, could also be instructive.

In the first official trip by a Japanese leader since 2011, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited China in October and underscored that it was a "historic turning point" in bilateral relations.

Just days later, Lam took a five-day trip to Japan, the first time Hong Kong had formally promoted trade in the country since 2012.

Lau Siu-kai, vice-chairman of the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macau Studies, said ties had warmed between China and Japan because of their fraught respective relationships with the United States.

They shoulder responsibilities in promoting global free trade amid rising protectionism

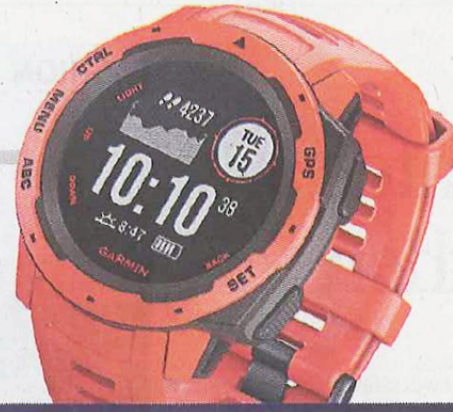
MAO YANHUA, SUN YAT-SEN UNIVERSITY

"The Greater Bay Area could



WHAT MR BAGS DID NEXT

International luxury brands can't get enough of style-savvy social media influencer **FASHION C9**



GADGETS THAT MATTER

Make 2019 healthier and smoother with these clever devices and appliances **DIGITAL LIFE C8**

Casey Wang of Hong Kong-based architecture and design firm Blend at a disused factory in Dongguan. Photos: Edmond So, Felix Wong



On resurrection row

A talented young Taiwanese architect is one of a number of professionals from the island helping transform down-at-heel Dongguan into the next mainland tech hub

Enid Tsui
 enid.tsui@scmp.com

The job of transforming China's former "sex capital" is not as glamorous as some of Taiwanese architect Casey Wang Nai-huei's previous projects. But here she is in Dongguan, Guangdong province, the sprawling mainland city also known as "the sweatshop of the world", where factories have long churned out cheap products for foreign brands.

After burnishing her professional credentials at two multinational firms Wang, 38, set up her own boutique practice in Hong Kong called Blend three years ago.

She cut her teeth on Foster + Partners' Yale School of Management building in New Haven, Connecticut, with its abundance of glass curtain walls. Then there was Tencent's stadium-sized Beijing headquarters, and the whimsical Taipei Performing Arts Centre, both by OMA.

Although her cosmopolitan team could have sought projects anywhere in the world, Dongguan appeared on the radar with a government-backed start-up fund available only to Taiwanese entrepreneurs below the age of 45.

Wang, who has a master's degree in urban design from Harvard University, and lectures part-time at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's school of

architecture, sniffed an opportunity.

Dongguan, blighted by lax urban planning, was once at the vanguard of China's 40-year-old reform drive, but its freewheeling ways went too far. In 2014, the authorities launched a massive crackdown on the city's runaway sex industry, including karaoke lounges, massage parlours, bars

launched, and won the top award of 200,000 yuan plus additional support.

The centre was established in the Songshan Lake Science and Technology Industrial Park, founded in 2010 to attract hi-tech Taiwanese factories. Its tree-lined thoroughfares bear names such as Taoyuan Road and Kaohsiung Road, and are lined with food stalls selling Taiwanese beef noodles.

"Dongguan turns out to be a great place to find projects without the bureaucratic restrictions that limit the room for experimentation and creativity in other places," Wang says. "Also, the centre and the industrial estate's Taiwan Affairs Department have been very helpful in introducing us to government and private sector opportunities."

Taiwan Affairs Departments are common under city governments or public bodies reporting to the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, which is in charge of setting Beijing's policies towards the island.

More than 100 other Taiwanese-owned start-ups have received payouts from the fund since Wang applied, while the centre also affords recipients temporary, free use of a 2,400 square metre co-working space and free accommodation in a serviced flat. It also helps with residency permits, customs clearance, schools and job searches for spouses.

and saunas, which sprang up in the wake of the manufacturing boom. The government also committed to build itself out of an economic rut caused by a plunge in manufacturing contracts, and replace old factories with shiny, new technology campuses.

The Dongguan-Taiwan Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Service Centre (aka the DG Young Teams Centre) was set up to manage the 50 million yuan (HK\$58 million) allocated to Taiwanese entrepreneurs.

Wang applied for funding in 2016, soon after the centre was

Today, the Songshan Lake address has added appeal. Just a few minutes from the centre is the new 130-hectare Huawei campus – a pastiche of chocolate box European-style architecture where a miniature train shuttles staff from the tech giant between "Oxford" and "Luxembourg".

Before Huawei and BKK Electronics helped turn Dongguan from seedy sex hub to tech hub, its factories were mostly owned by Hong Kong or Taiwanese. The city has China's second-biggest population of Taiwanese – around 100,000 at its peak a few years ago – though many have left due to a slowdown in global consumer demand.

Blend's team has continued to visit Dongguan at least once a week since its two-year subsidy programme expired, because most of its clients are there.

It is finalising the design of a new headquarters for Dogness, a Chinese company evolving from a low-cost, outsourced manufacturer of pet accessories (dog leashes for Ikea, for example) to a brand that creates its own hi-tech products.

The company raised US\$55 million on a Nasdaq listing in 2017, and that has allowed Wang's team the freedom to be creative. The "Dogness campus" will have four towers connected with elevated walkways, separate zones for manufacturing, research and development, and even a luxury pet hotel. A terrace garden and a central courtyard allow ample space for testing the latest smart collars.

"As Dongguan manufacturers transform ... and stress innovation and automation, they need the space to allow for seamless collaboration between the design team and the production team. The location of the [Dogness] headquarters is great, too. It is right in the middle of Dongguan's new business district," Wang says, as she gestures towards the city centre from the top floor of the new Kande International hotel.

Looking down from the 38th floor, she over points out the adjacent Dongguan Convention and Exhibition Centre, which is being turned into a civic centre. Blend has also been employed by the city government to plan the



HK\$58 million
 Amount of funding managed by the Dongguan-Taiwan Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Service Centre (aka DG Young Teams Centre)

traffic flow around the area and build a footbridge connecting the civic centre with a new commercial complex opening on the other side of a motorway, where another Blend project sees the company designing a green roof for a shopping centre.

Other projects include design work for a new industrial estate called Inno Valley No 1 – home to a

an environmentally friendly tonic that reduces the need for antibiotics at fish and prawn farms.

"We welcome all kinds of businesses and are not limited to hi-tech. As long as you have a good business plan, we will welcome you," he says.

Some of the recipients are second-generation Dongguan residents.

So many Taiwanese investors and managers arrived in Dongguan in the 1990s that the first school for Taiwanese children on the mainland opened there in 2000, and it follows Taiwan's syllabus.

"The children, called Taishang Baobaos [Taiwanese businessmen's babies], may go back to Taiwan for college, but some have come back because this is where they grew up," Huang says.

He and his wife arrived in Dongguan to work for Taiwan-owned businesses, but he quit and set up a firm making environmentally friendly cleaning powder.

Despite the rhetoric surrounding the delicate relationship between Beijing and Taipei – and President Xi Jinping's insistence on reunification – Dongguan's Taiwanese residents prefer to keep out of politics.

"We are encouraged to go back to Taiwan when there's an election. Naturally, those doing business in China tend to welcome closer cross-strait ties," Wang says.

Otherwise, it's all business, she adds. Her arrival in Dongguan in 2016 coincided with the inauguration of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen and subsequent deterioration in cross-strait relations.

More Taiwanese expatriates flew back for the November 2018 local elections than in previous polls because of concerns Tsai's administration would pull back economic integration with the mainland, Taiwan's media reported.

The ruling Democratic Progressive Party lost major seats in the elections.

"Taiwan may not like that Taiwanese expertise is being exported to Dongguan, but the China market is too big to ignore," Huang says.

Dongguan turns out to be a great place to find projects without the bureaucratic restrictions

CASEY WANG, ARCHITECT

Dongguan (left) had a reputation as a hotbed for prostitution until a 2014 crackdown; Jabez Huang Jingle of the DG Young Teams Centre.



Taiwan may not like that Taiwanese expertise is being exported to Dongguan, but the China market is too big to ignore

JABEZ HUANG JINGDE, DG YOUNG TEAMS CENTRE

Dongguan Macau Youth Innovation Services centre that helps Macau start-ups.

Back at the DG Young Teams Centre, chief financial officer Jabez Huang Jingde proudly shows off the generous co-working space.

Current tenants include a 3D-printer maker of fantasy characters, an inventor of a "hula hoop chair" that allows users to swing their waist while seated, and two doctors who have come up with