



HK today



Environment

# green living

## Treaty clears the air

**C**ountries in the northern hemisphere have significantly cut air pollution thanks in part to a 1979 treaty. This is a good sign for the climate change pact to be negotiated next month in Copenhagen, a UN body has said.

Levels of sulfur dioxide – one of the main causes of acid rain – dropped 70 per cent in the European Union (EU) and 36 per cent in the United States between 1990 and 2006, the Geneva-based Economic Commission for Europe said.

“The acid rain problem is well on the way to being solved,” a spokesman for Britain’s Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said. Britain is one of 51 countries that have adopted the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.

The amount of NOx, a class of nitrogen oxides that causes smog, has been reduced by 35 per cent in the EU and 23 per cent in the US during the 16-year period, the commission said.

Levels of ammonia and other organic compounds that are linked to human health problems have also dropped, and countries are discussing adding further chemicals to the treaty, the body said.

The Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution was signed in 1979.

**Associated Press**

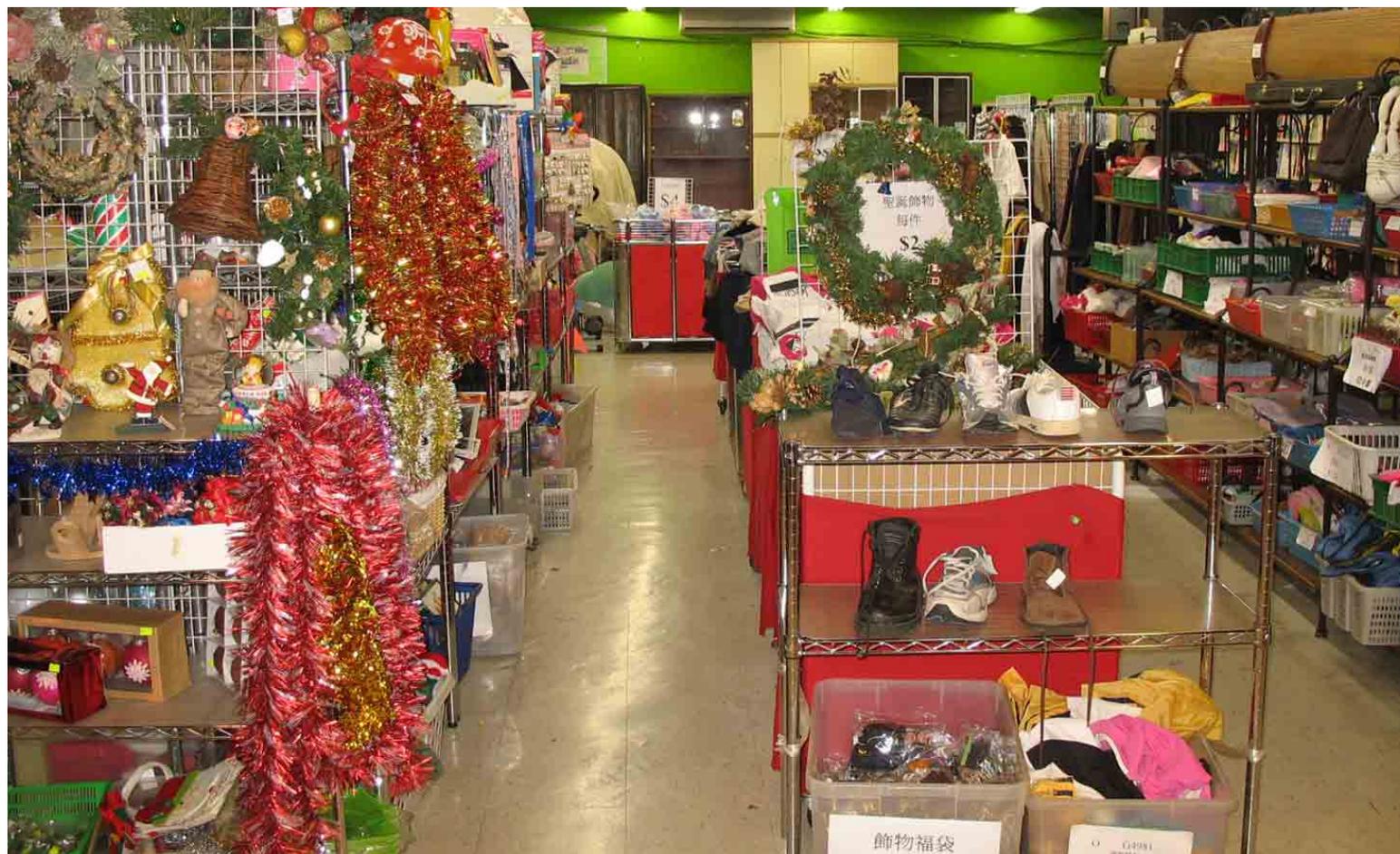
### brainbox



Draw up an advert for a recycling shop, showing what sort of things can be recycled.

Debate: Carbon-trading is not the solution to climate change.

3. What is your secret goal or dream? Write a letter to your parents to tell them about it.



THE SUCCESS OF THE COMMUNITY RECYCLING CO-OP IN SHAM SHUI PO HAS PROVED HONG KONG PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT SECOND-HAND GOODS. PHOTOS: COMMUNITY RECYCLING CO-OP

# Redistribution of wealth

Co-op recycles unwanted goods for those who need them, writes **Rebecca Tsui**

**A** second-hand shop in Sham Shui Po is showing how recycling can benefit both the community and the environment.

The Community Recycling Co-op, run by the Industrial Relations Institute, has been in operation since 2002 and has proved a success.

Its aim is to break people’s habit of simply throwing away what they don’t need when there are others who still lack basic necessities.

“Basically, we collect discarded items such as clothes, books, toys, electrical appliances, kitchen utensils, and furniture. Then, we will sell them to people in the neighbourhood at a low price,” said Lai Yuen-mei, one of the co-op’s founders.

“People who donate items receive coupons as a form of community currency. The coupons can be used to buy food and snacks in the shop.”

Lo Kin-lam, 17, said: “It’s very environmental friendly. It’s like a redistribution of resources. “For example, someone buys a new sofa and doesn’t know what to do with the old one. They can call the co-op to pick it up, and eventually it will end up in the hands of another family at a reasonable price.”

But Lai said the institute had serious reservations about setting up the co-op.

“We mostly worried that Hongkongers would reject the second-hand stuff. But in the end it was widely accepted by the community,” Lai said.

The co-op has even expanded its operations, opening a second shop in the

**People who donate items receive coupons as a form of community currency. The coupons can be used to buy food and snacks**

district. Booths are also set up occasionally in public estates and at university campuses to collect unwanted goods.

Earlier this month, a booth was set up at Hong Kong Polytechnic University by associate professor Joseph Lee Heung-wing.

“Hong Kong tops the Gini coefficient, which means the inequality of wealth and poverty here is greater than anywhere else in the world. What the co-op is doing can help relieve this problem,” Lee said.

“Firstly, we ... can help the underprivileged through donating. Secondly, it extends the life cycle of each item by recycling.”

**Readers who are interested in knowing more about the co-op’s work can visit [www.iri.org.hk](http://www.iri.org.hk)**



THE CO-OP HAS EXPANDED OPERATIONS.

**say it**

Phrases from this story

hemisphere  
半球

negotiated  
洽談

smog  
煙霧

necessities  
生活必需品

redistribution  
重新分配

inequality  
不公平