

# TAKE LIFE AS IT COMES

INTERVIEW



**MR THE HON JASPER YOK-SING TSANG**  
1968 HKU Graduate (Mathematics)

Mr the Hon Jasper Yok-sing TSANG was widely known as the former president of the Legislative Council. With a glint in his eyes, he joked, “I was amused when invited by secondary schools to hold talks on career planning. Sarcasically, I did not have a specific career goal even at the time when I was graduated from HKU.” Seeing my skeptical look, Mr Tsang revealed how he paved the road to law and politics.

When he was still in primary school, Mr Tsang said that a neighbor was a frequent visitor to his home to seek his dad’s help on Mathematics homework. Out of curiosity, Mr Tsang discovered intriguing problems like “children dividing peaches” and that

Mathematics was not mere arithmetic but also about logical deduction. Mr Tsang’s passion in Mathematics was lit up.

However, in 1968, the year when Mr Tsang graduated from HKU Pure Mathematics with flying colors, the Anti-War Movement swept across America with schools serving as centers of agitation. Furthermore, the year before was the infamous Hong Kong 1967 leftist riot during which Tsang’s brother was arrested for distributing pamphlets against the British government. In the face of social instability in the U.S. and the high possibility of being blacklisted for civil-service positions in Hong Kong, Mr Tsang declined the four offers from U.S. universities, thus, abandoning the road of becoming a Mathematician.



“When one door closes, another one opens.” The door to politics opened when Mr Tsang decided to take his friend Mr Cheng Kai Ming’s advice and became a Math teacher at Pui Kiu Middle School, a well-known pro-Communist school. During his days at Pui Kiu, Mr Tsang witnessed his colleagues resigning one after another at the time of the repudiation of the “Gang of Four” and the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Unlike others, Mr Tsang did not quit and became the principal of Pui Kiu. Then came Hong Kong’s first legislative election in 1991, in which Mr Cheng Kai Nam, who was Mr Cheng Kai Ming’s brother and a member of the pro-Beijing camp, suffered a crushing defeat.

With the hope of making “One Country Two Systems” possible and the urgent need to reorganise and establish a political party for future election, Mr Tsang utilised his networks and resources to facilitate the setting up of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) in 1992.

“While you may not believe me, I have not thought of stepping onto the road of politics even on the day of the DAB establishment,” chuckled Mr Tsang. Yet, we all know that Mr Tsang became the chairperson of the DAB and stayed there for 20 years, not to mention being the president of the LegCo in the end. To Mr Tsang, rather than having a calling from early on, he just took life as it came. It was only through living in the present moment and delving into the process did he discover the so called “goals”.


“Do you believe every problem has a solution?” I asked. “This is a complicated and interesting question to ask. Yet, have you heard of the three unsolved problems of plane geometry?” riddled Mr Tsang. After illustrating the problems lively to me, Mr Tsang explained “While the proof of impossibility was announced in the end, no one had realised this at first glance. Countless men pecked diligently at the problem with useful algebraic theorems developed during the struggle. Thus, it was the process of solving problem that counts.”

- Major Achievements*
- President of the Legislative Council (2008 - 2016)
  - Founding member and Chairperson (1992 - 2003) of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB)
  - Non-official Member of the Executive Council (2002 - 2008)
  - Member, National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (1993 - 2013)
  - Supervisor and Manager of Pui Kiu Middle School

“The purpose of life is to make life better for everybody else.”

**STUDENT REPORTER**

*“I asked Mr Tsang, ‘What is life for?’ He enunciated from the depth of his heart ‘The purpose of life is to make life better for everybody else.’ Sincerity shone through the window of his soul like a beacon at night. The moment was made memorable.”*



**Alice Leung, BSc Student**  
(major in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, minor in Psychology)