

The guardian angels of Yi Tung Shan

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HIGH in the mountains overlooking Chek Lap Kok airport, a small group of villagers living in a scatter of stone cabins, are the guardian angels for the Hong Kong Observatory's Radar Specialist Mechanics (RSMs).

For without the ever vigilance of these villagers - many of them missionaries and professional people - the automatic weather station atop Yi Tung Shan would be in constant disrepair.

The weather station was set up in 1997 specially for the monitoring of weather upwind of the airport. As there is no electricity to this remote part of Lantau, the station is powered by solar panels and wind energy. And access is only available by a narrow winding road, which no public transport would dare to go.

Initially, the villagers opposed the construction of the station, fearing that the metallic wind mast would attract lightning to the village. The RSMs explained the usefulness of the weather information collated at Yi Tung Shan to aviation and ensured them that the station would be fitted out with lightning protection. Since then there has been a

harmonious relationship between the villagers and the RSMs, so much so that the villagers immediately report any defects including deteriorating mechanical parts or vandalism to the solar panels by weekend hikers.

In fact, the station has been fully embraced by the villagers and one in particular, Mr Rupert Spicer, a barrister by profession, helps clean the solar panels from time to time to ensure that adequate sunshine is absorbed to generate enough electricity to support the weather station.

RSM, Mr Leung Wai-ming is fully appreciative of the care taken by the villagers.

"It takes much time and effort to ensure the smooth running of a remote outstation. Assistance from people like Mr Spicer makes my job much easier," he said.

Inspired by the use of wind power at the weather station, Mr Spicer has realized that it is a cost-effective and environmentally friendly source of energy. Now he is contemplating a similar wind power generator for his own cabin.



Mr Spicer and Mr Leung prepare to clean the solar panels to ensure they get adequate sunshine.



Mr Spicer (left) photographed with Mr Leung outside his stone cabin at Yi Tung Shan. In the background is the weather station with the wind sensors on top of the red-white mast and further afield, a separate mast carrying a wind-powered generator.