

Harbour Gloom Gives Activists a Warm Glow

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Green activists have claimed a victory in their battle against light pollution, saying the sky above the harbour was 60 per cent darker than normal last night during the two-hour Dim It Brighten Up campaign.

More than 3,500 buildings and organisations in the city turned their lights off at 8pm as part of an attempt to raise public awareness of light pollution and energy conservation.

Two IFC, **HSBC** ([SEHK: 0005, announcements, news](#)) headquarters, the Legislative Council building and the Convention and Exhibition Centre were among 200 buildings on both sides of the harbour taking part in the event, co-organised by Friends of the Earth and the International Year of Astronomy 2009 Hong Kong League.

Although stargazers hoping for a rare glimpse of the heavens were left disappointed by thick cloud obscuring the view, a 30,000-strong crowd enjoyed a carnival atmosphere along the Avenue of Stars in Tsim Sha Tsui, where the organisers had put up 100 telescopes for visitors to use.

One observer said: "The night sky is one of nature's marvels and I really feel sorry for those who grew up in the city. Our city lighting is so bright that we cannot often see the night sky in all its majesty."

Friends of the Earth's environmental affairs manager, Hahn Chu Hon-keung, said it was more than an environmental project. "It is also about the re-examination of our ways of living and values."

He said the overuse of lighting not only caused light pollution but made people less sensitive about energy consumption. He called on the government to enact laws to control light pollution. His group is launching a Dim It charter to encourage building owners to switch off lights on exterior walls by midnight.

In the first Dim It campaign last year about 140 buildings took part, making Victoria Harbour 32 per cent dimmer than usual, according to Friends of the Earth.

June 21 was chosen because it is the summer solstice and marks the start of peak electricity usage.