



May in Hong Kong

31.5.2018/No. 173

A condensed press review prepared by the Consulate General of Switzerland in HK

### **Economy + Finance**

- Stamp duty helps Hong Kong coffers swell by record HK\$328.6 billion (SCMP, May 2)
- Retail sales jump 11.4 per cent as Hong Kong shopping recovery rolls on (SCMP, May 3)
- Hong Kong dominates busiest air routes in the world – but budget airlines can't get a look-in (SCMP, May 7)
- Hong Kong Business Community Joint Conference rejects 'unacceptable proposal' to scrap MPF offsetting mechanism (SCMP, May 9)
- Hong Kong rolling out fast-track immigration scheme in bid to attract more IT talent amid fierce competition (SCMP, May 9)
- Hong Kong government maintains cautious approach as economy powers ahead with 'rather exceptional' 4.7 per cent growth in first quarter (SCMP, May 11)
- National funding 'crosses the bridge' to Hong Kong scientists and research hubs as part of innovation drive (SCMP, May 16)
- Hong Kong unemployment hits 20-year record low, but experts say labour market is still under pressure (SCMP, May 18)
- 10-year vision needed for Hong Kong economy to compete with Singapore on tech, HKU research vice-president says (SCMP, May 20)
- Stop Hong Kong's shipping industry exodus to Singapore by spending reserves on loans and cutting profits tax, advisers say (SCMP, May 22)
- Hong Kong overtaken by US as world's most competitive economy due to declining standards in education, health and the environment (SCMP, May 24)
- Hong Kong eyes mainland tax exemption for small group of professionals, boost for biotech industry (SCMP, May 29)
- Hong Kong lawmakers to approve HK\$170 billion for city construction projects by July, reveals Chief Executive Carrie Lam (SCMP, May 30)
- US business leaders bullish about Hong Kong's future despite concerns over erosion of city's freedoms under Chinese rule (SCMP, May 31)

### **Domestic politics**

- We must integrate with China's trade plans, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam warns lawmakers – or risk losing out (SCMP, May 3)
- Hong Kong opposition lawmaker Ted Hui bailed after arrest over phone-snatching saga (SCMP, May 6)
- Joint checkpoint plan on track to become law for Hong Kong's high-speed cross-border rail (SCMP, May 8)
- Demosisto party candidate Agnes Chow launches High Court bid to have Hong Kong election ban overturned on Bill of Rights grounds (SCMP, May 8)
- Budget passes through Hong Kong legislature with minimum fuss – but jury still out on better relations (SCMP, May 11)
- Mutual respect for Hong Kong and Macau needed to achieve economic integration, Beijing's top man in charge of cities says (SCMP, May 12)
- Hong Kong signs deal for projects with Sichuan ahead of quake anniversary (SCMP, May 12)
- Patrick Nip says Chinese constitution applies to gaps in Hong Kong's Basic Law, in talk about calls for end to 'one-party dictatorship' (SCMP, May 17)
- Beijing police release Hong Kong journalist after he was detained covering hearing of human rights lawyer Xie Yanyi (SCMP, May 17)
- Getting Demosisto candidates elected in Hong Kong now impossible, say party leaders, as Nathan Law withdraws from frontline politics altogether (SCMP, May 22)
- How has China's Communist Party kept power? 100 Hong Kong political bigwigs get rare lecture from senior theorist (SCMP, May 23)
- Greater Bay Area leader calls on Guangdong province cadres to take bold steps in cooperation with Hong Kong and Macau (SCMP, May 24)

- More than 1,000 march in Hong Kong's searing heat to remember June 4 Tiananmen Square crackdown (SCMP, May 27)
- Ousted Hong Kong lawmaker Lau Siu-lai will no longer contest disqualification, but may run in location election (SCMP, May 30)

### **International relations**

- Hong Kong should be praised by US, not dragged into trade war, Civic Party head Alan Leong says in Washington (SCMP, May 11)

### **Legal affairs and human rights**

- Senior counsels 'should accept their public duty' and help solve Hong Kong judiciary's manpower crunch (SCMP, May 7)
- Human trafficking complainant 'no victim', David Pannick QC, defending Hong Kong government, tells High Court in forced labour case (SCMP, May 9)
- 'Undesirable' for Hong Kong court to define anthem insults: Law Society on Legco bill (SCMP, May 12)
- Top Hong Kong judge aired doubts about all-important lawyers' exam – while chairing panel on its future (SCMP, May 29)
- In a first, Hong Kong refused US extradition bid following Beijing request, State Department report says (SCMP, May 31)
- Baroness Hale and Beverly McLachlin become first female judges to join Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal despite 'national interest' concerns (SCMP, May 31)

### **Health**

- Hong Kong health officials consider sugar tax to cure city of its bad health habits (SCMP, May 4)
- Hong Kong Hospital Authority to make it easier for Hong Kong patients to pay their bills (SCMP, May 8)
- Call to clearly define roles of Hong Kong doctors and nurses after surgical blunder ruling (SCMP, May 13)
- Hong Kong to reach decision by November on lifting Japanese food import ban over Fukushima disaster (SCMP, May 20)

### **Environment**

- Show of public support for conservation of Hong Kong wetland after suspicious fires (SCMP, May 3)
- Hong Kong exported more construction waste to mainland China than it sent to city's own facilities in 2017 (SCMP, May 10)
- Hong Kong's conservationists want government to expand restrictions around Sham Wan in hope endangered green turtles will return home to nest (SCMP, May 28)

### **Culture and education**

- Should Mandarin replace Cantonese in Hong Kong? No, says Carrie Lam (SCMP, May 3)
- Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam dismisses speculation over changes to controversial liberal studies subject (SCMP, May 3)
- Hong Kong Polytechnic University denies not rehiring social work instructors due to financial problems (SCMP, May 11)
- Hong Kong's version of Beijing Palace Museum to open with nod to HK\$3.5 billion donation from Jockey Club (SCMP, May 29)

### **Economy + Finance**

**Stamp duty helps Hong Kong coffers swell by record HK\$328.6 billion (SCMP, May 2):** Hong Kong's tax revenue swelled to a record high of HK\$328.6 billion in the financial year 2017-18, up 13 per cent on the previous year's taking, thanks to an upsurge in stamp duty revenue, which went up 54 per cent to HK\$95.2 billion. Of the total collected, 42 per cent, or HK\$139 billion, was from profits tax, while salaries tax accounted for about HK\$60.8 billion. Commissioner of Inland Revenue Wong Kuen-fai forecast total tax takings in 2018-19 of HK\$342.3 billion, a 4 per cent year-on-year increase. Baptist University economist Dr Billy Mak said the account of the revenue collections presented by the tax department showed Hong Kong's tax base was too narrow.

#Top of the Document

**Retail sales jump 11.4 per cent as Hong Kong shopping recovery rolls on (SCMP, May 3):** Hong Kong's retail sales jumped 11.4 per cent in March, the second-biggest year-on-year upsurge since 2015, as the industry benefited from robust tourism and upbeat consumer sentiment. A government spokesman expected the near-term outlook to remain optimistic, while industry body the Retail

Management Association even said sales for the whole year could break the record of HK\$494 billion (US\$63.3 billion), set in 2013. In 2017 tourism dollars contributed to 11.1 per cent, or HK\$296.7 billion, of the city's gross domestic product.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong dominates busiest air routes in the world – but budget airlines can't get a look-in (SCMP, May 7):** Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) claimed six of the world's 20 busiest air routes by flight frequency proving its credentials as an air transport hub. But unlike Asian rivals which also ranked highly, low-cost airlines were much smaller players here than anywhere else. Hong Kong only established a permanent home-grown low-cost carrier in 2013. Experts have said that Hong Kong airport is now so congested that there are very few take-off and runway slots available to new airlines wanting to start a new route.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong Business Community Joint Conference rejects 'unacceptable proposal' to scrap MPF offsetting mechanism (SCMP, May 9):** Hong Kong's small and medium-sized business owners put up a united front against a government proposal to stop employers from dipping into pension funds to pay for severance and long-service payments, calling on officials to offer more subsidies indefinitely. The government's proposal to scrap the so-called offsetting mechanism in the city's Mandatory Provident Fund would harm expansion and deter people from launching start-ups, said the Hong Kong Business Community Joint Conference, an alliance representing 114 business chambers on the issue. Under the government's latest plan, the offsetting mechanism would be cancelled. Employers would be required to set up a savings account and contribute 1 per cent of employees' wages to cover the payments. It would be capped at 15 per cent of a worker's annual wage. The government would provide HK\$17.2 billion in subsidies to soften the blow to employers over a 12-year period. Unionists, such as Tang Ka-piu, have accused employers of exaggerating the costs they would face under the proposal. They said the government should not offer subsidies indefinitely because the money comes from taxpayers.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong rolling out fast-track immigration scheme in bid to attract more IT talent amid fierce competition (SCMP, May 9):** Companies at two major Hong Kong technology parks will be able to hire IT experts from -outside the city and have them working within four weeks under a new fast-track immigration initiative. More than 700 firms at Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks and Cyberport will benefit from the three-year pilot Technology -Talent Admission Scheme, which starts next month. In the first year, a maximum of 1,000 people will be admitted to the city. The new hires must be engaged in seven areas: biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, robotics, data analytics, financial technologies and material science.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong government maintains cautious approach as economy powers ahead with 'rather exceptional' 4.7 per cent growth in first quarter (SCMP, May 11):** Hong Kong's economy continued last year's robust growth, jumping a stronger than expected 4.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2018. However, the government's forecast for the full year remains unchanged – three to four per cent. "The first quarter result was driven by rising asset prices, especially the booming property market and stock market seen last year," government economist Andrew Au said. "But uncertainties such as the US and China trade tensions have increased."

[#Top of the Document](#)

**National funding 'crosses the bridge' to Hong Kong scientists and research hubs as part of innovation drive (SCMP, May 16):** More than 20 Hong Kong laboratories and research centres have already received national-level funding as part of President Xi Jinping's pledge to support the city's ambition to become a global innovation hub. Discussing new opportunities presented by the funding boost, China's vice-minister for science and technology, Huang Wei, described Xi's commitment as "a bridge built over the river", for allowing the flow of funds into Hong Kong that could previously be accessed on the mainland only. Besides greater access to state funding, Hong Kong-based scientists can now capitalise on tariff waivers and other incentives when moving equipment across the border or importing machinery for scientific research. Chief Executive Carrie Lam, along with former and current heads of universities and research institutions, as well as legislators, welcomed the policy move.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong unemployment hits 20-year record low, but experts say labour market is still under pressure (SCMP, May 18):** Hong Kong's unemployment rate for the past three months reached a 20-year record low of 2.8 per cent, indicating a strong economic climate that is expected to last for the rest of the year. However, economists and unionists said strong demand for workers might not translate into decent salaries for all employees or give them more bargaining power during the review of the minimum

statutory wage.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**10-year vision needed for Hong Kong economy to compete with Singapore on tech, HKU research vice-president says (SCMP, May 20):** Officials must lay out a vision for the city's economy so universities can focus on producing the type of graduates needed to build a technology-driven society to rival Singapore, the University of Hong Kong's vice-president for research says. Professor Andy Hor called on Chief Executive Carrie Lam to deliver on her pledge to diversify the economy by drawing up a 10-year plan, with interim goals at three and five years. Her administration should also specify how much money it plans to invest in research and development each year, Hor said.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Stop Hong Kong's shipping industry exodus to Singapore by spending reserves on loans and cutting profits tax, advisers say (SCMP, May 22):** Hong Kong should cut profits tax by half and provide loans for vessel owners and supporting professionals to lure shipping business back from regional rival Singapore, a task force set up by the government says. A working group under the Hong Kong Financial Services Development Council called on officials to implement a concessionary tax rate no higher than 8.25 per cent for firms in ship leasing management and supporting services. The report also suggested a Hong Kong sovereign-rated financial institution "perform a facilitating role" by helping finance securitised loans, buying shipping loans directly from banks and providing insurance for the borrowed sums.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong overtaken by US as world's most competitive economy due to declining standards in education, health and the environment (SCMP, May 24):** Hong Kong's decline in education, health and the environment means the city is no longer the world's most competitive economy, according to the latest rankings from the IMD World Competitiveness Centre. The United States, meanwhile, jumped three places to claim top spot, with Hong Kong dropping to second on the list compiled by the Switzerland-based organization. According to this year's ranking, Hong Kong continued to lead the world in government and business efficiency. The ranking report identified a series of weaknesses in the city's infrastructure, such as total public expenditure on education, business expenditure on research and development, total expenditure on research and development, and health expenditure.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong eyes mainland tax exemption for small group of professionals, boost for biotech industry (SCMP, May 29):** A small group of Hong Kong professionals, such as university professors, who work on the mainland for more than 183 days per year may be exempt from paying higher mainland Chinese salaries tax under new arrangements, according to the city's financial secretary Paul Chan. Efforts to secure a broader exemption would be "very difficult" to achieve in the near term, Chan said. The proposed tax exemption marks the latest development in discussions between Hong Kong and mainland officials since November last year to push forward the free flow of tech talent across the border. Chan said discussions with mainland authorities are still under way. A check with the office of the financial secretary confirmed that the mainland was unlikely to make a broad exemption any time soon, but a small group might be able to.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong lawmakers to approve HK\$170 billion for city construction projects by July, reveals Chief Executive Carrie Lam (SCMP, May 30):** The Legislative Council's Finance Committee is close to approving an eye-watering HK\$170 billion for government construction projects, the city's leader revealed. Chief Executive Carrie Lam said the amount, which dwarfs the HK\$55 billion approved in the previous legislative year, should be agreed before the Legco summer recess begins in July. Lam attributed the figure to extra meetings and a consensus between the administration and lawmakers on how to prioritise items for scrutiny.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**US business leaders bullish about Hong Kong's future despite concerns over erosion of city's freedoms under Chinese rule (SCMP, May 31):** Most US companies in Hong Kong believe there has been an erosion of the city's "one country, two systems" form of government, a survey by one of the city's largest business chambers revealed. However, while there was also a feeling that the rule of law had been eroded, 70 per cent of US corporate leaders backed the city's position as a global financial hub, and 56 per cent believed the business environment was improving. According to the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong (AmCham), the survey found a bullish feeling among those questioned, with confidence stemming from the development of the city, Macau and nine other cities in Guangdong into an IT powerhouse called the Greater Bay Area. The survey came amid an escalating tussle on Sino-US trade, with Washington and Beijing taking tit-for-tat actions on trade restrictions for

each other.

[#Top of the Document](#)

### **Domestic politics**

**We must integrate with China's trade plans, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam warns lawmakers – or risk losing out (SCMP, May 3):** Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam has urged lawmakers to support the city's integration into China's trade and economic strategies, and oppose any move that seeks to challenge national security. "I must emphasise that one country, two systems must be implemented comprehensively and accurately and national sovereignty, security and development interests must be safeguarded," Lam said. "I urge all lawmakers ... to take a clear stance against any remarks or behaviour that contravenes the [national] constitution and law."

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong opposition lawmaker Ted Hui bailed after arrest over phone-snatching saga (SCMP, May 6):** Democratic Party lawmaker Ted Hui was bailed following his arrest on May 5 for common assault and dishonest access to a computer. Hui had been under investigation since April 24 when he snatched a phone from a female civil servant at the Hong Kong legislature. The woman was trying to marshal lawmakers into a meeting to discuss a government bill, but Hui felt it was wrong for the government to monitor lawmakers' whereabouts. Hui had been roundly condemned by government leaders and lawmakers, including members of the pro-democracy camp and his own party. He is facing pressure to resign.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Joint checkpoint plan on track to become law for Hong Kong's high-speed cross-border rail (SCMP, May 8):** A highly controversial bid to allow mainland Chinese laws to be enforced on the Hong Kong side of the cross-border rail link passed its first major hurdle in the legislature amid rowdy scenes as four protesting opposition members were physically removed from the chamber. The second reading of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (Co-location) Bill is expected to resume in the Legislative Council on May 30 or June 6, when legislators will have their last chance to flag any concerns before it officially becomes law. The co-location arrangement will see national laws enforced over a designated zone leased out to mainland Chinese authorities as a port area.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Demosisto party candidate Agnes Chow launches High Court bid to have Hong Kong election ban overturned on Bill of Rights grounds (SCMP, May 8):** Young Hong Kong democracy activist Agnes Chow, who was disqualified from the Legislative Council's March by-elections, has taken her fight against the government's ban to the High Court. She said the court needed to safeguard Hong Kong people's rights when they are under threat. Chow's candidacy was invalidated in January by returning officer Anne Teng on the grounds that the doctrine of "democratic self-determination", as promoted by Demosisto, was inconsistent with the "one country, two systems" principle enshrined and implemented under the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution. Teng noted Chow, a founding member of Demosisto, had declared her political affiliation with the party in her nomination form, showing she continued to subscribe to the doctrine.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Budget passes through Hong Kong legislature with minimum fuss – but jury still out on better relations (SCMP, May 11):** Hong Kong lawmakers gave the green light to the government's annual budget, marking one of the swiftest passages of the financial blueprint in the past six years. Major parties however said it was too early to tell whether tensions in the legislature had dissolved, despite there being little filibustering during the budget debate compared with during the term of Chief Executive Carrie Lam's highly unpopular predecessor Leung Chun-ying.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Mutual respect for Hong Kong and Macau needed to achieve economic integration, Beijing's top man in charge of cities says (SCMP, May 12):** The integration of Hong Kong and Macau with mainland China's ambitious economic and infrastructure development must be achieved with mutual respect for their own views and circumstances, Beijing's top man in charge of the two cities' affairs said. Zhang Xiaoming, director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, said he was reflecting the views of China's leadership regarding megaprojects such as the Greater Bay Area, which will pool the two cities together with nine mainland cities to form an economic powerhouse aimed at rivalling Silicon Valley. "We need to have mutual respect, and put ourselves in each other's shoes. In particular, we need to give enough respect to the views of the Hong Kong and Macau governments," Zhang said.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong signs deal for projects with Sichuan ahead of quake anniversary (SCMP, May 12):** Hong Kong moved to deepen ties with Sichuan through a raft of new cooperative projects. Officials from

both sides signed an agreement for 29 projects across fields such as technology innovation, education, tourism and transport after a high-level delegation from Hong Kong, led by Chief Executive Carrie Lam travelled to provincial capital Chengdu. The deal would build on a relationship that has expanded over the past decade after Hong Kong provided HK\$10 billion (US\$1.27 billion) to Sichuan for 190 reconstruction projects.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Patrick Nip says Chinese constitution applies to gaps in Hong Kong's Basic Law, in talk about calls for end to 'one-party dictatorship' (SCMP, May 17):** The Chinese constitution applies to Hong Kong when there is a gap in the city's Basic Law, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Patrick Nip told lawmakers. Nip was responding to HK First lawmaker Claudia Mo over the eligibility of people who have chanted "end to one-party dictatorship" to stand as candidates in council elections. While Nip refused to give Mo a straight answer, he said politicians in Hong Kong must uphold the Basic Law and respect the Chinese constitution and the country's political system. "If relevant policies and systems are stipulated in the Basic Law, we do it according to the Basic Law. If it is outside of those areas, the country's constitution also applies," Nip said.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Beijing police release Hong Kong journalist after he was detained covering hearing of human rights lawyer Xie Yanyi (SCMP, May 17):** A Hong Kong video journalist was released from custody after he was bloodied, handcuffed and dragged into a van by police in Beijing while trying to cover a hearing involving a human rights lawyer. The State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office had "mediated" at the request of the Hong Kong government. The incident came four days after i-Cable News journalist was kicked and beaten by two men in mainland China's southwestern Sichuan province while reporting on the 10th anniversary of a deadly earthquake. Hong Kong's chief executive Carrie Lam expressed regret over both incidents and said she hoped this would not occur again. She added that the city's government had followed up on the cases and she hoped that mainland authorities would also take the matter seriously. Asked why she did not condemn the violence, Lam said: "I don't want the public to adopt an antagonising attitude ... The public is clear that the government cares about this."

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Getting Demosisto candidates elected in Hong Kong now impossible, say party leaders, as Nathan Law withdraws from frontline politics altogether (SCMP, May 22):** Pro-democracy party Demosisto will stop putting candidates up for election after former chairman Nathan Law said the current political climate made it impossible to win a seat. Law, sitting alongside his replacement Ivan Lam, made the announcement. The pair said the party would not commit resources to fighting election campaigns and would go in a new direction, while Law plans to take a step back from frontline politics altogether. After being elected two years ago, Law was disqualified from the Legislative Council last year for taking his oath in a way that Beijing later ruled unconstitutional. Agnes Chow, who represented the party in a bid to take back Law's seat in the Legco by-election in March, was banned from the contest after a returning officer judged that Demosisto's desire for self-determination was incompatible with Hong Kong's Basic Law.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**How has China's Communist Party kept power? 100 Hong Kong political bigwigs get rare lecture from senior theorist (SCMP, May 23):** A senior Communist Party theorist Qu Qingshan has given a rare lecture in Hong Kong in which he told more than 100 local delegates and advisers to the national legislature that the party had survived almost 70 years ruling China because it learned from its mistakes and moved with the times. The unusual speech on party history comes after recent efforts by Beijing to assert its control and widen understanding in Hong Kong of the country's history and development. Participants believed the event was part of a national policy to reinforce the status of the party in Hong Kong.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Greater Bay Area leader calls on Guangdong province cadres to take bold steps in cooperation with Hong Kong and Macau (SCMP, May 24):** The top state leader in charge of China's ambitious "Greater Bay Area" project has exhorted cadres in Guangdong province to abandon obsolete ideas and take bold and innovative steps when working out measures to deepen cooperation with Hong Kong and Macau. Vice-premier Han Zheng, who is in charge of the region's development as well as Hong Kong and Macau affairs, also stressed that the importance of the project, which he said was "personally planned, personally mapped out, and personally promoted" by President Xi Jinping. Han's trip to the region coincided with news reports that Beijing would soon unveil details of the bay area development plan for Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**More than 1,000 march in Hong Kong's searing heat to remember June 4 Tiananmen Square crackdown (SCMP, May 27):** More than 1,000 Hongkongers took to the streets to take their yearly stand to "resist authoritarianism" ahead of the 29th anniversary of the Chinese military's bloody June 4 crackdown in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. "Human rights, freedom, democracy and justice have continued to deteriorate" in mainland China, said Richard Tsoi, representing the Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, the march organiser. "In Hong Kong, we have not yet reached the point where we have to 'put our lives aside'. Yet under the shadow of authoritarianism, the price for saying one particular slogan is increasing." The turnout was notably smaller than most pro-democracy marches in Hong Kong, with participants mostly middle-aged residents old enough to remember the 1989 events.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Ousted Hong Kong lawmaker Lau Siu-lai will no longer contest disqualification, but may run in location election (SCMP, May 30):** Ousted lawmaker Lau Siu-lai confirmed that she will no longer contest the High Court's decision to disqualify her from the Legislative Council for improper oath-taking, paving the way for a by-election for her Kowloon West seat. But the once pro-self-determination politician did not rule out submitting her name as a candidate in the poll. Hong Kong's election rules only say the returning officer will decide on a candidate's eligibility. She then threw her support behind veteran pan-democrat Lee Cheuk-yan and promoted him as a suitable candidate who could step up if she was barred from contesting.

[#Top of the Document](#)

### **International relations**

**Hong Kong should be praised by US, not dragged into trade war, Civic Party head Alan Leong says in Washington (SCMP, May 11):** Chief of a leading Hong Kong opposition party Alan Leong warned at a seminar in Washington that a trade war would only drive China away from values like democracy, freedom and rule of law. Civic Party chairman Leong also said it was "just disappointing" that the U S had dragged Hong Kong into its trade dispute with China when the city had "always been the voice of free trade and a vanguard of multilateral trade", and deserved praise from the US instead. Leong said he had argued for Hong Kong to be excluded from trade sanctions by the US and that the American politicians they met had expressed "understanding" and "support" of their views.

[#Top of the Document](#)

### **Legal affairs and human rights**

**Senior counsels 'should accept their public duty' and help solve Hong Kong judiciary's manpower crunch (SCMP, May 7):** Despite a series of pay rises over the years, Hong Kong's judiciary is still suffering from a manpower crunch, with 50 of the city's 214 positions on the bench left vacant between last April and this March. "It's a function of economics, because the senior counsel who are fit and proper to be appointed to the High Court are earning so much money in practice," Justice Mohan Bharwaney said. Bharwaney said that to get more established legal eagles to the bench, "it would be great if some senior counsels would wake up to the fact that you have to give back to the society which has given much to you". He described being a judge as requiring a "large element of public service".

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Human trafficking complainant 'no victim', David Pannick QC, defending Hong Kong government, tells High Court in forced labour case (SCMP, May 9):** A top London barrister representing the Hong Kong government in an appeal case argued in court that the city's administration had no obligation to introduce a specific offence criminalising forced labour. David Pannick QC also claimed that the man at the centre of the city's first ever judicial review on human trafficking was not a victim of forced labour because, despite having been threatened, he had worked "voluntarily" to earn a salary. Over the years, advocates have called for anti-human-trafficking laws to be put in place. Pannick suggested that the matter could be tackled under the current laws, with appropriate guidance and training.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**'Undesirable' for Hong Kong court to define anthem insults: Law Society on Legco bill (SCMP, May 12):** Leaving the court to define what constitutes an insult to China's national anthem in Hong Kong is "undesirable" and "could potentially expose the judiciary to unfair criticism", the city's solicitors body has said. In its Legislative Council submission, the Law Society had warned that mirroring the mainland's version of legislation on the anthem was a pitfall as the city's courts would need to "develop the law" from a different legal system. "The proposed legislation without clear definitions could potentially expose the judiciary to unfair criticism. That would not be beneficial to the rule of law in Hong Kong," it further stated.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Top Hong Kong judge aired doubts about all-important lawyers' exam – while chairing panel on its future (SCMP, May 29):** Patrick Chan, a non-permanent judge on the Court of Final Appeal, voiced

rare criticism of Hong Kong's all-important lawyers' qualification, it has been revealed, even while chairing a high-powered panel on the future of legal education. He aired his backing of the Law Society's controversial push for a unified exam, and even suggested a wider pool of local universities could provide the professional qualification.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**In a first, Hong Kong refused US extradition bid following Beijing request, State Department report says (SCMP, May 31):** Hong Kong's leader refused to hand over a fugitive to the US last year following a request by mainland Chinese authorities, in the first such case since the city's handover from Britain to China, American officials have revealed. The US Department of State stated in an annual report in Washington that Chief Executive Carrie Lam turned down an extradition request "at the behest" of the central government in October. Asked about the State Department report, a Hong Kong government spokesman declined to comment, saying: "The Hong Kong government handles the surrender of fugitive offenders in accordance with Hong Kong law." Authorities in the city have usually worked with law enforcement agencies in the US and generally accepted requests for extradition under a bilateral agreement that came into effect in 1997. One exception allows Hong Kong to refuse to surrender Chinese nationals when the request "relates to the defence, foreign affairs, or essential public interest or policy of [China]".

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Baroness Hale and Beverly McLachlin become first female judges to join Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal despite 'national interest' concerns (SCMP, May 31):** Two leading foreign judges who are vocal supporters of same-sex rights were appointed to Hong Kong's highest court – with the resounding backing of the city's lawmakers. Sixty out of 62 lawmakers present at the Legislative Council said yes to Britain's top judge Brenda Hale, and Canada's former top judge Beverley McLachlin, becoming the first women to join the Court of Final Appeal (CFA). The pair will begin their three-year terms in July, despite politicians continuing to question if foreign judges would uphold the national interest in politically sensitive cases.

[#Top of the Document](#)

## **Health**

**Hong Kong health officials consider sugar tax to cure city of its bad health habits (SCMP, May 4):** Hong Kong could consider a new sugar tax and increase its alcohol duty "if all else fails" to reduce deaths from non-communicable diseases, the health authority said as it unveiled its strategy for the next seven years. Looking ahead to 2025, the Department of Health plans to focus on four diseases – cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes – and four behaviours that contribute to those diseases – an unhealthy diet, lack of exercise, smoking and too much alcohol. Director of Health Dr Constance Chan said Hong Kong was adopting an "incremental approach" to reduce burden of those diseases. Should this approach fail, the department would consider lobbying for punitive taxes on sugar and alcohol.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong Hospital Authority to make it easier for Hong Kong patients to pay their bills (SCMP, May 8):** Hong Kong's Hospital Authority is looking at making it easier for the public to pay their bills electronically. Dr Chung Kin-lai, the director of quality and safety at the authority, revealed contactless payment with credit cards, and mobile phones, would be introduced to the existing self-service payment kiosks at specialist outpatient clinics, starting from September this year. He said that in 2016-2017, there were about 19 million cases of transactions on public hospital and clinic fees, involving HK\$3.8 billion. If each transaction required one minute to handle, it would take staff more than 300,000 hours to handle those transactions.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Call to clearly define roles of Hong Kong doctors and nurses after surgical blunder ruling (SCMP, May 13):** Medical groups and unions in Hong Kong urged their sector's watchdog and the Hospital Authority to clearly define the roles of doctors and nurses after a ruling saw a specialist banned from practising for six months bear "disproportionate" responsibilities for a surgical blunder. Frontline Doctors' Union president Catherine Wong said teamwork was important in the industry as doctors and nurses both had their own duties. She described nurses as not subordinate to doctors. The union stressed that taking care of patients' interests was a doctor's utmost duty but that the ruling meant doctors should actively look for others' mistakes.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong to reach decision by November on lifting Japanese food import ban over Fukushima disaster (SCMP, May 20):** Hong Kong is considering lifting a ban on Japanese food imports after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, with a decision to be reached by November when the city's top official visits the country, the Post has learned. In March, Japanese foreign minister Taro Kono met Chief Executive



Carrie Lam in Hong Kong to request the removal of restrictions on food imports imposed after the 2011 accident. But Lam expressed reservations at the time, citing public safety. The ban covers fresh produce and milk from Fukushima and four neighbouring prefectures, while fresh produce from the rest of the country is subjected to radiation tests by Hong Kong authorities. Japanese news agency Kyodo reported that Carrie Lam hoped to make the decision by November 1, when she is expected to head to Tokyo for a Hong Kong-related forum and meet Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

[#Top of the Document](#)

### **Environment**

**Show of public support for conservation of Hong Kong wetland after suspicious fires (SCMP, May 3):** More than 80 per cent of Hongkongers polled by a coalition of green groups support better conservation of a wetland in the New Territories that has been plagued by suspicious fires. At least 62 per cent of the 1,003 adults interviewed also supported drastic measures to permanently protect the ecologically rich area from acts of eco-vandalism and lingering development pressures. Roy Ng of the Conservancy Association, one of the six groups involved in the study, said the results clearly reflected popular demand for the area to be preserved, and urged the government to review its conservation plan.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong exported more construction waste to mainland China than it sent to city's own facilities in 2017 (SCMP, May 10):** Hong Kong exported more construction waste to mainland China last year than it sent to the city's own overflowing facilities, according to government statistics. About 13.5 million tonnes of inert construction and demolition waste, or public fill, was shipped across the border to Taishan, Guangdong province in 2017. Some 13.3 million tonnes went to local public fill reception facilities in HK. "As local reuse cannot absorb all of the public fill generated in Hong Kong in recent years, the government has been delivering surplus public fill to Taishan for disposal since 2007," environment minister Wong Kam-sing said.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong's conservationists want government to expand restrictions around Sham Wan in hope endangered green turtles will return home to nest (SCMP, May 28):** When Hong Kong officials decided to close off Sham Wan beach for five months every year, the hope was the endangered green turtle would return to nest in peace. A decade has passed since the moratorium was imposed to combat the effect humans had on the turtles' natural environment, but the situation remains dire. Green groups have been pressing officials to step up protection efforts for the animal by expanding the restricted zone to the whole of Sham Wan bay. They have also proposed extending the restricted period by another two months so it starts in April, as green turtles begin mating in nearby waters in March. At present, the restricted period begins in June and ends in October.

[#Top of the Document](#)

### **Culture and education**

**Should Mandarin replace Cantonese in Hong Kong? No, says Carrie Lam (SCMP, May 3):** Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam dismissed a controversy over the use of Mandarin in public schools and whether Cantonese could be considered the city's mother tongue as a "non-issue", telling legislators her administration had no plan to change its policy on the language used to teach. Secretary for Education Kevin Yeung denied any plans to begin teaching the Chinese-language curriculum in Mandarin. Linguists estimate more than 200 different dialects are spoken in China, but the country is united by one "common speech" – Mandarin, which is also known as Putonghua.

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam dismisses speculation over changes to controversial liberal studies subject (SCMP, May 3):** Hong Kong's leader dismissed speculation about changes to the controversial liberal studies subject at secondary school level as "groundless" and accused those who started the debate of "making a mountain out of a molehill". Chief Executive Carrie Lam's comments on the subject – which aims to give pupils a broad understanding of current affairs but which critics say allows teachers to impart their own political biases. It was reported recently that liberal studies could become an elective "pass or fail" subject in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination and lose its status as a compulsory "core subject".

[#Top of the Document](#)

**Hong Kong Polytechnic University denies not rehiring social work instructors due to financial problems (SCMP, May 11):** Polytechnic University under fire for not renewing the contracts of nine instructors has denied allegations that it is facing financial problems and prioritising research over education in pursuit of better rankings. In its statement, PolyU explained that the move was meant to align its practices with those of other local institutions. "[For] other local universities, supervision work is mostly taken up by part-time sessional supervisors based on the number of students in placement," it said. The school said that while its financial status on the whole was healthy, as a publicly funded

university, each of its departments had to regularly review its current operating model to ensure the effective use of resources.

#Top of the Document

**Hong Kong's version of Beijing Palace Museum to open with nod to HK\$3.5 billion donation from Jockey Club (SCMP, May 29):** Hong Kong's version of Beijing's Palace Museum will open with an exhibition of ancient horse-themed relics borrowed from the capital to depict the "striving -spirit" of the Jockey Club, which -donated HK\$3.5 billion to the project. Built on 10,000 square metres of prime West Kowloon harbourfront land previously reserved for a performance venue, the Hong Kong Palace Museum is expected to be completed before July 1, 2022. Officiating at the ceremony, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said she had been a "driving hand" behind the project, and had persevered through the pressures on her brought by an "environment of politicisation in Hong Kong".

#Top of the Document

612.0 - RRE/RAN/LRE/CHW/KUR

Disclaimer

This is a review of the Hong Kong media and does not necessarily represent the opinion of the Consulate General of Switzerland. The Consulate General of Switzerland in Hong Kong does not bear any responsibility for the topicality, correctness, completeness or quality of the information provided. Liability claims regarding damage caused by the use of any information provided, including any kind of information which might be incomplete or incorrect, will therefore be rejected.

62/F, Central Plaza  
18 Harbour Road  
Wan Chai, Hong Kong  
Phone: +852 3509 5000, Fax: +852 3509 5050  
hon.vertretung@eda.admin.ch  
www.eda.admin.ch/hongkong