



September in Hong Kong

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

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## **Economy + Finance**

**Hongkongers working in mainland China face being taxed on their global income (SCMP, Sept. 1):** Hongkongers living or working in mainland China could face bigger personal income tax bills after an amendment to the relevant law proposed by the Ministry of Finance was approved on Friday, but there is still room for possible relief. The change, set to take effect from the beginning of next year, will require Hong Kong residents who stay or earn their main income on the mainland for more than 183 days a year to pay tax on any other earnings around the world. "Hongkongers' concern can be solved by updating the treaty between the central government and the Hong Kong government [to avoid double taxation]," said Tam Yiu-chung, the city's sole delegate to the National People's Congress Standing Committee.

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**US-China trade war hits Hong Kong tourism as weaker yuan slows number of visitors from across the border (SCMP, Sept. 1):** Hong Kong felt the effect of a worsening US-China trade war and volatile currency exchanges as tourist arrival growth slowed to its lowest pace in six months. The Hong Kong Tourism Board revealed the number of visitors in July rose 5.7 per cent compared to a year earlier, to about 5.46 million. But the board said the escalating trade war as well as the fluctuation in multiple currency exchange rates resulted in a dwindling number of tourists arriving from short-haul destinations, with a fall of 6.2 per cent compared to the same month last year. A board spokesman said the strong showing of the US dollar against other currencies would affect tourism to a certain extent. The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the US dollar.

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**Hong Kong surpasses New York as home to the world's biggest population of ultra-rich people (SCMP, Sept. 6):** Hong Kong surpassed New York as the city with the highest population of people worth at least US\$30 million, according to a new report. It saw its number of ultra-wealthy increase 31 per cent last year, to about 10,000, research firm Wealth-X found, higher than the nearly 9,000-strong population of the US's largest city. Tokyo came third, while Paris beat out London to take the European crown as Brexit weighed down the UK capital.

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**Hong Kong's dismal display in expat life survey sees it trail Singapore, Myanmar and Mexico (SCMP, Sept. 8):** Hong Kong's high cost of living, long working hours and scarcity of childcare have made the city one of the least preferred destinations for expats, according to a new survey, which ranked it 56th out of 68 economies worldwide. Foreigners reported difficulties making friends and staying healthy, but were relatively happy with transport and internet services. The city trailed Vietnam (14th), Myanmar (53rd) and mainland China (55th). The findings were published in the latest Expat Insider survey by networking website InterNations, which interviewed about 18,000 expatriates around the world in February and March.

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**More than 1,700 financial firms in Hong Kong share customer information with authorities in global tax evasion initiative (SCMP, Sept. 12):** More than 1,700 financial institutions in Hong Kong have submitted to local authorities the account details of customers who are tax residents of 75 jurisdictions around the world, as the city prepares to exchange information with other governments to crack down on tax evasion. But as Hong Kong has agreements with only 50 of these jurisdictions, including mainland China, Canada, Singapore and Japan, it will only send information annually to local tax authorities in those areas. The first exchange is set to take place by the end of this month, and the remaining 25 jurisdictions will receive information once they activate "exchange relationships" with Hong Kong. Hong Kong is among 149 jurisdictions that are party to a global tax cooperation initiative known as Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information in Tax Matters (AEOI).

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**Hong Kong taxi drivers seek 25 per cent rise in base fares, citing mounting costs (SCMP, Sept. 13):** Hong Kong taxi drivers are seeking a 25 per cent rise in base fares as they battle rising costs and dwindling manpower. It would be another blow to the wallets of the city's many taxi passengers, coming on the heels of large increases of base fares from ride-hailing app Uber, and its introduction of waiting fees. The latest application is pending government approval and new fares are likely to take effect next year.

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**Typhoon Mangkhut bill could set Hong Kong record of US\$1 billion in insurance claims (SCMP, Sept. 18):** One assessor estimated that claims could exceed US\$1 billion, which would make Typhoon Mangkhut the most destructive storm in local history. The typhoon slammed into Hong Kong on Sept. 16 and tore through cities in neighbouring Guangdong province. Yet among the bleak images and reports, the good news was no less remarkable: not a single life was lost. Bank of East Asia chief

economist Paul Tang called the storm a pressure test for Hong Kong. "Mangkhut shows that this type of typhoon with this kind of strength is not a one-off and will happen again," Tang said. "This will cause people or companies to evaluate the durability of their properties or facilities, which will end up driving up costs and spending."

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**Latest rounds of US-China trade war leave Hong Kong business leaders fearing there is no end in sight to dispute (SCMP, Sept. 20):** Hong Kong business leaders fear there will be no end to the trade war between the world's two biggest economic powers, with the government rolling out more support measures to help companies. Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Edward Yau said that the US-China trade war had escalated to "a new level" and promised to keep up dialogue with business chambers and increase insurance coverage and credit support for Hong Kong firms. The Hong Kong Export Credit Insurance Corporation introduced extra measures, including offering a deeper 30 per cent discount on premiums for small business policyholders compared with 20 per cent previously. Small business policyholders would have a bigger credit limit on US importers, as it was raised 20 per cent to HK\$5 million (US\$641,000).

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**Beijing recruits Hong Kong artificial intelligence start-up SenseTime to lead tech drive (SCMP, Sept. 21):** A Hong Kong start-up whose face- and image-recognition technology is being used for smart cities, online entertainment and finance has been hand-picked by Beijing to power China's ambition to be a global tech leader. China's Minister of Science and Technology Wang Zhigang announced his ministry would entrust SenseTime to establish an "open innovation platform for next-generation AI" on intelligent vision. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam hailed the involvement of SenseTime as a "vote of confidence in Hong Kong's strengths in innovation and technology", as she met Wang Zhigang. She and Wang witnessed the signing of an agreement where both sides pledged further cooperation in innovation and technology. It means Hong Kong researchers will get greater access to top mainland Chinese laboratories, more cross-border sharing of scientific and biomedical data, and the ability for Hong Kong scientists to take part in national policymaking and international projects.

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**Hong Kong's first high-speed train makes maiden trip across border, as Carrie Lam says rail link will be 'bright light' on China's calling card (SCMP, Sept. 22):** Hong Kong's first high-speed train sped off on its maiden journey across the border on Sept. 22, with the city's leader declaring that the mega project would be a shining light on China's calling card. Chief Executive Carrie Lam gave the ringing endorsement at the HK\$84.4 billion (US\$11.3 billion) Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link opening ceremony, which was also officiated by Guangdong governor Ma Xingrui. Ma described the commencement of the express rail link as a "milestone" in the establishment of the Greater Bay Area – Beijing's initiative to link Hong Kong, Macau and nine Guangdong cities to form an innovation hub rivaling Silicon Valley.

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**Travel agencies in Hong Kong eye growth in high-speed mainland China business via tour packages (SCMP, Sept. 24):** Eager for their slice of the high-speed rail pie, Hong Kong travel agencies scrambled to cash in on tour package offerings aboard the new cross-border link. Tourism sector lawmaker Yiu Si-wing said the cross-border link's debut marked an important milestone for the local industry. "The high-speed rail has provided an inspiration for the tourism sector to create more products such as new tour lines to mainland cities," he said.

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**'Wide support' in Hong Kong for developing damaged farmland, land supply report says (SCMP, Sept. 25):** Developing Hong Kong's large tracts of damaged farmland has won "widespread support" from different sectors, according to a preliminary report of a public consultation on tackling the city's housing crisis. The findings were submitted to Chief Executive Carrie Lam on Sept. 24 by the government-appointed Task Force on Land Supply. While the final analysis of public opinion on 18 options to boost land supply will not be completed until the end of the year, Lam requested the preliminary report so she could prepare for her policy address on October 10. The report named the five most discussed groups of proposals. Developing degraded agricultural land – known as "brownfield sites" – was the only option described as receiving wide public support.

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**Beijing interference main threat to freedom of Hong Kong's economy, Fraser Institute report says (SCMP, Sept. 27):** Beijing's interference in Hong Kong affairs has for the second year running been singled out as a threat to the city's ranking as the world's freest economy, in an annual report by a Canadian think tank. The Hong Kong government, while welcoming the top ranking, disputed the Fraser Institute's warning, saying the rule of law in the city, and judicial independence, were "alive and

well". The institute, in the 2018 edition of its report Economic Freedom of the World, placed Hong Kong first on the ranking of free economies, followed by Singapore and New Zealand. The United States was sixth, followed by Canada and Australia tied in 10th place. China was 108.

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**HSBC raises Hong Kong prime rate for the first time in a decade, ending era of cheap funds (SCMP, Sept. 28):** HSBC has become the first commercial bank to raise its prime rate in Hong Kong, taking its cue from the US Federal Reserve and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority in ending a decade of cheap capital. "Hong Kong's low-rate environment has prevailed for over 10 years now, so it's inevitable that banks would have to raise rates" following the recent increases in the US, the city's Financial Secretary Paul Chan said at the Hong Kong Institute of Bankers conference, before HSBC announced its move. "Most banks are reluctant to touch their base lending rates, because the rate is linked to a substantial amount of loans, and any shift would hurt them competitively," said Gordon Tsui Luen-on, managing director of Hantec Pacific in Hong Kong. "However, eight rounds of interest rate increases over three years have finally forced the banks' hands." The last time Hong Kong's major lenders raised their base rate was on March 30, 2006, when HSBC raised the rate to 8 per cent from 7.75 per cent.

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### **Domestic politics**

**Early bird applications filed for new ID card giving Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan residents in mainland China wide access to public services (SCMP, Sept. 1):** Beijing announced last month that people from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan who had been living, working or studying on the mainland for at least six months would be able to apply for the new smart cards. The cards will give holders almost the same rights as mainlanders in accessing 18 types of schemes and services. The move has been hailed as a "breakthrough" by Hong Kong's leader, Chief Executive Carrie Lam. But Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council branded the scheme a "political ploy" to belittle the self-ruled island. It warned Taiwanese that being registered under the mainland's household management system would bring privacy concerns regarding the personal data on their applications.

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**Hong Kong students cautioned about independence debate as academic year begins (SCMP, Sept. 3):** Two of Hong Kong's top officials cautioned youngsters against independence talk on university campuses as classes resumed on Sept. 3, saying that while the city enjoyed freedom of speech, debate about separatist ideas was pointless. But at Chinese University, which saw clashes last year amid renewed calls for Hong Kong to break away from China, student leaders at an event to herald the start of a new academic year insisted they had a right to talk about sovereignty over the city. Secretary for Education Kevin Yeung said independence was not feasible and the discussion was therefore unnecessary. Separately, the city's No 2 official Matthew Cheung said: "Hong Kong is a place with freedom of speech, but there is absolutely no space for Hong Kong independence."

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**China's 'Greater Bay Area' plan will not compromise Hong Kong's judicial independence, city leader Carrie Lam says (SCMP, Sept. 5):** Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam said the city's judicial independence and other strengths would not be compromised under Beijing's plan to integrate it and its neighbours into a dynamic economic hub. Lam made the remarks as she visited Guangzhou to attend a series of meetings. She was at the opening of a high-ranking regional forum alongside top officials from the pan-Pearl River Delta – an area encompassing Hong Kong, Macau, Guangdong province and eight other mainland provinces or regions in southern and southwestern China. "Some people are worried that the plan will affect the implementation of 'one country, two systems' ... But Hong Kong's integration would surely not make one country, two systems a blurry [principle]," she said.

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**Ousted Hong Kong lawmaker says pro-democracy groups in city forming alliance to help her as she considers Legco comeback (SCMP, Sept. 7):** Ousted Hong Kong lawmaker Lau Siu-lai revealed that major pro-democracy groups in the city had formed an alliance to help her explore a comeback in the upcoming by-election. Lau, who was disqualified last year from the Legislative Council alongside Edward Yiu and four other pan-democratic lawmakers after a court found their oath-taking improper, admitted her bloc could not solely bank on the backlash over the saga in their campaign. Sources said Lau, a social science lecturer at Polytechnic University's Hong Kong Community College before becoming a full-time politician in 2016, would try to link her policy ideas with neighbourhood issues to make them more relevant to voters. While Lau said she was "actively considering" contesting her old seat, she denied the group had been set up solely for her.

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**Hong Kong teachers urged to promote sense of ‘national identity’ in city students at liaison office open day (SCMP, Sept. 9):** A senior mainland envoy in Hong Kong has told the city’s teachers and principals to fulfil their mission in developing “a sense of national identity, a care for Hong Kong, and a global vision” in the younger generation so that they can become successors of “one country, two systems”. Tan Tieniu, deputy director of the central government liaison office in Hong Kong, also said he was pleased to see closer ties between the Hong Kong and mainland school sectors in recent years, citing figures that about 100,000 Hong Kong students and teachers took part in exchange programmes and visited the mainland every year.

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**Calls for independence leave Hong Kong’s leader fighting fires behind the scenes as Beijing’s patience wears thin (SCMP, Sept. 9):** Chief Executive Carrie Lam slammed the student leaders using school events to promote “absurd” separatist ideas, using the word “condemn” five times. She also spoke of being “heartbroken” by independence advocacy among youth. She said students advocating independence were violating the Basic Law, Hong Kong’s mini-constitution, and her government would not tolerate any talk that affected the “one country, two systems” principle under which the city enjoys a high degree of autonomy. “Lam wants to demonstrate to Beijing that she is taking the issue seriously and is capable of handling it properly, so there is no need to rush through the national security legislation,” said Wong Kwok-kin, a lawmaker for the pro-establishment Federation of Trade Unions. Beijing has already signalled its impatience with Hong Kong for not making sufficient progress in fulfilling its obligation under the Basic Law to enact national security legislation.

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**Pro-Beijing politician’s attack on Hong Kong judges as ‘sinners of society’ earns stiff rebuke from leader Carrie Lam (SCMP, Sept. 12):** Hong Kong’s leader hit back against criticism of the city’s courts, this time over a pro-Beijing politician’s condemnation of judges as “sinners of society” for overturning the jail sentences of 13 activists recently. Chief Executive Carrie Lam was responding to Stanley Ng, a local delegate to the national legislature, who labelled five Court of Final Appeal judges “killers of young people” in a Facebook post. Lam described insults and personal attacks against judges as “regrettable”. “It is not the first time I am [making such remarks] here, and that has nothing to do with one’s political stance,” she said. “It is unacceptable for people to make inappropriate comments over court decisions, to vilify the judges in contempt of court, or even to launch personal attacks against a particular judge because they are unhappy with the judgment.” Such acts dealt a blow to the spirit of the city’s judiciary, including its system, she added.

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**China’s top official on Hong Kong says his office must act as ‘guardian’ of ‘one country, two systems’ policy (SCMP, Sept. 14):** Beijing’s top official overseeing Hong Kong and Macau affairs has pledged to adopt an “innovative and creative” attitude in coping with difficulties that arise in the cities, warning against being too “idealistic, simplistic and emotional”. Zhang Xiaoming, director of the State Council’s Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO), also defined the roles of his office “in this new era” as being the “dear close friend” of Hong Kong and Macau residents, and the “guardian” of Beijing’s “one country, two systems” policy. Zhang said: “Just like other great businesses that are bound to face difficulties, the implementation of one country, two systems is not plain sailing either. [The policy] itself already contained some contradictions. And some problems have been left despite the smooth transition of sovereignty.”

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**Typhoon Mangkhut: Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam defends decision not to declare day off amid post-storm transport chaos (SCMP, Sept. 18):** Hong Kong’s leader Carrie Lam has insisted it would have been irresponsible of her to declare Sept. 17 an official day off for the city to recover from its most powerful typhoon on record, but she ordered a review of the post-storm management after a chaotic start to the week. Chief Executive Carrie Lam was on the defensive after commuters were left confused and angry as they tried to get to work during large-scale suspensions of rail and bus services caused by Super Typhoon Mangkhut. Lam stressed that it would not be responsible for the city’s leader to declare an official day off before doing a thorough assessment of the impact on different sectors, adding that such a decision would have no legal basis. She said the government had never considered such a move as there was no mechanism to assess its legal consequences and its impact. The chief executive however said she had already asked Secretary for Security John Lee to conduct an overall review of the various arrangements for coping with typhoons.

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**Ousted pro-democracy Hong Kong lawmaker Lau Siu-lai announces bid to return to the Legislative Council in by-election (SCMP, Sept. 20):** Ousted Hong Kong lawmaker Lau Siu-lai has announced a bid to re-enter the legislature in a November by-election. Lau, one of six lawmakers removed from the Legislative Council for improperly taking their oaths, vowed to return to Legco to

“stand for justice and strive for our future”. She will contest the poll for the Kowloon West constituency. Lau said she never supported Hong Kong independence. She said her previous calls for self-determination had to do with genuine universal suffrage and autonomy in livelihood issues, such as a universal pension. She said she could not tell if she would join the ranks of pro-democracy activists barred from elections. Lau said she would hand in her papers once the nomination period begins on October 2, to allow more time for the pro-democracy camp to deploy a backup plan, should she be blocked.

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**Hong Kong National Party spread hatred against mainlanders and would have infiltrated schools, security minister John Lee says (SCMP, Sept. 24):** A Hong Kong separatist party was officially banned by the government on national security grounds on Sept. 24 with Secretary for Security John Lee detailing how it had pursued its agenda by spreading hatred against mainlanders and planning to infiltrate schools. It means anyone who associates with the party by serving them, participating in gatherings and giving them financial assistance could be liable on conviction to a fine and jail sentence of two to three years. But Lee stressed that Hongkongers should not worry that the ban on the Hong Kong National Party was a clampdown on their freedoms, as the decision was made to “safeguard national security, public safety, public order and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others”. In a press briefing, Lee elaborated on how the party had “executed action” in the past two years to build support for its cause, even calling for an “armed revolution”, though he conceded it had not resorted to violence.

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**Beijing renews call for Hong Kong to pass national security law after pro-independence party ban (SCMP, Sept. 26):** Beijing renewed its call for Hong Kong to enact controversial national security legislation, a day after local officials took the unprecedented step of banning a party advocating independence from China. Shen Chunyao, chairman of the Basic Law Committee – a body that advises the Chinese government on Hong Kong’s mini-constitution – was quoted as making the appeal during a meeting with the pro-establishment Hong Kong Professionals and Senior Executives Association in Beijing. Association president Thomas Lee quoted Shen as saying Hong Kong officials needed to enact national security legislation, especially in light of pro-independence advocacy in the city. Under Article 23, the city must enact its own law to prohibit acts such as “treason, secession, sedition and subversion” against the central government.

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**Hong Kong universities tell students to remove independence banners, as top China diplomat says city’s young need enhanced education on mainland culture (SCMP, Sept. 28):** Banners in support of Hong Kong independence were on display on two university campuses two days after a separatist party was outlawed on national security grounds, even as the management urged the student unions concerned to remove them or take appropriate action. As the controversy intensified, China’s top diplomat, Yang Jiechi, told a visiting delegation of Hong Kong professionals in the capital that solving youth problems was key to tackling the issue of independence. Yang, a member of Beijing’s coordination group in charge of Hong Kong and Macau affairs, stressed the need to better educate the city’s youth on Chinese culture, as he reiterated the central government’s zero-tolerance policy against independence advocacy.

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**New Hong Kong civic group co-founded by activist Joshua Wong appeals for international help to fend off ‘China’s sharp power’ in city (SCMP, Sept. 28):** A newly formed Hong Kong civil society group has appealed to the international community to help it fend off what it calls Beijing’s encroaching interference in the city’s freedoms, with three well-known activists advancing this cause at the European Parliament and in Britain. Hong Kong Civil Hub, co-founded by the poster boy of the Occupy protests for greater democracy four years ago, Joshua Wong issued a report on Thursday describing how “China’s sharp power” was affecting the rule of law, elections, the media, academic freedom and religion. Occupy co-founder Benny Tai, who contributed to the report, accused Beijing of being increasingly authoritarian towards the city in a seminar at the European Parliament in Brussels. Tai will be in Britain with the group’s co-founder Martin Lee and Nathan Law of localist party Demosisto to attend a conference on Hong Kong’s democratic development.

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## **International relations**

**US Consul General Kurt Tong dismisses Hong Kong National Party’s call to punish city by applying US-China trade war tariffs (SCMP, Sept. 5):** The United States’ top envoy in Hong Kong has brushed aside a local separatist party’s call for the country to apply its China-targeted tariff and trade policies to the city. Kurt Tong, the US consul general in Hong Kong, reaffirmed the “very good relationship” between Washington and the city’s government. His remarks came after the Hong Kong

National Party (HKNP) wrote to the US Department of State calling on Washington to suspend the differential treatment on trade between the city and mainland China under the US-Hong Kong Policy Act. "We've already been very clear on that," Tong said. "The degree of autonomy Hong Kong enjoys is still more than sufficient for the Hong Kong Policy Act to remain in force."

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**British government sounds warning on freedom of speech in Hong Kong (SCMP, Sept. 7):** The British government has warned of the "growing concerns" about the extent of free speech in Hong Kong, particularly in relation to the discussion of the controversial notion of Hong Kong independence. But its remarks, made in the latest six-monthly report to the UK parliament, immediately drew criticism from China's foreign ministry office in Hong Kong, which said the independence notion was not part of free speech, but a violation of China's constitution and the city's mini-constitution, the Basic Law. In the report, UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt judged that most provisions of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, which guaranteed the "one country, two systems" guiding principle for Hong Kong, had been implemented faithfully, although he was concerned about the continued pressure on the city's high degree of autonomy, rights and freedoms. "The UK Government's view on independence is well known – we believe that it is neither a realistic nor a desirable option for Hong Kong," Hunt wrote in the report.

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**Britain not 'interfering' in Hong Kong politics, top UK diplomat says, as he reaffirms country's commitment to city's special status (SCMP, Sept. 17):** London's interest in Hong Kong should not be seen as a "threat or interference" in Chinese sovereignty, a top British diplomat has said. Simon McDonald, Permanent Under-Secretary and Head of the Diplomatic Service of Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said his country would continue to maintain its obligations to the city, while looking to strengthen trade ties with China. "Freedom of expression does not diminish our security," he said, adding that Britain does not support independence for Hong Kong. "The Brits believe that freedom of speech is an aspect of a strong society. It is our practise in the UK."

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**China hits out at foreign attacks on Hong Kong National Party ban, but spokeswoman for US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo renews criticism just hours later (SCMP, Sept. 25):** China's foreign ministry issued a stern rebuke to other countries for criticising the Hong Kong government's unprecedented ban of a separatist party, urging foreigners to stop interfering in the nation's internal affairs "under the guise" of freedom of speech and association. China's foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang did not name any countries or groups, but after Hong Kong security minister John Lee announced that the National Party had been outlawed on national security grounds, several foreign bodies issued statements of disapproval. Hours after Geng's comments, Heather Nauert, a spokeswoman for US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, added fuel to the fire by also expressing concern over the ban. She said the US supported the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association. "These are core values we share with Hong Kong, and must be vigorously protected," Nauert said. Her comments echoed those by the US consulate which said the ban was inconsistent with core values of freedom of expression and association that the United States shared with Hong Kong. Britain's Foreign Office said it did not support Hong Kong independence, but urged full respect for the city's high degree of autonomy and its rights and freedoms. The European Union said the ban would limit political activity in the city and "risks having a wider negative impact". Human Rights Watch proclaimed it "a grim sign for human rights" in Hong Kong and urged the government to immediately reverse its decision.

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

**Fears of 'invisible hands' as figures show slump in Hong Kong's cooperation on transfer of foreign fugitives (SCMP, Sept. 4):** The number of fugitives from justice either surrendered to or by Hong Kong under international treaties has slumped significantly over the two decades since the city returned to Chinese sovereignty, the Post has found. Also on the decline since 1997 is the rate and number of agreements that Hong Kong has signed with overseas jurisdictions to formalise international cooperation in the fight against crime. This comes amid concerns that both Hong Kong and Macau are relying more heavily on opaque and informal "arrangements" when dealing with the pursuit of fugitives and administration of international justice. The slowdown in cooperation has raised concerns that both cities could become de facto "holding centres" for international and mainland fugitives, as Beijing tries to chart a course through the murky waters of global corruption, crime and money laundering without endangering its national interests.

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**Restriction on Hong Kong barristers taking second job set to be eased under proposed changes to Bar Association Code of Conduct (SCMP, Sept. 12):** Barristers will no longer need permission to have a second job under proposed changes by the Hong Kong Bar Association, after a challenge to the



long-standing restriction almost went to the city's top court. The association, the city's top legal professional body, is considering relaxing its rule so that barristers would only be required to tell the Bar Council, its executive committee, that they intend to start a second or part-time job. However, if there are any concerns about the appropriateness of their non-legal work, they will have to comply with any advice given. "The rule we have has been abolished in most other places," Bar Association chairman Philip Dykes said.

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**Occupy trio to let evidence against them go unchallenged and focus on legality of charges they face in Hong Kong protest trial (SCMP, Sept. 17):** The three founders of Hong Kong's 2014 Occupy protests are likely to focus on legal arguments rather than challenging the evidence against them when it comes to their trials in November. Dr Chan Kin-man, who alongside Benny Tai, Reverend Chu Yiu-ming, and six co-defendants, said the trio would argue that some of the charges against them, such as incitement to incite public nuisance, were unconstitutional. However, district judge Johnny Chan has already ruled that charge is constitutional in common law. He also sided with prosecutors that there was no repetition of charges, with Dr Chan, Tai and Chu also facing counts of conspiracy to commit public nuisance, and incitement to commit public nuisance. Each charge carries a maximum sentence of seven years in jail.

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**Breakthrough for LGBT rights as Hong Kong to recognise same-sex partnerships in spousal visa applications (SCMP, Sept. 18):** Hong Kong will for the first time recognise overseas same-sex partnerships when granting dependant visas, the government announced. The new policy was welcomed by advocates, but opponents of LGBT rights called on the government to make sure the amendment did not lead to more rights for homosexual couples, even as officials insisted it would not. The change came after a review prompted by a Court of Final Appeal ruling in July, at the end of a long legal battle, that a married British lesbian – identified as QT – should be granted a spousal visa. She had initially been denied.

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## **Health**

**Schools take precautions against second outbreak of dengue fever in Hong Kong (SCMP, Sept. 2):** Hong Kong's schools are adding anti-mosquito measures to their list of tasks ahead of the first day of term, even though most parents remain unconcerned about the possibility of a second outbreak of dengue fever. There have been 28 confirmed cases of the disease contracted locally since August 14, the highest number reported in a year since records began in 1994. Secretary for Food and Health Professor Sophia Chan said that the Centre for Health Protection had issued letters to schools reminding them to take anti-mosquito measures. She said the Home Affairs Department would distribute mosquito repellent to all schools. Most dengue fever cases in the city in previous years were imported – patients were bitten elsewhere and displayed signs of the illness upon returning.

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**Use of ADHD medication in Hong Kong has risen 36-fold over 15 years, university study finds (SCMP, Sept. 20):** There has been a 36-fold increase in the use of medication for attention deficit disorder in Hong Kong over 15 years, indicating the condition has become a major issue in the city, a study has found. Academics from the University of Hong Kong led an international team of researchers who studied medication prescription rates for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in 15 areas of 13 countries. About 6.4 per cent of children and adolescents are affected by the disorder in Hong Kong, with 10,438 new cases in 2017, according to Department of Health figures. Children with ADHD show a pattern of inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsivity. "In Hong Kong, we found there was a 36 times increment of use of ADHD medications among our local population. It's something rather alarming. That means ADHD has become a major issue in Hong Kong and our prescription [rate] has been increasing year by year," Dr. Patrick Ip said.

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**Call for universal breast cancer screening in Hong Kong as study shows most cases are not hereditary (SCMP, Sept. 21):** A study of more than 16,000 Hong Kong breast cancer patients has found that only one in seven had a family history of the disease, while another study of close to 3,000 women found only one in 10 had a gene mutation that points to a higher risk of breast or ovarian cancer. The Breast Cancer Foundation said this made clear that the vast majority of breast cancer cases in the city were not hereditary, underscoring the importance and need for universal screening. But experts remain divided on the need for widespread mammograms, with a government working group of doctors concluding in June that it was "unclear whether population-based breast cancer screening did more harm than good".

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**Ban e-cigarettes, Hong Kong medical experts say after ‘shocking’ 55 per cent rise in primary schoolchildren trying vaping (SCMP, Sept. 28):** Four Hong Kong medical groups have banded together to step up calls for a total ban on e-cigarettes following a 55 per cent rise in the proportion of Primary Two to Four pupils trying the products. The Council on Smoking and Health, Federation of Medical Societies, Medical Association and Dental Association also cautioned that e-cigarettes could help youngsters abuse other drugs. Their warning comes ahead of debate on proposed regulations in the city’s legislature, which is set to reconvene next month.

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### **Environment**

**Customs in Hong Kong could use anti-gang laws to fight smuggling in endangered species (SCMP, Sept. 5):** More cases of endangered wildlife smuggling in Hong Kong could be prosecuted using tougher organised crime laws in future, Hong Kong customs authorities said. This came as the volume of endangered wildlife products seized at border checkpoints and cargo terminals in the first eight months eclipsed that for the whole of last year. Customs officials nabbed 174 tonnes of endangered species worth about HK\$58 million in 522 cases from January to last month, leading to arrests of 374 people and – as of July – 101 prosecutions. “Our target is, for all smuggling cases that appear to be syndicated, to use this ordinance in order to tighten the penalty and seize their ill-gotten gains. This is the direction we are working hard towards,” said the Customs and Excise Department.

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**WWF-Hong Kong fears lack of oversight over offshore natural gas facility as council meeting to discuss environmental impact is scrapped (SCMP, Sept. 10):** A council meeting of government advisers to discuss the environmental impact of a planned offshore natural gas facility near Lantau Island has been scrapped, raising concerns from a green group that any decision will be “rubber-stamped”. “I’ve never heard of this happening before, at least for a project of such scale,” said WWF-Hong Kong conservationist Samantha Lee, whose group strongly opposes the project. Lee’s group has argued that the facility would harm marine life and compromise a planned marine protected area nearby. The government wants the city to burn less coal and be generating at least half of its power from relatively cleaner natural gas starting in 2020.

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**Trash from mainland China ending up on Hong Kong’s shores could be 7 times worse than estimated, green group warns (SCMP, Sept. 12):** The amount of marine litter from mainland China washing up on Hong Kong’s shores could be seven times higher than government estimates, an environmental advocacy group said. A 2015 study by the city’s Environmental Protection Department on marine rubbish concluded that less than 5 per cent of the trash washing up on local shorelines came from up north. But new research by The Green Earth on Hong Kong’s shorelines last month suggested the figure could be as much as 38 per cent. “Our results may only serve as a reference but from the huge discrepancy between our figures and the government’s, it’s clear the government may have severely underestimated the contribution of mainland rubbish in Hong Kong,” project officer Mandy Cheung said.

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**Hong Kong sewage treatment facility leaking waste into waters off Sai Kung after being damaged in Typhoon Mangkhut (SCMP, Sept. 21):** Sewage has been leaking into the sea in Sai Kung as a treatment facility there was damaged when Typhoon Mangkhut battered the city over the weekend, authorities warned. Elsewhere, three sections of water mains in Southern District on Hong Kong Island had also broken, leading to “the discharge of sewage”, according to officials. While drainage officials said it could take months to repair the Sai Kung facility, they estimated they would need three weeks to fix the pipes in Southern District and warned the public to stay away from at least five of the beaches nearby for the meantime. Environmentalists warned of possible disaster to the marine life off Sai Kung if the problem lingers.

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### **Culture and education**

**Asian Games medallists prove up to the test after Hong Kong’s Education University gives them room to perform with flexible learning methods (SCMP, Sept. 5):** Hong Kong had its best-ever haul of 46 medals at the Games. It sent 586 athletes to Indonesia, with 46 of them undergraduates or graduates of Education University. “The university makes special arrangements to meet the schedules of these elite athletes,” said Ada Ma, associate professor in the health and physical education department. “They can get learning materials online and the time to submit assignments and do assessments is also flexible for them.” The university wants to change the public perception that athletes cannot make a living and to share with the wider community that there is no conflict between studying and competing in sports.

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**Authority paid out HK\$1.609 billion for Hong Kong arts hub project despite knowing main contractor was in financial trouble (SCMP, Sept. 11):** The authority managing a multibillion-dollar arts hub being built in Hong Kong has defended paying HK\$1.609 billion to subcontractors over the course of 18 months, despite knowing the main company was in financial trouble. "Our logic throughout ... [was that] we wanted to keep the project going," Duncan Pescod, chief executive of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, said while stressing that it was only confirmed in May that the main contractor was insolvent. Gammon Construction Limited has been appointed as the management contractor to oversee the M+ project, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2019, and is expected to open in 2020.

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**New University of Hong Kong chief Zhang Xiang: 'Campus should not be a platform for political advocacy' (SCMP, Sept. 19):** The new head of the University of Hong Kong has declared the school management's opposition to Hong Kong independence. Professor Zhang Xiang said the campus should not become a platform for political advocacy. The mainland China-born scientist, who became HKU president and vice chancellor in July, took the clear stance just weeks after student leaders at different local universities insisted they had a right to talk about the idea of breaking away from China at events heralding the start of the new academic year. "The University of Hong Kong is committed to the core principle of 'one country, two systems' under the Basic Law. It expects its staff and students to obey the law and to be aware of their responsibilities and the consequences of their actions," Zhang said.

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**University of Chicago Booth School of Business unveils sleek Hong Kong complex on site of former Victoria Road Detention Centre (SCMP, Sept. 26):** The University of Chicago unveiled the results of a US\$75 million (HK\$586 million) restoration and construction project that breathed new life into the former Victoria Road Detention Centre in Pok Fu Lam and turned it into a modern academic complex. The University of Chicago has had a presence in Hong Kong since 2014 at Cyberport, following its move from Singapore after more than a decade there.

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#### **Macau**

**Clean-up begins in Macau after Typhoon Mangkhut, with no deaths reported in city (SCMP, Sept. 17):** Macau was making a speedy recovery from the effects of Super Typhoon Mangkhut, as local authorities announced no fatalities were reported during the stormy weekend. Officials said only 40 people were hurt, compared to 10 deaths and more than 240 people injured last August during Typhoon Hato. Macau's secretary for security Wong Sio-chak attributed the reduced harm to better preparations. Wong said the government was still assessing the economic loss brought on by Mangkhut, but said he expects it to be less than the 8.31 billion patacas of damage dealt by Hato. The security chief also noted the suspension of gambling was not required by law, and it will need further legislation to formalise the arrangement.

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62/F, Central Plaza  
18 Harbour Road  
Wan Chai, Hong Kong  
Phone: +852 3509 5000, Fax: +852 3509 5050  
[hongkong@eda.admin.ch](mailto:hongkong@eda.admin.ch)  
[www.eda.admin.ch/hongkong](http://www.eda.admin.ch/hongkong)