



October in Hong Kong

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

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- Dengue fever outbreak over for Hong Kong but stay vigilant against mosquito-borne diseases, health officials say (SCMP, Oct. 12)
- New Chinese medicine hospital in Hong Kong will be a 'flagship institution' for sector, says official charged with making it a reality (SCMP, Oct. 12)
- Gene discovery by HKU team of researchers could lead to hand, foot and mouth treatment breakthrough (SCMP, Oct. 16)
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- HK\$1.2 billion drainage plan to collect reservoir excess will save city 3 million cubic metres of water – enough for 70,000 Hongkongers yearly (SCMP, Oct. 8)
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- Do you have an old diesel vehicle? Hong Kong government may pay you to take it off the road in bid to reduce roadside pollution (SCMP, Oct.11)
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- Hong Kong Polytechnic University students end hunger strike over bulletin board which carried pro-independence signs (SCMP, Oct. 7)
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- Universities among the big winners as Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam announces plans to inject HK\$20 billion into research fund to boost innovation (SCMP, Oct. 11)
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- Liberal arts college in Hong Kong upgraded to private university amid city's push to be global financial hub (SCMP, Oct. 31)

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- Wealth managers UBS and Julius Baer restrict travel to China after Singapore banker is detained (SCMP, Oct. 23)

Economy + Finance

Push made for overseas income tax exemption for all Hongkongers in mainland China (SCMP, Oct. 2): Hong Kong's representatives in China's national legislature are joining forces with the city's top advisers to Beijing to push for an exemption from tax on overseas income for all Hongkongers living on the mainland who hold a home return permit. Under an amended income tax law passed in August by the Chinese government, Hongkongers living north of the border for more than 183 days a year will be subject to global taxation by the mainland authority from the start of next year. The move runs contrary to recent efforts by Beijing to woo residents of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan with a new smart identity card that offers greater access to social services. Beijing has hinted that an exemption is on the way for Hongkongers living and working on the mainland. However, local delegates to the National People's Congress (NPC) and members of the country's top political advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), want the exemption extended to cover everyone with a home return permit.

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Hong Kong's economy to wobble as US-China trade war, high interest rates take their toll, says Standard Chartered (SCMP, Oct. 5): Standard Chartered downgraded Hong Kong's full-year economic growth forecast from 3.8 per cent to 3.6 per cent. The bank cited the US-China trade war, the likelihood of further interest rate rises, an expected slowdown in exports, and disappointing growth in the second quarter, in its "Global Focus – Q4 2018" report. The bank also expects slower growth in 2019. It sees the city's gross domestic product expanding 3 per cent, less than its previous estimate of 3.4 per cent, and expects it to stay at that level in 2020. The adjusted forecast by Standard Chartered comes after Bank of America, Bank of East Asia, Citigroup and HSBC all cut their outlooks for the city's GDP in recent days, following the most recent escalation of trade tensions between the US and China. Bank of America Merrill Lynch downgraded Hong Kong's GDP growth forecast from 4 per cent to 3.8 per cent in 2018, and from 3 per cent to 2.7 per cent next year.

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'Prepare for the worst' from US-China trade war, Hong Kong commerce minister Edward Yau warns (SCMP, Oct. 5): Hong Kong must prepare for the worst from the raging US-China trade war by throwing a lifeline to smaller companies appealing for help, the city's commerce minister said. Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Edward Yau revealed new relief measures aimed at easing the financial burden on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with banks tightening credit and no end in sight to the worsening confrontation. "After discussing with the various chambers of commerce for the ninth time in the last seven or eight months, I think the general consensus is that the dispute between the US and China over trade is unlikely to be resolved in a short period of time," he said. "We therefore have to prepare for the worst and for this battle to be played long." Back in Hong Kong after

leading a business delegation to Washington last month to lobby US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and other officials, Yau said that his American counterparts “understood” the city’s position.

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‘Golden week’: 1.2 million mainland visitors throng Hong Kong, but high-speed rail link still fails to live up to hype (SCMP, Oct. 6): Hong Kong received a better-than-expected 1.2 million visitors from the mainland during the first five days of the “golden week” public holiday, filling hotel rooms and shop registers as some tourists took advantage of the recently opened high-speed rail link to make last-minute day trips. Ridership numbers for the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link failed to meet the government’s conservative estimate of 80,100 daily as the holiday drew to a close, which tourism sector lawmaker Yiu Si-wing blamed in part on complicated ticketing processes that deterred people and travel agencies. Overall though, arrivals were up 28 per cent from the same period last year.

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US-China trade war to turn the screws on Hong Kong’s beleaguered shipping industry (SCMP, Oct. 8): Escalating trade tensions between the United States and China are likely to catch Hong Kong and its struggling shipping industry right in the middle, according to one of the city’s main port operators. Peter Levesque, group managing director of Modern Terminals, said that shipments via Hong Kong between the US and China represent about 14 to 16 per cent of the city’s trade each year. “If it goes to an all out US\$500 billion there will be an impact,” Levesque told the South China Morning Post. “It’s just hard to identify the impact. A lot of it depends on how much importers in the US are willing to maintain status quo and simply pass on the increases to consumers.”

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Hong Kong commerce minister warns of long US-China trade war but says American investors will not abandon city (SCMP, Oct. 8): Investors are not pulling out of Hong Kong, and American business dealings with it on a practical level should continue, regardless of the raging US-China trade war and the political belligerence from Washington, the city’s commerce minister and business leaders say. Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Edward Yau insisted the campaign for free global trade must continue, but also warned “the situation could get worse before it gets better” and the fallout would “play long”. Yau flew with a trade delegation to Washington last month to meet Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and other officials from US President Donald Trump’s administration. “Tough and gets tougher” was the forecast for the next six to 12 months from Tara Joseph, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, who also attended the Washington talks. But investors were not pulling out of Hong Kong or mainland China, she noted. “They see Asia as important,” she said. “Hong Kong is an important place and it is not the time to abandon ship.”

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Financial watchdog SFC vows to stamp out ‘fake’ stockbroker trading accounts (SCMP, Oct. 10): Hong Kong’s securities watchdog has promised to clamp down on any stockbroker found to have opened what it called “fake” accounts in an effort to hide any misconduct. Securities Futures and Commission (SFC) deputy chief executive Julia Leung said the regulatory body has discovered the “worrying trend” of some brokers helping clients to use such accounts to allow third parties to be nominated to act on behalf of companies. She said the commission would later issue a circular alerting the city’s more than 500 local stockbrokers of the scrutiny now being given to the issue, and the possible penalties they could face for “bad behaviour”.

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In tomorrow’s world, Hong Kong’s leader sees a massive HK\$500 billion artificial island in middle of the sea, home to 1.1 million people (SCMP, Oct. 11): A controversial plan to build several artificial islands to ease Hong Kong’s chronic overcrowding could cost half a trillion dollars of taxpayers’ money, it was revealed in Chief Executive Carrie Lam’s Policy Address. Estimated to be 1,700 hectares (4,200 acres) in size, the islands, situated to the east of Lantau Island, would be large enough to house 1.1 million people. Dubbed the “Lantau Tomorrow Vision” by Lam, her grand plan is to develop Hong Kong’s biggest island and its surrounding areas, creating Hong Kong’s third housing and business centre in the process – the first two being Central and Kowloon East. She said Lantau, adjacent to Hong Kong International Airport and along the route of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge, was “strategically located to interact with the Greater Bay Area” cities.

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Closer economic ties sought with overseas markets such as Britain, Hong Kong leader says, amid US-China trade war impact (SCMP, Oct. 11): Hong Kong will seek to form close alliances with overseas markets such as Britain to open up more economic opportunities as the US-China trade war grinds on, the city’s leader has announced. Chief Executive Carrie Lam conceded in her annual policy address the city was facing many challenges that warranted more free trade agreements and further investments in innovation and technology to spur growth. The impact of the trade war on a tax-free port

such as Hong Kong would be especially “visible”, she said, but the local economy would still manage to grow between 3 and 4 per cent this year. Economic growth in the first half of 2018 stood at 4 per cent. The Hong Kong and British governments would explore the possibility of free trade agreement in future, she explained, based on a joint statement earlier this year agreeing to closer economic ties. Other candidates for free-trade deals would include Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru – the four-member trade bloc in Latin America called the Pacific Alliance.

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Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam’s proposal to increase MPF subsidy to HK\$29.3 billion over 25 years to remove offsetting mechanism fails to impress business leaders or unionists (SCMP, Oct. 11): Small and medium-sized companies are set to benefit most from an improved subsidy proposal of HK\$29.3 billion (US\$3.75 billion) over 25 years to help them cope with changes to the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) pension scheme, it was announced. For years, the so-called offsetting mechanism has allowed bosses to use their portion of contributions to employees’ MPF accounts to cover long service and severance payments. Delivering her policy address, Hong Kong’s leader Carrie Lam made clear that the offsetting mechanism must be scrapped. The government plans to secure the Legislative Council’s approval by 2022 and implement the proposal in 2024. Veteran unionist Lee Cheuk-yan slammed the government for being too generous to employers with taxpayers’ money. Chinese Manufacturers’ Association permanent honorary president Irons Sze said 12 years was too short a period for the first-tier subsidy.

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Expats earn more in Hong Kong, but prefer to live in Singapore, according to HSBC survey (SCMP, Oct. 12): Expatriates living in Hong Kong earn 10 per cent more than those in Singapore, but the Lion City has once again outranked it as a better place for them to live, according to HSBC’s Expat Explorer Survey. According to the survey, now in its 11th year, expatriates in Hong Kong also make the most amount of money in Asia-Pacific and the third worldwide. They earn an average salary of US\$178,706 a year, US\$72,000 more than the average expatriate globally. This only behind Switzerland at US\$202,865 and the US at HK\$185,119. Hong Kong has lost out to Singapore, which is considered the best place to live by expatriates. This is the fourth year in a row that Singapore has ranked top in terms of living conditions for expatriates.

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Top German R&D institutes team up with Hong Kong Productivity Council to set up industrial technology centre (SCMP, Oct. 12): Two top German research and development institutes are embarking on their first overseas venture by opening a new centre to help Hong Kong move up the technology ladder with smart manufacturing. The Fraunhofer Institute for Production Technology and RWTH Aachen Campus will team up with the government-backed Hong Kong Productivity Council in the venture, and they hope to create a springboard for more cooperation with mainland China in IT development. Their new centre The Hatch aims to develop industrial technology and digital manufacturing, at a time when Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam has decided to pump HK\$4 billion (US\$512 million) into re-industrialisation efforts.

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‘Benefits outweigh costs’ of Hong Kong’s massive plan to reclaim land around Lantau Island (SCMP, Oct. 15): The hefty price tag for what would be Hong Kong’s largest ever infrastructure project should not be measured against the size of the public coffers, a think tank has said. Stephen Wong, deputy executive director at the Our Hong Kong Foundation, said the frequent weighing of infrastructure costs against the size of government’s fiscal reserves was “illogical” and ignored the potential economic benefits. Wong said infrastructure investments brought substantial economic benefits in the form of jobs and commercial activity, as well as land, profits and salaries tax revenues. The foundation has long supported reclaiming land east of Lantau Island for housing.

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Hong Kong’s securities regulator mulling over new rules for city’s cryptocurrency exchanges (SCMP, Oct. 15): Hong Kong’s Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) is exploring ways to regulate the various cryptocurrency trading platforms already operating in the city and thus tighten investor protection, says its outgoing chairman Carlson Tong. “But no other international market currently has a comprehensive regulation framework for these cryptocurrency platforms. We need to see if and how these platforms can be regulated to a standard that is comparable to that of a licensed trading venue, while at the same time ensuring investors interest are being protected,” Tong said.

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Hong Kong takes 7th place for global competitiveness but lags Singapore in 2018 World Economic Forum study (SCMP, Oct. 18): Hong Kong has outperformed Singapore in entrepreneurship but fallen short in innovation by taking seventh place in a study of global

competitiveness by the World Economic Forum. The Geneva-based institution placed the Lion City in second and the United States No 1 in the 2018 edition of its Global Competitiveness Report. In macroeconomic stability and health, Hong Kong was crowned the winner. The city came second in another four pillars – infrastructure, information and communications technology adoption, product markets and the financial system. Its weakest sector was innovation capability, in which Hong Kong scored 61.9 out of 100. Singapore notched up 75 in this area.

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Hong Kong reclamation plan could earn city HK\$1.6 trillion, claims consultant to group that wanted project to be even bigger (SCMP, Oct. 22): Hong Kong will break even on a controversial 1,700-hectare reclamation project off Lantau Island within 20 years and could make trillions of dollars from the deal, a member of a government-friendly think tank has claimed. Kaizer Lau, a former surveyor, lawmaker, and now a consultant with former chief executive Tung Chee-hwa's Our Hong Kong Foundation, said that based on potential land sales for residential development as well as commercial and industrial uses, about HK\$1.6 trillion in land revenue could be generated.

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Chinese President Xi Jinping hails Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge as showpiece of innovation and integration (SCMP, Oct. 24): President Xi Jinping opened the world's longest sea crossing on Oct. 23, holding up the new Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge as a showpiece of Chinese power, ambition and innovation. The mega bridge, which puts the three cities it links within an hour's drive of one another, is slated to further integrate the two special administrative regions with southern China and boost business, but critics have called it a "white elephant", doubting if it was worth the HK\$120 billion (US\$15.4 billion) Hong Kong invested in it. Chief Executive Carrie Lam brought up her "Lantau Tomorrow Vision", a controversial reclamation-driven project to build a new metropolis to tackle the city's housing shortage. With the new bridge and Hong Kong International Airport nearby, Lam said, Lantau Island would become a "double gateway" to the world and the bay area. Vice-Premier Han Zheng, Beijing's man in charge of regional economic integration, said: "[The bridge] opens up all three places for greater exchanges in economics and trade ... It also enhances the competitiveness of the Pearl River Delta."

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Hong Kong still China's most competitive city, but Greater Bay Area has a long way to go, study shows (SCMP, Oct. 29): Hong Kong is still China's most competitive city, the latest survey by the United Nations and China's foremost think tank has found. The study also concluded that China's "Greater Bay Area" – a project that aims to link Hong Kong, Macau and nine mainland cities into a technology and innovation hub with ambitions to rival Silicon Valley – still has a long way to go before it will be on par with the three major bay areas in Japan and the US. The findings of the survey, which was carried out by 16 international researchers on 1,007 cities across the globe, were released at the International Conference on New Global Cities organised by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Hong Kong placed 11th in terms of economic strength but leapt seven places ahead from its placing last year to No 6 in the sustainable competitiveness ranking, making it the Chinese city with the best overall scores. The top five cities in terms of sustainable competitiveness were New York, Tokyo, London, Singapore and Los Angeles.

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Domestic politics

Uphold China's national security and development interests, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam tells city in National Day speech (SCMP, Oct. 1): Hong Kong must not forget its mission of upholding China's national "sovereignty, security and development interests", the city's top official said, as it "develops and shares prosperity" with the country. "As we celebrate National Day, let us not forget the original spirit of 'one country, two systems' but bear in mind the mission of upholding our country's sovereignty, security and development interests," Lam continued. "Let us develop jointly and share prosperity with our country and embrace a brighter future together." Tam Yiu-chung, the city's sole delegate to the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the country's top legislative body, said that to fulfil their mission of upholding China's national security, Hong Kong officials needed to get ready to enact such legislation. Under Article 23 of the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution, Hong Kong must enact its own law to prohibit acts such as "treason, secession, sedition" and subversion.

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Top Beijing official delays retirement to help rein in pro-independence calls in Hong Kong (SCMP, Oct. 4): Despite reaching retirement age last year, a top Beijing official has been asked to stay on at the central government agency overseeing Hong Kong affairs to handle legal issues relating to pro-independence calls in the city. Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office deputy director Feng Wei was originally expected to step down late last year when he turned 60, the usual age for vice-ministerial officials to leave officialdom. A source in Hong Kong who is familiar with the situation said Feng, who

has been handling the city's affairs for two decades and is well versed in its laws, was told to remain in his current position until further notice to handle legal issues relating to Hong Kong, particularly on how to rein in the mounting calls for the city to break free from China.

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Backlash as Hong Kong denies visa renewal for Financial Times journalist Victor Mallet (SCMP, Oct. 6): Hong Kong has set off a storm by refusing to renew the visa of a British journalist after he chaired a controversial talk at the Foreign Correspondents' Club by an independence activist in August, despite objections from the city's government and Beijing. "The Hong Kong authorities have rejected an application to renew the work visa of Victor Mallet, Asia news editor at the Financial Times," a spokeswoman for the newspaper headquartered in London said. The Foreign Correspondents' Club issued a statement expressing deep concern and urging the government to let Mallet stay. Basic Law Committee member Priscilla Leung said the FCC had "breached the bottom line" of the "one country, two systems" principle – under which the city is ruled by Beijing, but promised a high degree of autonomy – by hosting independence activist Andy Chan. "I think this incident has given a clear message to the Hong Kong public that the zero tolerance for pro-independence talk has been escalated to a state level," she said, adding that Beijing would not let anyone into the city who provided a venue for separatist advocacy. Reporters Without Borders – an international group which advocates press freedom – urged authorities to reverse their decision, describing the action as proof Beijing was extending to Hong Kong what it called a policy of intimidating foreign journalists. The government, through a spokesman, said it would not comment on individual cases.

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Hong Kong's denial of work visa for journalist Victor Mallet sends 'chilling message' about erosion of basic rights, Financial Times says (SCMP, Oct. 8): The Financial Times newspaper has described the Hong Kong government's decision to deny a work visa to its journalist Victor Mallet as sending a "chilling message" to everyone in the city and a reflection of how their basic rights are being eroded. In its editorial, the Financial Times said it did not support the idea of Hong Kong independence, but it strongly supported the principle of free speech. "Seeking [independence] would not only violate the Basic Law and the Sino-British Joint Declaration but would also be highly impractical. Such a move does not enjoy popular support in the territory," it said. The piece pointed out that without any explanation from the authorities, it was difficult to resist concluding that the rejection amounted to "retribution" for his role in the club, where he acted as spokesman during the controversy over independence activist Andy Chan's talk.

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Financial Times journalist Victor Mallet allowed back into Hong Kong for seven days only – even though British tourists can stay for six months (SCMP, Oct. 8): The British journalist at the centre of a political storm after he was denied a working visa by the Hong Kong government has been given seven days to leave the city. Victor Mallet, Asia news editor for the Financial Times, will be allowed to stay for one more week on a visitor's visa, even though British tourists can remain for up to six months – a decision slammed by opposition politicians and welcomed by their pro-establishment counterparts. In a strongly worded statement, the American Chamber of Commerce said the rejection of Mallet's working visa sent a "worrying signal", as business and trade could not be reliably conducted without a free press. "Any effort to curtail press freedom in Hong Kong could damage Hong Kong's competitiveness as a leading financial and trading centre," the statement read. The European Union has issued a stronger statement, saying the denial of Mallet's visa renewal has set a worrying precedent. "In the absence [of] a credible alternative explanation from the authorities, the decision appears politically motivated and therefore raises serious concerns about freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Hong Kong. It risks damaging Hong Kong's international standing and trust in the 'one country, two systems' principle," its spokesman said.

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I will defend press freedom but not allow advocacy of Hong Kong independence, city leader Carrie Lam says amid row over visa for British Financial Times journalist (SCMP, Oct. 9): Chief Executive Carrie Lam said she would defend press freedom, but would not tolerate anyone advocating the city's separation from China, as her government continued to take flak over its refusal to renew a British journalist's work visa. She said: "One of the issues is Hong Kong independence. The other is freedom of the press ... The [Hong Kong] government will not tolerate advocacy of Hong Kong independence, which threatens national security, territorial integrity and development interests." A dozen representatives from six journalists' groups – including the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) – held a rally outside government headquarters on Oct. 9. They urged the authorities to give a full explanation, as they submitted a petition with 15,000 signatures.

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Punishment awaits Hong Kong independence advocates amid efforts to make Article 23 passage more likely, Carrie Lam says (SCMP, Oct. 11): Hong Kong's leader has vowed to "fearlessly" punish independence advocacy using existing laws while continuing to cultivate an environment favourable for introducing contentious national security legislation. Chief Executive Carrie Lam highlighted the use of the Societies Ordinance to impose an unprecedented ban last month on the separatist Hong Kong National Party (HKNP) as a "strong testimony" of the government's resolve to safeguard national interests. "I have stated publicly a number of times that the government will carefully consider all relevant factors, act prudently and continue its efforts to create a favourable social environment for the legislative work," Lam said in her second policy address.

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Ousted pro-democracy Hong Kong lawmaker Lau Siu-lai barred from Kowloon West Legislative Council by-election (SCMP, Oct. 13): A fresh political storm erupted after the government banned the ousted opposition lawmaker Lau Siu-lai from running for a seat in the legislature on the grounds that she once advocated self-determination for Hong Kong. Citing her remarks made two years ago, the returning officer appointed by the Electoral Affairs Commission argued that Lau had not genuinely changed her stance even though she had ditched the self-determination calls over the past months in preparation for the Kowloon West by-election on November 25. Lau's pan-democratic supporters and some legal experts slammed the decision as essentially stripping her of her political rights for life, and accused the government of violating procedural fairness by not giving her a chance to defend herself. Labour Party veteran Lee Cheuk-yan signed up for the race as a "plan B" in case of Lau's disqualification.

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Hong Kong leader says there is 'no room' in city for those that back independence or self-determination (SCMP, Oct. 14): Hong Kong's leader said there was "no room for inclusion" in the city for anyone who advocated for self-determination or independence, and those that did could never be its lawmakers. Reinforcing her stance that there could be no compromise on the subject, Chief Executive Carrie Lam dropped her latest political bombshell just hours after the government banned ousted opposition politician Lau Siu-lai from running for a seat in the Legislative Council. Pointing to her political masters in Beijing, Lam said her uncompromising approach was based on her "dual responsibility" to Hong Kong, and the central government.

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Journalist's visa refusal made Hong Kong 'look silly', and leader Carrie Lam wrong to say not explaining decision was accepted practice, says city's top lawyer (SCMP, Oct. 16): Hong Kong's leader was wrong when she said the government was following international practice in refusing to say why British journalist Victor Mallet was denied a work visa – the city's top lawyer said. Bar Association chairman Philip Dykes pointed to immigration authorities in Britain and Australia, which both issue written explanations when a visa or entry to the country is denied, as evidence of why Chief Executive Carrie Lam was mistaken. The British consulate in Hong Kong also said on its official Facebook page that individuals would be notified of the reasons for a visa refusal, so they could prepare an appeal. While not speculating as to whether Mallet's participation in independence activist Andy Chan's speech at the FCC led to his expulsion, Dykes said the decision made Hong Kong "look silly" internationally. "[The non-renewal] looks like retribution for doing something, that's not in breach of the law," Dykes said.

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Hong Kong's freedoms will not be curbed, but city cannot be used as anti-China base, top Beijing official says (SCMP, Oct. 19): A top Beijing official in charge of Hong Kong affairs has sought to reassure the city that the central government has no intention of curbing its freedoms, and recent warnings against the city being used as an anti-Communist Party and anti-China base merely reflect a long-standing central government policy. Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) director Zhang Xiaoming told a delegation of senior news executives from the local media that both the central and local governments must exercise "zero tolerance" when dealing with calls for the city's independence, which crossed the "red line" of undermining Chinese sovereignty.

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Labour Party veteran Lee Cheuk-yan given green light to run in November's Legco by-election (SCMP, Oct. 19): Labour Party veteran Lee Cheuk-yan was given a last-minute green light to represent the pro-democracy camp in the Legislative Council by-election on November 25. Before Lau Siu-lai was banned, Lee had been prepared to serve as the "plan B" candidate should Lau be barred from the race. Before Lee was validated, fears loomed that he might also be barred from the by-election for his core positions over the years in the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China, which has long called for an end to "one-party dictatorship" in China.

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Hong Kong National Party founders lodge separate appeals against ban in effort to avoid further legal action (SCMP, Oct. 24): Andy Chan and Chow Ho-fai, two founders of the outlawed Hong Kong National Party, have lodged separate petitions to city leader Carrie Lam against the unprecedented ban, the Post has learned. The party was banned under the Societies Ordinance on September 24 for being a threat to national security and public order. Based on existing procedure, the party had until October 24 to file an appeal to the Exco and Lam could have the final say on whether to uphold or reverse the ban. It is understood that Chan and Chow filed their appeals separately in order to safeguard themselves and their lawyers from possible legal repercussions.

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Departing Hong Kong anti-graft director rejects suggestions of Beijing interference in ICAC's operations (SCMP, Oct. 29): The outgoing investigation chief of Hong Kong's graft-buster has rejected any notion of interference by mainland Chinese authorities in the operations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) amid increasing cross-border ties, insisting checks and balances on its work are stronger than ever. "Personally, I have never been given any order to do or not do certain things," said Ricky Yu, the ICAC's director of investigation (government sector), as he concludes his 39-year career. Yu, who helped bring down some of the city's highest officials during his career, stressed the ICAC in the city had been subject to strict monitoring and that he had never felt under pressure when carrying out his duties.

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Hong Kong eager to play bigger role in China's further reform and opening up, Carrie Lam says (SCMP, Oct. 30): Hong Kong is eager to play a bigger role in China's further reform and opening up and to share its experience in institution-building with emerging economies, the city's leader Carrie Lam said during a seminar. The chief executive said the city had played a significant and unique role in the 40-year journey: "We are a contributor as well as a beneficiary in China's reform and opening up." "As our country continues to develop, Hong Kong is eager to play an even bigger role than before and make [a] contribution to the country and the world," she said. "To make economic development in the Asia-Pacific region more inclusive, we need to improve systems and institutions to uphold safety, equity, efficiency and justice," Lam said.

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International relations

Britain demands explanation from Hong Kong over rejection of visa renewal for Financial Times journalist Victor Mallet (SCMP, Oct. 6): Britain has asked the Hong Kong government for an urgent explanation over its refusal to renew the visa of journalist Victor Mallet who chaired a controversial talk by an independence activist Andy Chan. "Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and its press freedoms are central to its way of life, and must be fully respected," the office added in its statement. A spokesman for the US consulate in Hong Kong echoed Britain's concern, saying the denial was "deeply troubling". Asked for its reaction to the British government's request, a spokeswoman for the Hong Kong government said it would not comment on individual cases. Beijing's Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong issued a statement firmly supporting the city's government. According to the "one country, two systems" governing principle and the Basic Law, the Hong Kong government had the power to make decisions on applications for work visa extensions, it said, and no foreign country had the right to interfere.

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Ex-British foreign secretary and US senator urge action on Hong Kong visa refusal of Financial Times journalist Victor Mallet (SCMP, Oct. 11): Both a former British foreign secretary and a US senator urged their governments to take action on Hong Kong's decision to deny journalist Victor Mallet's work visa renewal. Malcolm Rifkind said Britain should make retaining the integrity of the handover settlement a top priority, while Marco Rubio reiterated calls for the US to review Hong Kong's human rights situation before continuing to grant the city its special economic and trade status. The US Congressional Executive Commission on China's (CECC) annual report described the "continued erosion" of Hong Kong's autonomy in recent years and reiterated calls for the enactment of laws requiring the US government to review Hong Kong's human rights conditions before continuing to grant the city its special economic and trade status, a standing not enjoyed by the rest of the country. Britain, the US and the European Union have all expressed concerns over Mallet's visa refusal and urged Hong Kong to explain the decision. A Hong Kong government spokesman said: "The HKSAR Government reiterates that foreign legislatures should not interfere in any form in the internal affairs of the HKSAR."

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Legal affairs and human rights

Billions of dollars declared under Hong Kong's dirty cash law (SCMP, Oct. 4): A traveller carrying HK\$230 million (US\$29 million) in cash was among the 3,500 people who declared a total of HK\$42 billion (US\$5.36 billion) as they entered Hong Kong in the last 2½ months, after a new law came into

effect. The legislation, meant to tackle the problem of dirty cash, requires travellers to declare of sums of more than HK\$120,000 when coming into the city. More than 80 per cent of the 3,500 travellers declaring currency worked for financial institutions such as banks and money changers, the source said.
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Forced retirement is ‘age discrimination’, head of Hong Kong’s Elderly Commission tells local businesses (SCMP, Oct. 7): Employers that force staff to retire after they have reached a certain age are being “totally unwise” and are practising age discrimination, a member of the city leader Carrie Lam’s cabinet said. Lam Ching-choi, who heads the Elderly Commission tasked with advising the government on its policies for seniors, said an employee’s ability had nothing to do with age. “The policy of retirement age is in fact a form of age discrimination,” he said. He hoped the government and employers would not make a recruitment decision based only on an applicant’s age.

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Activists ‘shocked’ after Hong Kong police chiefs block alert to banks on human trafficking-linked transactions (SCMP, Oct. 11): Hong Kong’s determination to tackle money laundering linked to human trafficking has been called into question after it emerged that police chiefs blocked an alert – prepared by a specialist law enforcement unit – warning banks in the city to be aware of the problem. Anti-human trafficking campaigners expressed shock at news of the suppressed alert. That coincided with the publication of a report by the city’s Ombudsman which found a complaint that police were unreasonably withholding data on dirty money transactions linked to human trafficking was “unsubstantiated”. Sources told the Post the alert was cleared for distribution by both the Security Bureau and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority late last year but blocked by police top brass, who feared it could “lead to Hong Kong being labelled as a hub for human trafficking”.

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48 high-definition surveillance cameras installed on Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge to guard against terrorism (SCMP, Oct. 13): Hong Kong police have installed high-definition surveillance cameras to prevent terrorism on the city’s section of the mega bridge to Zhuhai and Macau, the Post has learned. The force will store the footage for about 30 days while anti-terror officers patrol by car along what has been billed as the world’s longest sea crossing. While visitors technically enter the city when they reach the Hong Kong section of the bridge, there are still 12km to go until they arrive at the border facilities, the source added. “We cannot leave them unmonitored along this 12km link of critical infrastructure.” The multibillion-dollar, 55km bridge, placing the three cities within an hour’s commute of one another, is expected to open as early as later this month.

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Indonesian envoy calls on Hong Kong to do more to tackle loan sharks targeting domestic helpers (SCMP, Oct. 21): Indonesia’s top envoy in Hong Kong has called on the city’s government to step up action against loan sharking syndicates that target domestic helpers, who are usually forced to surrender their passports in exchange for borrowing money. Consul general Tri Tharyat also urged helpers not to hand over their passports to others and advised those who had fallen victim to loan sharks to report it to the Indonesian consulate or Hong Kong police. “The Indonesian consulate and the Philippine consulate met Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung to convey our concern regarding many migrant workers becoming victims of illegal moneylending operations in Hong Kong,” Tharyat said. “We requested the government of Hong Kong to take strong actions against those practices.”

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Hong Kong-based international firms hit back at Law Society’s plans to close loophole allowing foreign lawyers to practice (SCMP, Oct. 23): International law firms in Hong Kong are pushing back against an “arbitrary” proposal by the professional solicitors’ body to raise the bar for hiring foreign and mainland Chinese lawyers. In a joint letter from Hong Kong partners from 15 global firms to Law Society president Melissa Kaye Pang, the companies expressed “enormous concern” that, for every foreign lawyer hired, they would now have to hire two local lawyers, instead of one, as was previously the case. “In particular, [the international firms] are concerned that the implementation of this proposal will have colossal negative repercussions for the economy of Hong Kong and for Hong Kong’s status as an international financial centre,” wrote the partners. The backlash from international firms has already forced the Law Society to push back the end date of a consultation period for the new measure from November 1 to December 31. The firms have also requested an “urgent meeting” with Pang, which she has agreed to, but no date has been fixed yet.

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Cathay Pacific calls in Hong Kong police to help investigate massive data breach that hit 9.4 million customers (SCMP, Oct. 29): Hong Kong police visited Cathay Pacific’s headquarters to investigate the massive data breach that saw the personal details of 9.4 million customers leaked, but they admitted that the task was not an easy one, owing to the delay by the airline in reporting the leak.

The news came as the city's privacy commissioner took to the airwaves to criticise the airline for not cooperating with the Hong Kong watchdog's own investigation, and pledged legal help to anyone who wanted to pursue Cathay for damages. A total of 403 expired credit card numbers, and 27 credit card numbers with no card verification value were compromised in the breach, along with about 860,000 passport numbers, 240,000 Hong Kong ID card numbers, and millions of names, phone numbers, and email addresses.

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Health

Hong Kong government urged to cut cancer treatment waiting times, as some in the city wait up to 80 days to be seen (SCMP, Oct. 7): Hong Kong's oldest cancer prevention group has asked for the government to look into narrowing waiting times between disease diagnosis and first treatment at public hospitals, saying some patients had to wait up to 80 days. This is the length of time people found to have colorectal cancer must wait before their receive treatment, with the waiting time 66 days for breast cancer and 54 days for nasopharyngeal cancer, according to the Hong Kong Anti-Cancer Society. In the UK, the waiting time targets for cancer treatment have been set for no more than 62 days while in the US, the median time was 29 days.

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Officials 'plugging loopholes' in proposed Hong Kong ban on e-cigarettes, as industry vows opposition (SCMP, Oct. 11): Officials are exploring ways to plug possible loopholes and close off access to e-cigarettes or new smoking products – especially for young people – following an announcement by Hong Kong's leader of a proposed ban on such items. The ban on the import, manufacture, sale, distribution and advertisement of e-cigarettes and other new smoking products was to protect the health of Hongkongers, particularly children and teenagers, Chief Executive Carrie Lam stressed. In her policy address report, Lam stated there was also "a lack of sufficient evidence to prove the products can help quit smoking". Tobacco industry members however said the government's decision was unfortunate and some vowed to oppose the ban.

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Hong Kong maternity leave to increase to 14 weeks under raft of pro-family measures announced in chief executive's policy address (SCMP, Oct. 11): Hong Kong's leader won rare applause from the women's community as she unveiled an array of pro-family measures, which included longer maternity leave and new initiatives to support breastfeeding. The most eye-catching move was to extend the statutory maternity leave from the current 10 weeks to 14 weeks, which will finally put Hong Kong on par with the minimum standards laid down by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Working mothers are currently paid 80 per cent of their wages while on maternity leave. Under the proposal, the government would be fully responsible for the cost incurred by the extra four weeks of maternity leave, although the money – based on the same four-fifths formula – would be capped at HK\$36,822 per employee.

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Dengue fever outbreak over for Hong Kong but stay vigilant against mosquito-borne diseases, health officials say (SCMP, Oct. 12): Hong Kong's dengue fever outbreak has officially come to an end, but staying vigilant against mosquito-borne diseases is vital, the city's health officials told local doctors. A sudden surge of infection swept the city this year. From August 14 to September 4, the Centre for Health Protection confirmed 29 local cases of dengue fever – the highest total since records began in 1994. No new local cases were reported after September 4. The centre noted all the patients had recovered and that no severe cases had been reported.

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New Chinese medicine hospital in Hong Kong will be a 'flagship institution' for sector, says official charged with making it a reality (SCMP, Oct. 12): Officials charged with making Hong Kong's first Chinese medicine hospital a reality have said it would not just be a place to treat people, but "a flagship institution" for the sector. Dr Cheung Wai-lun, project director of the Food and Health Bureau's Chinese Medicine Hospital Project Office, said as well as providing a clinical service, the hospital would also be a training ground for local practitioners and a development centre. The 400-bed hospital, which is expected to open in late 2024, would be seen as the "flagship Chinese medicine institution", while involving collaboration with western medicine.

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Gene discovery by HKU team of researchers could lead to hand, foot and mouth treatment breakthrough (SCMP, Oct. 16): A study led by the University of Hong Kong has discovered a gene key to viral infections that could lead to hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD), shedding light on the development of a specific treatment for the illness. But researchers said it could take about another 10 years to develop the drug. Led by the university's top microbiologist, Professor Yuen Kwok-yung, the

study identified that a gene named hWARS – found in every human cell – was the receptor for enterovirus-A71 (EV-A71) to enter a cell and thus inflict damage. In general, without a specific receptor, a virus cannot enter a cell. Yuen said in the past hWARS was merely seen as an ordinary gene. “We didn’t think that it was linked to viral infection,” he added.

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Sharp surge in rubella cases in Japan prompts travel warning from Hong Kong health authorities

(SCMP, Oct. 24): Hong Kong health authorities are warning travellers to exercise caution when visiting Japan after a sharp surge in rubella cases was seen during a local outbreak. The city’s Centre for Health Protection specified that children under one should not visit Japan, a popular holiday destination among Hongkongers, as they were not yet due for vaccination under the Childhood Immunisation Programme. All pregnant women and women preparing for pregnancy who were non-immune to the infection should not travel to Japan during the outbreak, the centre advised. In the past six weeks, 914 cases were reported in Japan, making up most of the 1,289 cases recorded this year as of Oct. 17.

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Environment

Typhoon Mangkhut may have come and gone, but Hong Kong’s chief forecaster warns city to prepare for more bad weather (SCMP, Oct. 7):

Hong Kong is still recovering from the most intense typhoon to hit since records began, but the city’s chief weatherman Shun Chi-ming warned residents to stay vigilant – storm season is not over yet. With the threat of powerful storms on the scale of Typhoon Mangkhut more likely in the future amid a changing climate, the city will have to rethink its resilience strategy and adopt new technologies to help it better respond to extreme weather, he said. To strengthen resiliency, the city may have to think about changing the way infrastructure is built. “With rising sea levels, would land reclamation works have to be done higher? Should we be building sea walls that are higher and stronger? The city could also consider adopting real-time data sharing that would allow government departments to coordinate and respond to severe weather.

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HK\$1.2 billion drainage plan to collect reservoir excess will save city 3 million cubic metres of water – enough for 70,000 Hongkongers yearly (SCMP, Oct. 8):

Hong Kong will save more than 3 million cubic metres of water each year when a project to collect excess run-off from four Kowloon reservoirs is completed, drainage officials have said. According to the Drainage Services Department, the amount could meet the annual demand of 70,000 Hongkongers. At present, all excess rainwater goes to waste once the reservoirs are full, because it flows downhill into storm drains and out to sea. Works could begin as early as next year, and the design would involve automated water gates releasing excess water into the tunnel once the reservoirs reach capacity.

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Hong Kong can make full transition to renewable energy by 2050, says Lui Che Woo Prize winner Hans-Josef Fell – but only if city ‘really wants it’ (SCMP, Oct. 9):

Falling costs and technological advances mean a 100 per cent transition to renewable energy in Hong Kong will be possible by 2050, an award-winning environmentalist has said. The city should tap into unexplored “bio-coals”, leverage on abundant organic waste and landfill gas for power, and import more clean sources from abroad, said Hans-Josef Fell, a former German Green Party politician. But all of this would need to be bolstered by a legislative framework, and a robust “feed-in tariff” programme that incentivised investment into renewables. He was in the city to receive this year’s prestigious Lui Che Woo Prize in the sustainable development category.

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Do you have an old diesel vehicle? Hong Kong government may pay you to take it off the road in bid to reduce roadside pollution (SCMP, Oct.11):

About 40,000 old, polluting diesel vehicles used by the commercial sector will be taken off the streets in five years as part of the Hong Kong government’s long fight against roadside air pollution. The plans include ex gratia payments to incentivise 40,000 owners of “Euro IV” diesel commercial vehicles to replace their vehicles with cleaner “Euro VI” ones by 2023, and to study the feasibility of eliminating all new private diesel cars. The measures were announced in Chief Executive Carrie Lam’s second policy address. “Improving roadside air quality to better protect public health has always been a key environmental priority of the government,” Lam said.

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Hong Kong must raise the bar when it comes to cleaning up its act on air quality, top scientist says (SCMP, Oct. 21):

Hong Kong’s five-yearly review of its air quality objectives should not be “feasibility led” but “public health driven”, a veteran air scientist has suggested. Dr Alexis Lau, professor at the University of Science and Technology’s Division of Environment and Sustainability, said the government needed to be more “prepared” for reviews, as it lacked crucial data that would help with the review phase and allow it to come up with more scientific policies. Lau’s comments come as a

government working group prepares to release a host of new recommendations for improving air quality. The latest objectives, which set concentration limits for seven key pollutants and the number of times they can be exceeded, took effect in 2014.

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Culture and education

Hong Kong Polytechnic University students end hunger strike over bulletin board which carried pro-independence signs (SCMP, Oct. 7): Three students at Polytechnic University ended their two-day-old hunger strike on Oct. 7 after resolving a dispute with campus chiefs over a bulletin board where pro-independence messages were posted. The row began almost two weeks ago after the union temporarily relaxed rules for posting messages on the board – the so-called Democracy Wall – following the government's unprecedented ban on the separatist Hong Kong National Party (HKNP). After the changes, some pro-independence messages went up on the board. Two PolyU ultimatums to restore the wall were ignored, and school officials eventually covered the material with red paper. There was no indication that the union was behind – or supported – the independence advocacy. It accused the officials of suppressing free speech. "[The student union] has agreed to restore the wall to its original mode of operation and manage the wall in accordance with the rules and regulations agreed by both parties," the university's statement said.

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Hong Kong education chief says he doesn't want to force schools to teach Mandarin over Cantonese, as critics claim Beijing is trying to control what city's children learn (SCMP, Oct. 9): Hong Kong's education chief has been forced to clarify twice in two days that he had no intention of forcing schools to teach Mandarin, in what critics say reflected the sensitivity surrounding language in the city. Kevin Yeung was strongly criticised after he suggested experts look into whether Mandarin, which is the official language in mainland China, should be taught instead of Cantonese, which is the dialect spoken in Hong Kong. Critics said his remarks had touched a raw nerve with Hongkongers, amid fears that Beijing's interference on local educational policy was increasing, with mainland officials becoming more vocal on the subject. "Beijing believed the localist sentiment was something to do with the problems of education [policies]," said Bruce Lui, a senior lecturer at Baptist University who spent years covering China news.

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Universities among the big winners as Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam announces plans to inject HK\$20 billion into research fund to boost innovation (SCMP, Oct. 11): Hong Kong universities have taken a big piece of the pie among all other education sectors as the government plans to inject HK\$20 billion (US\$2.56 billion) into a research endowment fund to boost innovation. Chief Executive Carrie Lam announced in her policy address the addition to the Research Endowment Fund – one of the city's main sources for competitive research funding – with the aim of doubling such resources for institutions. She also explained to spend HK\$1.5 billion in the 2019/20 school year to ensure all public primary and secondary school teachers were given a graduate post within two years. Most primary and secondary teachers have degrees, but many need to take on non-graduate posts with lower pay.

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City University third in Hong Kong to roll out more flexible entry conditions for students with good overall grades (SCMP, Oct. 13): Another Hong Kong university joined two other institutions in the city in relaxing entry requirements for students with outstanding examination results but who scored just slightly under the qualifying mark in certain subjects. The move by City University came after Chinese University and the University of Science and Technology revised their admission schemes on the same premise. For Chinese University in particular, the aim was to provide more chances for students who excelled in science and mathematics – in line with the city's push for innovation and technology – but scored below the mark in other subjects.

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Hong Kong's HK\$900 million fund for after-school programmes needs better supervision as lawmakers express concern system is open to abuse (SCMP, Oct. 20): The government's new HK\$900 million fund to encourage more after-school activities for students could be subject to abuse, and should be closely supervised, lawmakers have said. In response to the lawmakers' concerns, the Education Bureau said it had issued manuals to primary and secondary schools that included guidelines for choosing which activities to pursue. The bureau said schools should select activities according to their students' needs, and reiterated that the schools are required to submit audits every year to ensure that public funds are properly spent.

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Liberal arts college in Hong Kong upgraded to private university amid city's push to be global financial hub (SCMP, Oct. 31): A top liberal arts institution in Hong Kong supplying talent for local

businesses has won government approval to become a private university as part of the city's push to become a financial hub. Officials announced that the Chief Executive in Council had approved an application from Hang Seng Management College to change its name to Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. With the upgrade, the city will have 11 degree-awarding post-secondary institutions classified as a university. Education sector lawmaker Ip Kin-yuen welcomed the news, saying it would give a "boost" to the development of higher education in Hong Kong.

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Macau

Beijing praises Macau official who fell to his death, calling Zheng Xiaosong a man of integrity (SCMP, Oct. 28): Beijing has praised Zheng Xiaosong, its top official in Macau who died in a fall on Oct. 20, as a man of integrity in a statement. The head of the mainland Chinese government's office in the city fell to his death, prompting widespread speculation about the reason for his fall, after authorities said he had been depressed. The liaison office in the city mourned him as an "excellent member" of the Communist Party, and said he had been "clean and upright" when serving in ministries in the past. Macau police earlier said no letter or message had been found during their investigations, and that there were no suspicious circumstances connected to the fall.

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IPIM president and other officials under probe for corruption (Macau Daily Times, Oct. 29): The president of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), Jackson Chang, as well as two other high ranking officials are under criminal investigation for alleged irregularities regarding the unlawful granting of residency statuses through an investment scheme, the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) announced on Oct. 26. The corruption watchdog also noted in the statement that all suspects involved in the case have been targeted with compulsory measures that include their suspension from their positions and are restricted from leaving the region. Chief Executive Chui Sai On promised "full cooperation with the judicial authorities," noting that the government will treat the cases with "zero tolerance for corruption among public servants."

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Press articles related to Switzerland and Swiss matters

Wealth managers UBS and Julius Baer restrict travel to China after Singapore banker is detained (SCMP, Oct. 23): Two large global wealth managers have imposed restrictions on staff travel to China after a UBS Group AG employee was detained, underlining the challenges of capturing business in a country where fortunes are growing the fastest on the planet. UBS has asked some bankers not to travel to China after the incident, according to people with knowledge of the matter, who asked not to be identified because the measures aren't public. Julius Baer also imposed a travel ban for its relationship managers to the country, another person said. It's unclear under what circumstances the Singapore-based UBS employee was detained and whether the person has been released, the people said. A spokesman for UBS, the world's largest wealth manager, declined to comment on the ban and detention. Julius Baer also declined to comment. A Credit Suisse spokesman said no travel ban was in place for its staff.

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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
www.eda.admin.ch/hongkong