



March in Hong Kong

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## **Economy + Finance**

**Hong Kong's top talent will be first to enjoy tax favours in Guangdong, vice-governor Lin Shaochun vows (SCMP, March 1):** Hong Kong's top talent in advanced manufacturing and professional services will be the first to enjoy tax favours in Guangdong, the neighbouring province's vice-governor said. Lin Shaochun, the permanent vice-governor of Guangdong, said: "To meet the [tax favour] policy's requirements, one must be a high-end talent in the industries of advanced manufacturing and advanced services." "We have been reviewing policies on accommodation, health care and taxation for Hong Kong and Macau youngsters working and starting their own business in Guangdong," Lin said. The other policies Lin mentioned included fiscal support for Hong Kong and Macau entrepreneurs and provision of one-stop business registration and consultation.

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**Work with Hong Kong to reap benefits of China's Greater Bay Area scheme, city's leader Carrie Lam urges Southeast Asian nations (SCMP, March 1):** By working with Hong Kong, Southeast Asia stands to gain from the "Greater Bay Area" plan, the city's leader Carrie Lam said at a Bangkok trade forum. "Despite protectionism, trade conflicts and regional instability continuing to disrupt the global economy, I remain optimistic and very confident that our collaboration with Asean, and with Thailand in trade, investment and other aspects, will continue to expand," Lam said, referring to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Four cooperation agreements were signed during the forum including on enhancement of the partnership between the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and Thailand's Board of Investment. Lam attended the opening of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Bangkok, the third in Asean after Jakarta and Singapore.

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**US-China trade war: how Hong Kong workers are getting caught in the crossfire of tariff spat between global superpowers (SCMP, March 4):** Hong Kong's trade sector employs about 478,000 people, or 12 per cent of the city's total workforce, and contributed 17.7 per cent to its economy in 2017. Some of Hong Kong's biggest players in the trade sector took precautions. The city's largest container terminal operator Hutchison Port Holdings Trust decided in January to freeze pay rises for more than 1,000 staff at the local container port terminal unit Hongkong International Terminals. Some logistics firms contemplated lay-offs and pay cuts. Carlos Hung, director general of the Union of Hong Kong Dockers, said that most of the 5,000 dock workers at the nine container ports at Kwai Tsing had endured tough times in the past few months. The biggest damage so far, in the words of Nicholas Kwan, the research director of the Trade Development Council, was to tens of thousands of Hong Kong manufacturers working across the border.

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**Hong Kong retail sales jump 7 per cent in January to HK\$48 billion, defying predictions of doom and gloom from US-China trade war (SCMP, March 6):** Hong Kong's retail sector enjoyed a stronger-than-expected start to the year, with sales jumping more than 7 per cent in January as a record number of mainland Chinese visitors flooded the city for pre-Lunar New Year shopping. Contrary to the doom and gloom predicted by many for 2019, retail sales for January jumped the biggest in five months to HK\$48.1 billion (US\$6.2 billion), up 7.1 per cent year on year, and much improved on the 0.1 per cent growth in December, the government announced. The government, however, said seasonal factors distorted January's retail sales, with Lunar New Year falling on February 5 compared with February 16 last year.

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**Hong Kong welfare secretary says elderly care homes will not turn to foreign domestic helpers to fill the labour shortage (SCMP, March 10):** Hong Kong will not employ foreign domestic helpers to ease a manpower shortage at subsidised elderly care homes, the city's labour and welfare chief Law Chi-king said. Law said laws and immigration conditions on foreign domestic workers meant they cannot work in other areas. Law said that when the government discusses importing labour in the future, one question to be addressed would be where the labour would come from – mainland China or Southeast Asia.

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**Hong Kong securities regulator fines top investment banks US\$100 million for failures as IPO sponsors (SCMP, March 15):** Hong Kong's securities watchdog slapped a record fine of HK\$786.7 million (US\$100.2 million) on investment banks UBS, Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch and Standard Chartered for failing in their duties as IPO sponsors. Swiss lender UBS bore the brunt of the fine. Its two units UBS AG and UBS Securities Hong Kong were ordered to pay HK\$375 million for failing to conduct proper due diligence on the quality of the listing candidates in their role as one of the joint sponsors in

three initial public offerings. The SFC banned UBS Securities from sponsoring IPOs for one year. Ashley Alder, chief executive of the SFC, said that “the sanctions send a strong and clear message to the market” and that the commission “will not hesitate to hold errant sponsors accountable for their misconduct”.

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**Bigger tax break offered for Hongkongers working in mainland China as Beijing seeks talent for Greater Bay Area project (SCMP, March 16):** Beijing has revealed a more lenient tax exemption for Hongkongers working in mainland China, offering six years without charge on income from outside the country – up from the previous five. But taxpayers will need to spend 30 consecutive days in those six years outside the mainland to qualify for the concession. Finance and tax officials also said a special subsidy would be offered to “high-end and urgently needed talent” working in nine Guangdong cities included in southern China’s “Greater Bay Area” project. The aim is to keep income tax as low as Hong Kong levels for imported workers. The bay area plan seeks to pool the strengths of Hong Kong, Macau and Guangdong to create an innovation and technology-led region.

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**HK\$624 billion Lantau reclamation project will be most expensive in Hong Kong’s history, but city will recoup costs, government says (SCMP, March 20):** The controversial plan to build a new metropolis to the west of Hong Kong Island will be the most expensive infrastructure project in the city’s history at an estimated cost of HK\$624 billion (US\$80 billion), the government has revealed. Secretary for Development Michael Wong dismissed concerns that the enormous cost would wipe out more than half of the city’s fiscal reserves, which are estimated to stand at HK\$1.16 trillion by the end of March. The project will entail massive reclamation to build artificial islands and a new transport network to create Hong Kong’s third business district and housing hub. The huge cost would eventually be recouped, he said, citing what he called a “conservative” estimate by the Institute of Surveyors that put the potential land revenue from the artificial islands at between HK\$974 billion and HK\$1.143 trillion.

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**Hong Kong shares gold for world’s most expensive city, alongside Paris and Singapore, survey says (SCMP, March 20):** Hong Kong and Paris are now tied with Singapore as the world’s most expensive cities to live, according to a survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit. Paris, Singapore and Hong Kong are all 7 per cent more expensive to live than New York, the benchmark city. Zurich and Geneva ranked the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> respectively. The Worldwide Cost of Living survey compares prices of 150 items in 133 cities.

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**New law gives Hongkongers tax break of US\$7,650 in a bid to boost their inadequate pension savings (SCMP, March 21):** Hong Kong’s lawmakers unanimously passed an amended law that allows up to HK\$60,000 (US\$7,650) in tax deductions in a bid to encourage more voluntary retirement savings in pension schemes and address the shortfall. The change comes into effect on April 1 and taxpayers will be able to claim the deduction on their tax returns in the new financial year. This is on top of the HK\$18,000 tax break a year for mandatory MPF contributions. Hong Kong has an ageing population but the MPF, the city’s compulsory retirement scheme, ranked among the bottom three in least adequacy worldwide because of the low level of contribution, according to a Mercer report last year.

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**China approves one-stop bank account for Hong Kong residents, taking the first step to liberalise financial services on the mainland (SCMP, March 21):** China has chosen the Hong Kong unit of the country’s largest overseas lender to roll out a cross-border account that would break down barriers between the two jurisdictions, making it easier for local residents to gain access to banking services in the world’s second-largest economy. Bank of China (Hong Kong) would allow existing customers to open bank accounts with its Beijing-based parent Bank of China without having to visit mainland China in person.

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**Hong Kong’s HK\$300 million Youth Development Fund set to dish out more cash to help start-ups develop their business locally or in Greater Bay Area (SCMP, March 23):** Hong Kong start-ups run by youths will get more financial support to develop their businesses locally or in the “Greater Bay Area”, according to Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung. Under the new initiatives, the HK\$300 million (US\$38.5 million) Youth Development Fund, set up by the government in 2016, will increase its matching grant to NGOs to finance their youth entrepreneurship projects. So each successful NGO applicant chips in funding and the government will match it with three times the amount. The previous ratio was 1:2. The maximum government input will be capped at HK\$4.5 million per NGO.

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**Greater Bay Area has potential to rival both Silicon Valley and Wall Street, says Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam at Beijing forum (SCMP, March 25):** Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam believes the "Greater Bay Area" could become Asia's version of Silicon Valley and Wall Street all rolled into one, and said development of the area could be a "win-win" for all involved. Hong Kong's chief executive said the city's deep and liquid capital market could promote the commercial application of technological achievements through direct financing by private equity funds, or raising capital through listing. Speaking at the same venue, Ma Xingrui, the governor of Guangdong province, said his region would seek greater integration with Hong Kong and Macau under the plan.

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**Hong Kong and Australia sign deals to open up bilateral free trade and services (SCMP, March 26):** Hong Kong and Australia signed deals to open up bilateral free trade and services, allowing the city prized access to the country's rail and professional industries. The accord covers a wide range of areas such as goods, trade in services, investment, intellectual property, government procurement and competition. It is the fourth trade deal the Hong Kong government has signed in the past 18 months, bringing its total of free trade agreements to eight. Hong Kong has been seeking to open up to more overseas trade, with the need for greater options increasing since the first shot of the US-China trade war was fired last year.

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**Hong Kong hands out virtual bank licences as city catches up with China, Japan in disrupting bricks-and-mortar banking (SCMP, March 28):** Hong Kong handed out three virtual banking licences allowing financial institutions to operate branchless savings and loans businesses, as the city catches up with other Asian jurisdictions in disrupting traditional banking. The city now has 155 licensed banks. The licences are aimed at increasing competition. Arthur Yuen, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority's deputy chief executive, said: "There will be competition between traditional banks and digital banks, but we believe the Hong Kong market can absorb such competitive pressure."

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#### **Domestic politics**

**Chief of China's top political advisory body highlights opposition to Hong Kong independence at the start of nation's two-week annual parliamentary sessions (SCMP, March 4):** Wang Yang, chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference CPPCC, has listed its job of "unequivocally opposing Hong Kong independence" in its annual work report and pledged to fully implement the "one country, two systems" principle under which Beijing governs the city. Wang said the CPPCC would continue to facilitate exchanges between young people from Hong Kong and the mainland, so that they could make policy recommendations on implementing the Greater Bay Area blueprint.

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**Ban on pro-independence party has been good for Hong Kong's stability, Vice-premier Han Zheng tells city's CPPCC delegates (SCMP, March 5):** Banning the pro-independence Hong Kong National Party (HKNP) last year was the right thing to do, and has had a positive effect on the city's stability, Chinese Vice-Premier Han Zheng said, praising Chief Executive Carrie Lam for her leadership. Han also urged Hong Kong's advisers to Beijing to be firm defenders of national security, and revealed that the central government would roll out more than 30 new initiatives to push forward its "Greater Bay Area" plan, which aims at transforming Hong Kong, Macau and nine Guangdong cities into an innovative and financial powerhouse to rival Silicon Valley by 2035.

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**Hong Kong and Macau will develop and thrive with mainland, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang says as he delivers annual work report (SCMP, March 6):** Hong Kong and Macau will develop and progress together with mainland China as they seize opportunities under the nation's trade and integration plans, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang delivered his annual work report. This was the first time Li had highlighted that the two cities would maintain prosperity and stability as they "thrive together with the mainland". Starry Lee, a delegate of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), said the premier dropping the phrase "promoting democracy" from his report reflected the priorities for Hong Kong's development (on economic development and improve livelihood).

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**Greater Bay Area integration the only way for Hong Kong to resolve its long-standing problems, says Beijing's chief official on city's affairs (SCMP, March 8):** Beijing's "Greater Bay Area" project to integrate Hong Kong with 10 neighbouring cities is the only way Hong Kong can resolve its long-standing problems and deep-rooted conflicts, the central government's top official on Hong Kong affairs said. Beijing's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office director Zhang Xiaoming praised Hong Kong Chief

Executive Carrie Lam and her government for banning the pro-independence Hong Kong National Party (HKNP). Zhang also praised Lam for being proactive on both socio-economic and political fronts.

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**Premier Li Keqiang reassures Hong Kong over mainland China's foreign investment law (SCMP, March 15):** Premier Li Keqiang gave the strongest assurance yet that investors from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan would be covered by mainland China's new foreign investment law, hours after the legislature approved it. Business people in Hong Kong had raised concerns that the new law would not apply to the city. Li's was the highest-level affirmation yet that would not be the case. Li said that Beijing attached high importance to investments from Hong Kong and Macau because they accounted for 70 per cent of all foreign investments on the mainland. "We will further harness the advantages of Hong Kong and Macau as separate customs territories and free ports," Li said.

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**Give Hong Kong more leeway and separatism will subside, leading mainland Chinese constitutional scholar tells Beijing (SCMP, March 18):** Beijing should allow Hong Kong more autonomy in its own governance to end a vicious cycle of mistrust between both sides, according to a leading mainland scholar Zhang Qianfan. While Zhang believed Beijing was the sovereign power and Hong Kong should not challenge the bottom line of separatism, the central government also had some misconceptions about its power and threats in Hong Kong that ought to be cleared. The Peking University scholar is known for being vocal on constitutional rights such as free speech and fair elections on the mainland.

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**Senior editor at People's Daily appointed deputy director of Beijing's liaison office in Hong Kong (SCMP, March 20):** A senior editor at People's Daily, the flagship newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, has been appointed a deputy director of Beijing's liaison office in Hong Kong, the central government announced. Lu Xinning would be the seventh deputy director at the liaison office, and the second with a background in state-owned media. Baptist University journalism lecturer Bruce Lui, a veteran reporter covering mainland issues, said Lu's appointment may indicate that one of the six other deputy directors might be relieved from their post or that Beijing would like to reinforce ideological control in Hong Kong.

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**Hongkongers' confidence in future plunges to a worse level than 2003 record low when deadly Sars epidemic struck, university survey finds (SCMP, March 20):** Hongkongers' confidence in the city's future is at a worse level than the record low set in 2003, when the Sars epidemic hit, according to a University of Hong Kong survey. The university also found that the younger generation were more distrustful of Beijing than others. Edward Tai of HKU's public opinion programme said analysis showed the younger the respondent, "the less one trusts the central government and the less confident in Hong Kong's future and one country, two systems". Among those aged 18 to 29, 70 per cent had no confidence in Hong Kong's future, against 25 per cent who had.

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**Pineapple politics: Beijing-friendly Taiwanese mayor Han Kuo-yu comes bearing fruit, but won't touch prickly cross-strait issues (SCMP, March 23):** Kaohsiung mayor Han Kuo-yu deftly avoided prickly questions about cross-strait issues on a rare visit to Hong Kong. He instead put the focus on ramping up trade between the two sides. Chief Executive Carrie Lam met with Han at Government House. During their meeting, Lam said Hong Kong and Taiwan have frequent trade, economic and people-to-people exchanges, and called the two places major trading partners and sources of tourists for each other. Han later went to the liaison office and met Wang Zhimin, the city's top mainland official. Han also met Chief Executive Fernando Chui and Fu Ziying, director of Beijing's liaison office in Macao. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's pro-democracy lawmakers Eddie Chu, Au Nok-hin, Leung Yiu-chung, and activist group Demosisto called Han's meeting with Wang "inappropriate". "Trade between Kaohsiung and Hong Kong certainly falls within the remit of the Hong Kong government, and that has nothing to do with the liaison office," they said in a statement.

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**Thousands take to Hong Kong streets against proposal to extradite suspects to mainland China (SCMP, March 31):** Thousands of protesters took to the streets of Hong Kong, intensifying a campaign against the government's controversial plan to allow the transfer of fugitives to mainland China, Taiwan and Macau. They warned that the next generation of Hongkongers could be victimised under a different legal system north of the border and urged the government to work out an extradition arrangement with Taiwan only. The march organisers said 12,000 took part in the rally while Police put the turnout at 5,200 at its peak. The demonstration came as three human rights groups, including Amnesty International, warned the proposal could be used to intimidate critics of the Hong Kong or Beijing governments.

Security chief John Lee said Hong Kong's courts and justice department would not allow extradition based on political reasons.

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#### **International relations**

**US government stands by vocal concern about Hong Kong's autonomy, after Beijing's complaints of 'distortion and defamation' (SCMP, March 3):** America said it remained concerned about Hong Kong's autonomy, a day after Beijing fired complaints at Washington's man in the city, who warned that the central government's deep involvement in local decision-making could hurt the economy. The latest comments from the US consulate in Hong Kong came as Beijing's Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the city complained of "distortion and defamation" by US Consul General Kurt Tong, who suggested a narrowing political space could hurt the city's economy.

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**British parliamentary committee urges London to 'take action' and monitor closely human rights in Hong Kong under 1984 joint declaration (SCMP, March 13):** A British parliamentary committee has asked London to "take action" and closely monitor guarantees of human rights for Hong Kong under the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration. The Joint Committee on Human Rights also criticised the British foreign office's six-monthly reports on Hong Kong, saying it had failed to lead "adequate maintenance of the required freedoms" for the city's residents. The committee, which examined written evidence from groups and individuals in Hong Kong – including political group Hong Kong 2020, the Hong Kong Journalists Association, and former Democratic Party chairman Emily Lau.

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**Washington points to Hong Kong National Party ban and disqualification of pro-democracy lawmakers as cause for concern in latest human rights report (SCMP, March 15):** Hong Kong's ban on a separatist party is just one in a series of events which constitute "substantial interference" in the city's freedom, the United States has said in its latest human rights report. "During the year ... some [Hong Kong] and central government actions restricted or sought to restrict the right to express or report on dissenting political views, particularly support for Hong Kong independence," the 2018 report said, although it acknowledged that the Hong Kong government did generally respect freedom of expression. The State Department also cited the disqualification of lawmakers over the oath-taking saga, and the election bans imposed on candidates over their political stance, as limiting "free speech in the political arena". A Hong Kong government spokesman rejected the criticism, and said foreign governments should not interfere in the city's internal affairs.

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**European Union voices concern over Hong Kong's plan to allow extraditions to mainland China (SCMP, March 16):** The European Union has voiced concerns about a Hong Kong government proposal to allow fugitives to be handed over to mainland China. It said officials should get a better idea of the public view on the sensitive issue before moving ahead, and that it was worried about the potential impact on citizens living in or visiting the city. The 28-member bloc was the first foreign governmental body to officially air worries over the plan. "We are concerned about the effect amendments could have on EU citizens, either residing in Hong Kong or passing through it, and about the possibility of the re-surrender of fugitives," an EU spokesman said. "Satisfactory safeguards should be enforced in case of ad hoc extradition. We have conveyed our concerns to the Hong Kong authorities."

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**Hong Kong's former No 2 Anson Chan meets Mike Pence in Washington as US report criticises Beijing 'intervention' in city's affairs (SCMP, March 23):** Anson Chan, former chief secretary and now a pro-democracy critic of the Hong Kong government, and opposition lawmakers Charles Mok and Dennis Kwok met a senior National Security Council (NSC) staff member in Washington, and Chan had a brief discussion with US Vice-President Mike Pence about Hong Kong citizens' human rights, and the special trading relationship between the city and the United States. Issued on March 21 by the State Department, the Hong Kong Policy Act Report found that while the city still enjoyed sufficient autonomy to warrant sustaining special trade relations with the US, "the tempo of mainland central government intervention in Hong Kong affairs – and actions by the Hong Kong government consistent with mainland direction – [has] increased, accelerating negative trends seen in previous periods". "Hong Kong's affairs belong purely to the internal politics of China," China's foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in response to the State Department report. Hong Kong's current No 2 official Matthew Cheung also said Western countries "misunderstood" and perceived Hong Kong's autonomy as diminishing based on their own values, particularly on how the city has cracked down on independence advocacy.

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**'Face reality,' China tells Britain in response to report expressing fears over rights and freedoms in Hong Kong (SCMP, March 29):** The Beijing and Hong Kong governments have insisted that human

rights and freedoms have been fully protected in the city, as they rejected British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt's concerns that the city's high degree of autonomy is "being reduced". In response to London's latest six-monthly report to the British parliament, a spokesman for the Hong Kong government also reiterated that foreign governments should not interfere in any form in the internal affairs of the special administrative region, which is an inalienable part of China. In a strongly-worded statement, a spokesman for China's foreign ministry office in Hong Kong urged London to stop interfering in China's internal affairs. In the British document, Hunt said: "I am concerned that on civil and political freedoms, Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy is being reduced. These concerns are driven by recent events, such as the banning of the Hong Kong National Party, political screening of election candidates, and the seemingly politically motivated expulsion of the Financial Times Asia News Editor," he wrote.

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

**Legal challenge to settlement scheme for mainland migrants thrown out, as judge says 'court is not the ombudsman' (SCMP, March 2):** Hong Kong's High Court has thrown out an application to review a policy allowing up to 150 mainland Chinese residents to settle in the city daily, a scheme which has led to critics accusing new migrants of draining public hospital resources. "The court is not the ombudsman," Mr Justice Anderson Chow wrote in a judgment. "The proposed judicial review cannot be reasonably argued." The legal challenge against the so-called one-way permit scheme was lodged by Kwok Cheuk-kin last month. Kwok called on the court to fix the perceived maladministration that had harmed the public. Chow pointed out that the chief executive could not decide on the quota as this laid in the hands of the central government. He also noted that courts had no power to formulate, amend or implement immigration policies, nor serve as watchdogs over the government to ensure no maladministration.

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**Hong Kong and Singapore, Asia's heavyweights, must lead the way in empowering women and promoting equality: UN director (SCMP, March 8):** Hong Kong and Singapore must use their wealth and international status to lead the fight for gender equality in Asia-Pacific, according to Mohammad Naciri, the regional director for the UN agency promoting women's rights. "For a city like Hong Kong, it's much easier to attract more international businesses if they are leading the change that we want to see in the world: an equal friendly city, a more socially just city, a city that promotes human rights in general," Naciri said.

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**Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong officials lied to UN Human Rights Council about city's high degree of autonomy, activists say (SCMP, March 18):** Officials from mainland China and Hong Kong had lied to the UN Human Rights Council about the city's high degree of autonomy being intact, activists said while claiming that the erosion of local freedoms had reached a critical juncture. A coalition of campaigners made the remarks after Hong Kong's No 2 official Matthew Cheung said at the five-yearly Universal Periodic Review session in Geneva that the "one country, two systems" principle was successfully implemented. "This is the first time ever that so many countries have expressed concern about Hong Kong's human rights situation at the Universal Periodic Review, showing that the status quo has reached a critical juncture," said Law Yuk-kai, director of the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, an NGO.

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**After tearful apology, ex-Hong Kong official Patrick Ho gets 'truly merciful' 3-year sentence in US bribery and money laundering case (SCMP, March 26):** Disgraced former Hong Kong minister Patrick Ho delivered a tearful apology in a US federal court in New York after he was sentenced to 36 months in jail and fined US\$400,000 (HK\$3.1 million) over a multimillion-dollar bribery scheme involving top African leaders. Ho, who has been held in custody since November 2017, was given credit for the 16 months he has already served so will spend an additional 20 months behind bars. Ho served as Hong Kong's home affairs minister from 2002 to 2007, and later became deputy secretary general of a think tank funded by Shanghai-based oil conglomerate CEFC China Energy. Last December, a federal jury found him guilty on seven of eight counts of bribery and money laundering over oil rights for CEFC in Chad and Uganda.

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**Hong Kong-mainland China extradition plan to be watered down by exempting 9 economic crimes, under intense pressure from business community (SCMP, March 27):** Hong Kong's leader, under intense pressure from the business community, has agreed to exempt nine economic crimes from a controversial proposal to allow the transfer of fugitives from the city to mainland China, Taiwan and Macau. Chief Executive Carrie Lam's cabinet endorsed a revised bill that would also allow extraditions only for offences punishable by three years' imprisonment instead of one year as originally proposed. The new bill will exclude crimes such as those related to taxes, securities and futures trading, intellectual



property, company offences, and unlawful use of computers, from a list of 46 to be presented to the legislature on April 3. However, officials stood firm on the inclusion of bribery, fraud and money laundering. The government has presented it as a direct response to the case of a Hongkonger who, under the existing law, cannot be extradited to Taiwan where he is wanted on suspicion of murdering his girlfriend.

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### **Health**

**Review system and cut through red tape, Hong Kong minister urges Hospital Authority in bid to address city's health care woes (SCMP, March 2):** Hong Kong's health minister Sophia Chan has urged the Hospital Authority to review its system after the body was accused of red tape that increased the burden on overworked medical staff. She announced the move as the city's struggling health care system was set to receive a total of HK\$80.6 billion (US\$10.3 billion) in recurrent expenditure. Other measures for the health care system included the set up of a HK\$10 billion public health care stabilisation fund, which would be used by the authority for any additional spending in unexpected circumstances. The authority, which manages Hong Kong's 43 public hospitals and institutions, would also have its usual annual subvention increased to HK\$68.8 billion.

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**Union warns of industrial action if support staff at Hong Kong's public hospitals do not get 12 per cent pay rise in line with proposed increase for new recruits (SCMP, March 5):** Some 10,000 health care support staff at public hospitals in Hong Kong could go on strike if they do not get a pay rise of at least 12 per cent at all levels, a union leader has warned. The demand came as the union held a protest on March 4 to call for similar wage rises for new recruits and experienced workers. "The authority decided to raise the salary for newcomers because it knows our job is stressful and undesirable, but it forgot that current colleagues are doing the same job and facing the same stress and difficulties," union member Yeung Yee-mui said.

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**Pledge of staff boost at Hong Kong's stretched public hospitals (SCMP, March 15):** More than 2,000 nurses and 500 doctors will be recruited in the coming year under an ambitious plan to ease the burden on workers at Hong Kong's public hospitals. That was the promise from the Hospital Authority, which also pledged to cut red tape to spare clinical staff being locked in meetings with management. The authority is battling mounting discontent by overworked doctors and nurses. Lawmakers cautiously welcomed the measures, but said the authority also needed to boost pay to keep staff. The Public Doctors' Association and Frontline Doctors' Union voiced their discontent at a meeting with Chief Executive Carrie Lam. They claimed the staff shortage stemmed from a lack of long-term planning more than a decade ago.

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**More measles cases likely to hit Hong Kong, disease expert warns (SCMP, March 26):** Hong Kong could face a second wave of measles infections, a top disease expert warned as health authorities stepped up vaccinations of workers at the city's airport. The Centre for Health Protection has recorded 20 measles infections so far this year – against 15 in all of 2018 – five of them involving airport and airline staff. Health officials, meanwhile, met representatives from the Hong Kong Airport Authority, airlines and other airport-based firms and briefed attendees on the latest cases and offered advice on infection control. Due to a generally high level of measles immunity among the city's population, the scale of the current outbreak had been small, University of Hong Kong microbiologist Dr Ho Pak-leung told a radio programme. "But I expect more cases to surface, and there could be a second round of infections," he said.

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**Blood tests to find out who really needs measles vaccine among Hong Kong International Airport workers (SCMP, March 29):** Hong Kong health workers will do blood tests on airport staff and only vaccinate people found to lack immunity to measles to preserve the city's limited supply of vaccines, health officials announced. The new strategy came as the total number of infections for 2019 rose to 31 – more than double the total of 15 for last year. Among this year's cases, 11 involved airport and airline personnel. Dr Yuen Kwok-yung, chair professor of infectious diseases at the University of Hong Kong, also said it was important for authorities to find airport employees who were vulnerable to the measles virus. Sophia Chan emphasised that, as most Hong Kong residents are immune to measles, there was no need to panic or scramble for vaccines when they arrive.

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### **Environment**

**Sort your rubbish properly, Hong Kong's glass recyclers tell residents amid supply and waste management woes (SCMP, March 4):** Delvin Cheng, project manager at Baguio, which operates the

recycling plant, said their biggest challenge was in sifting through waste glass and sorting processable items from others. "If people really sort through their rubbish properly before disposal, recycling can be done so much better. Public education must really be strengthened." Baguio is one of two glass management contractors hired by the government through open tenders in 2017 and last year to provide effective collection and proper reuse or treatment of glass containers. The waste is then turned into reusable materials. Hong Kong sent 10,733 tonnes of municipal waste to landfills every day in 2017, with glass – mostly bottles – comprising about 300 tonnes.

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**Hong Kong's air quality goals for 2025 cleared by environment advisory group, but fall short of WHO global guidelines (SCMP, March 5):** An environmental advisory group has raised no objection to proposed revisions to the Hong Kong government's five-year air quality goals, even as officials dismissed calls to tighten targets for two pollutants. The government told the Advisory Council on the Environment the revised targets for 2025 could not be set to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) ultimate objectives as such a move would make it impossible for infrastructure projects to pass environmental impact assessments (EIA). Undersecretary for the Environment Tse Chin-wan said although the targets did not meet the WHO's objectives, "we will continue to implement measures until we reach them".

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**WWF poll finds 80 per cent of Hongkongers want regulations on single-use plastic tableware, 60 per cent want it banned (SCMP, March 28):** The conservation body WWF Hong Kong found that 78 per cent of respondents supported the regulation of the single-use plastic utensils, with nearly 60 per cent calling for a ban on all disposable tableware. Chief Executive Carrie Lam in her 2018 policy speech announced a feasibility study on the regulation or ban of disposable plastic tableware to be completed by 2020. WWF Hong Kong called for the government to set up a timeline for eradicating single-use plastic tableware after the results of its feasibility study are released.

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#### **Culture and education**

**Hong Kong's universities 'not being transparent' with management records by failing to properly archive documents (SCMP, March 4):** None of Hong Kong's eight major universities keeps records of meetings by their governing councils in proper public archives despite controversy in recent years over how the institutions are managed. The discovery by the Post comes as the city's Law Reform Commission carries out a public consultation exercise on a proposed archives law that would cover government departments and some statutory bodies. Universities would not be accountable under the law, but experts said they should be, in light of their growing entanglement in Hong Kong's political wrangling.

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**Hong Kong Polytechnic University student plans legal challenge against expulsion (SCMP, March 5):** A graduate student expelled from Polytechnic University is planning a legal challenge against the decision, and has called on the institution to be more transparent with its disciplinary action. Gerald Ho said he was innocent of accusations that he had assaulted staff. He also had not been allowed to hire a lawyer in his defence, he said. Ho is a member of the Student Independence Union, a group promoting the idea of Hong Kong breaking away from China. The decision to expel Ho came after disciplinary hearings against four students who were seen clashing with management staff last year. A member of the university's governing council said the four had "acted like triad members", and he urged PolyU to report the matter to police.

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**West Kowloon Cultural District hopes high-speed rail link attracts visitors from mainland China to boost audience numbers (SCMP, March 6):** Henry Tang, chairman of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, said people living near cities such as Guangzhou, Zhuhai and Foshan could make a day trip to Hong Kong using the high-speed rail to watch a show at the cultural district and return the same day. A Hong Kong government source said: "We are discussing new train schedules for the high-speed rail, including later departure times. We also need to take into account the opening hours of West Kowloon station." Tang said the multibillion-dollar project on the West Kowloon waterfront presented a golden opportunity for Hong Kong to become a leading arts and cultural centre. Tang said he was confident the city's strengths such as infrastructure, rule of law, intellectual property protection and logistics could help achieve this vision.

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**Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to speed up mainland China expansion plan by enrolling students two years earlier than opening of Guangzhou campus (SCMP, March 13):** Hong Kong University of Science and Technology will speed up its development plans in mainland China

by enrolling students for classes in September, two years ahead of the expected completion date of its Guangzhou campus. Professor Nancy Ip, HKUST's vice-president for research and graduate studies, said the university had been very proactive as it wanted to grasp opportunities from the "Greater Bay Area". HKUST announced plans to build a campus in Guangzhou in October, making it the fourth Hong Kong tertiary institution to expand onto the mainland.

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#### **Society**

**Derailed MTR train back on tracks after crash as Hong Kong government assures public signalling system upgrade will only go ahead if safety is guaranteed (SCMP, March 20):** The train crash happened when the MTR Corp was testing the new signalling system. A driver was hurt in the crash and the first carriage on the Central-bound train was derailed. No passengers had been on board. "I want to reiterate that public safety is of primary concern, so we will not rush to ... put in place this new signal system until we are assured of [its] safety," Chief Executive Carrie Lam said. Transport minister Frank Chan echoed Lam, saying tests would be suspended until safety was assured. The rail operator announced that the trains involved in the collision had been removed from the main tracks and repair work had been done. Train services of the whole line resume as normal.

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**Builders on HK\$97 billion Sha Tin-Central link did cut corners but public safety was never threatened, says Hong Kong commission of inquiry (SCMP, March 27):** A top-level investigation into a construction scandal surrounding the HK\$97.1 billion Sha Tin-Central link has concluded that work on the rail line was not executed to plan, but the affected parts of the project were safe. Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam said the commission of inquiry had ruled that Leighton Contractors (Asia), the main firm on the job, deviated from the agreed design when building new platforms under Hung Hom station. "Even so, the panel thought the construction work had satisfied safety standards," Lam said. This should help allay public concerns over the project's safety, she added. The MTR Corp welcomed the commission's conclusions and reiterated that it reserved the right to take action against Leighton.

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**Dropping cross-harbour tunnel toll plan for second time 'does not weaken Hong Kong government', says leader Carrie Lam (SCMP, March 27):** Chief Executive Carrie Lam said her government has decided to shelve for the second time a plan to change tolls on Hong Kong's cross-harbour tunnels, and the plan would not be revived before the government takes back running of the Western Harbour Tunnel in 2023. "Hong Kong is a diverse society, and there are vested interests ... so when these proposals can't get enough support from the Legislative Council, we will respect them," she added. Lam was referring to the government's plan to raise tolls at the publicly operated Cross-Harbour Tunnel and Eastern Harbour Tunnel, while lowering them for the privately run Western Harbour Tunnel, which is underused because of its higher charges.

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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)