



June in Hong Kong

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

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## **Economy + Finance**

**Trade war will continue to buffet Hong Kong, says commerce minister Edward Yau, as new Chinese tariffs on US imports take effect (SCMP, June 1):** The intensifying US-China trade war looks set to trouble Hong Kong's trade figures into the third quarter of this year, and is also prompting fears of bigger problems globally, according to the city's commerce minister Edward Yau. Hong Kong's gross domestic product (GDP) rose 0.6 per cent in the first quarter year on year, the slowest growth in a decade. Singapore recorded 1.2 per cent year-on-year GDP growth in the first quarter, its poorest in 10 years, while South Korea's growth of 1.8 per cent was the weakest since the global financial crisis of 2008. "Hong Kong as a free port and a financial centre will be hit first if there is any global economic slowdown," Yau said. "How much it affects the economy will depend on how long and how broadly the trade war plays out."

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**World's most expensive housing market is getting even pricier with mortgages in Hong Kong eating up almost 70 per cent of monthly income (SCMP, June 3):** Ordinary people are increasingly being priced out of Hong Kong's property market, with mortgages eating up almost 70 per cent of monthly incomes and prices surpassing the height of the 1997 housing boom, the city's finance chief said. Financial Secretary Paul Chan warned home ownership was becoming unaffordable as the cost of buying had increased by 126 per cent in the past 22 years. "Property prices are still mostly out of reach for Hongkongers," Chan said. He said on average 18,800 private flats would be completed annually over the next five years, 20 per cent more than the figure for the previous five years.

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**Hong Kong slips behind New York and Nasdaq in five-month global IPO rankings, as trade war takes a toll on sentiment (SCMP, June 5):** A lack of blockbuster listings has seen Hong Kong slip to third place in the worldwide IPO rankings, according to data provider Refinitiv. In terms of total proceeds, it was overtaken by the Nasdaq and New York stock exchanges in the first five months of the year after the American bourses managed to attract some mega listings by global technology giants. Analysts said the US-China trade war had dented the appeal of Hong Kong as an IPO destination, and the outlook remained uncertain. Edward Au, audit and assurance partner at Deloitte China, said the trade war had affected the expansion plans of many Chinese companies.

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**Hong Kong seeks new markets through Asean free-trade deal as US-China trade war rages on (SCMP, June 10):** The intensifying US-China trade war has battered Hong Kong, prompting it to look to new markets and trade mechanisms such as those presented by the upcoming free-trade deal with Asean, the city's commerce minister Edward Yau has told the Post. Yau said that the pact with the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations would be a crucial alternative for Hong Kong companies that rely on traditional markets, such as the United States and European Union. He also said the government had provided billions of dollars in funding to subsidise ventures by local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) into new markets, including mainland China and countries with which Hong Kong has a free-trade agreement.

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**Hong Kong developer walks away from HK\$11.1 billion Kai Tak project, citing 'social contradiction and economic instability' (SCMP, June 12):** Goldin Financial Holdings told a telephone conference that it was rescinding its HK\$11.1 billion (US\$1.42 billion) winning bid for 4C Site 4 at Kai Tak, forfeiting its HK\$25 million deposit on the site. The withdrawal represents the largest strategic U-turn by a major Hong Kong company since US President Donald Trump slapped tariffs on US\$200 billion worth of Chinese products and threatened to impose 25 per cent duties on another US\$300 billion worth of imports from China this summer. They did not say what the company meant by "social contradiction", but the announcement came as Hong Kong lawmakers were preparing to vote on the city's contentious bill allowing -extradition of criminal suspects to the mainland.

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**Rising uncertainty over trade war could weigh on bottom lines at Hong Kong's banks, KPMG says (SCMP, June 14):** Rising interest rates helped boost Hong Kong banks as the city's economy slowed last year, but heightened uncertainty from an escalating trade war between the United States and China could weigh on their performance in 2019, according to KPMG. "Tensions on trade will cause the rate of loan growth to decline. We still expect the total balance of loans to increase but I think the rate of loan growth is probably more muted," KPMG said. As the spat intensified last year, the total

growth in loans and advances at Hong Kong's banks climbed 3.5 per cent to HK\$9.03 trillion in 2018, KPMG said. That compared with 14.9 per cent growth in 2017.

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**Hong Kong extradition bill: business groups breathe collective sigh of relief over government decision to delay legislation (SCMP, June 16):** Hong Kong's business sector breathed a collective sigh of relief at the news the government had backed down in the fight over the extradition bill. American Chamber of Commerce, which has strongly opposed the bill and urged Chief Executive Carrie Lam to ditch it, saw the decision as an important signal to the international community that Hong Kong is serious about protecting its special status under "one country, two systems", the means by which China allows the city a certain level of autonomy. Entrepreneur Allan Zeman, dubbed the father of Lan Kwai Fong, the entertainment district in Central, said the decision would hopefully ease tensions. "Business needs stability," Zeman, a Lam supporter, told the Post. "Hong Kong has been built on trust, which is why foreign companies feel safe and keep their finance in Hong Kong." The city's largest business group, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the government's decision to back down.

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**Beware volatility, warns HKMA chief Norman Chan, as Hong Kong leaves interest rate unchanged in lockstep with US Fed (SCMP, June 20):** Hong Kong's de facto central bank has reiterated its warning for borrowers and investors to beware of volatile market changes, as it kept the city's base interest rate unchanged in lockstep with the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy overnight. "Future direction of fund flows has become more uncertain in view of the increased uncertainties in the Fed's monetary policy direction. The public should stay vigilant in managing the potential risks arising from market volatilities," said Norman Chan, chief executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority. Hong Kong manages its monetary policy in sync with the US Fed to maintain the stability of the Hong Kong dollar, which has been pegged to the US currency since 1983. That means every interest rate increase or cut in the US is mirrored in Hong Kong.

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**Hong Kong hits export slump and worst is yet to come warns top Bank of East Asia economist, as trade war shows no signs of ending (SCMP, June 25):** Hong Kong exports and imports slumped further in May under the shadow of the US-China trade war, and the worst is yet to come, Bank of East Asia chief economist Paul Tang has said. The city's exports dropped 2.4 per cent year on year for the seventh month, while imports were down 4.3 per cent for six months in a row, the Census and Statistics Department said. In the first five months of this year, exports declined 2.5 per cent from the same period last year and imports shrank 3.8 per cent. This left a trade deficit of HK\$188.8 billion (US\$24 billion). Exports to the US, and vice versa, through Hong Kong accounted for about 9 per cent of the city's total exports in 2018. Trade and logistics is one of Hong Kong's four pillar industries, employing more people than any other sector.

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**Hong Kong protests hit other areas of city life as government hints at land supply delay, sparking fears of rise in house prices (SCMP, June 26):** A plan for the Hong Kong government to partner with private developers to build on the city's large tracts of farmland may be delayed, sparking fears of a short-term lack of land supply. "The social atmosphere at the moment is quite tense," Secretary for Development Michael Wong said. "We felt that it would be better to discuss many issues when the atmosphere has become more relaxed." The programme is the government's major short-term measure to release some 1,000 hectares of agricultural land owned by developers. Now uncertainties surrounding the plan have raised concerns the government could run out of land soon, further heating up the world's most expensive property market.

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**Hong Kong's retail sales will drop 5 per cent this year amid fall in numbers of mainland Chinese tourists, says PwC (SCMP, June 27):** Hong Kong's retail sales are expected to slump 5 per cent to HK\$460 billion (US\$59 billion) for the full year, dragged down by economic uncertainty and a decline in mainland Chinese tourists, according to international advisory firm PriceWaterCoopers (PwC). "The ongoing Sino-US trade dispute, equity market turbulence and volatility of renminbi continue to cast a long shadow on consumers' sentiment and actual spending," said Michael Cheng, PwC's Asia-Pacific consumer markets leader. Electrical and luxury goods experienced the biggest decline in sales and are expected to shrink even further, PwC said.

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### **Domestic politics**

**Hong Kong extradition bill: security chief John Lee says he expects Beijing to keep its promises on human rights safeguards (SCMP, June 2):** Hong Kong's security chief John Lee said he was confident Beijing would keep its word and safeguard the human rights of any fugitives handed over to

mainland China, even though protections would not be written into the government's contentious extradition bill. While critics demanded those safeguards form part of the legislation, Lee insisted the current proposal would offer greater flexibility, adding he was confident mainland authorities would stay true to their promises, even without protection clauses in the bill. "China has signed extradition deals with 55 countries and it has no problem discharging its international responsibilities," he said.

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**Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam 'will not simply follow orders from Beijing' on extradition requests and can refuse transfer of fugitives accused of crimes against defence or foreign affairs (SCMP, June 4):** Hong Kong's leader has given an assurance she will not be able to simply follow orders from Beijing to transfer criminal suspects to mainland China under her government's controversial extradition bill because of protections built into the legislation. Critics fear Beijing could use the new arrangement to target political opponents or that suspects would be sent to jurisdictions where a fair trial was not guaranteed. Eric Cheung, a legal scholar at the University of Hong Kong, said: "When did the chief executive ever refuse to act on the central government's decision?" In theory, Cheung said, the central government could dictate whether the chief executive should accept or reject rendition requests it deemed to involve defence and foreign affairs. But if local courts found there was insufficient evidence to back the case, Cheung said the transfer would not happen.

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**Hong Kong keeps Tiananmen crackdown memory alive with 'record-breaking' mass vigil (SCMP, June 5):** A record turnout of more than 180,000 people, according to organisers on June 4 night, turned Hong Kong's Victoria Park into a sea of candles in an emotionally charged vigil to mark the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown. Organisers attributed the massive turnout to this being the 30th anniversary of Tiananmen as well as the political fallout and public backlash over the extradition bill which would allow Hong Kong to hand over fugitives to jurisdictions it has no previous agreement with. Attendance peaked twice to about 180,000 in 2012 and 2014, but has diminished in recent years, with some student leaders urging a boycott because they consider it more worthwhile to fight for greater democracy in Hong Kong rather than the rest of China.

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**Human sea of white washes through Hong Kong as masses register anger over extradition bill (SCMP, June 9):** According to the organiser Civil Human Rights Front, 1.03 million people took part in the march to say no to the government's proposed law amendments, which would allow the transfer of fugitives to jurisdictions with which Hong Kong has no extradition deal, including mainland China. Police put the figure at 240,000. For many, the march brought back memories of the 500,000-strong protest in 2003, which led to the government shelving plans to enact legislation critics feared would erode the city's freedoms.

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**From Vancouver to New York to Brisbane, rallies around world express solidarity with Hong Kong's mass protest against extradition agreement (SCMP, June 9):** A wave of solidarity swept from Berlin to Brisbane as demonstrators gathered around the world to support the mass protest in Hong Kong against the government's extradition bill. At least 29 rallies were held in 12 countries with protesters taking to the streets in cities such as New York, San Francisco, Washington, Toronto and Vancouver, as well as Tokyo, Sydney and Taipei. The demonstrators expressed support for Hong Kong, where hundreds of thousands of people marched in opposition to a proposed amendment.

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**Violent clashes mar protest after 'more than a million' Hongkongers of all ages and backgrounds march against controversial extradition bill (SCMP, June 10):** Protesters used bottles and metal barriers to attack police who tried to drive them away with batons and pepper spray outside Hong Kong's legislature late on June 9 night at the end of mass rally that drew historic numbers against the government's highly contentious extradition bill. A government source said the extradition bill would still be put before Legco for debate and a vote, regardless of the turnout. A government spokesman said it had listened carefully to different views on over the past four months and made two revisions. With Beijing officially throwing its weight behind Chief Executive Carrie Lam to push the bill, it was unlikely to have a change of heart after June 9's rally, according to Lau Siu-kai, a vice-chairman of the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macau Studies. "The issue now is more than the extradition bill. To the Beijing leaders, it is a showdown between China and foreign influence," he said, referring to the campaign against the bill by Western business chambers and consulates.

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**Hong Kong's young protesters back with a vengeance as all-out chaos erupts on city's streets following anger at extradition bill (SCMP, June 12):** Hong Kong descended into all-out chaos with police firing tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters, as tens of thousands surrounded the city's

administrative centre to block lawmakers from debating the government's highly divisive extradition bill. More than 70 people were injured in the clashes, including protesters, police officers and journalists. The violence prompted Legco president Andrew Leung, who had set the stage for the bill to be passed by the pro-establishment majority in the legislature as early as June 20, to cancel June 12's scheduled second reading. "Clearly, this was no longer a peaceful assembly, but the public and organised instigation of a riot," Chief Executive Carrie Lam said. While protesters accused police of using excessive force, and even some government officials privately questioned whether they had failed to take adequate action to start off with, Police commissioner Stephen Lo insisted his officers had it under control and did not require help from the city's People's Liberation Army garrison. In Beijing, foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang dismissed rumours that the PLA could be brought in for the first time. Community leaders, religious groups and professional organisations added their voices to the calls for calm, urging the Lam administration to withdraw the bill and defuse public anger.

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**Leading Hong Kong teachers' union calls for class boycott after clashes over extradition bill (SCMP, June 13):** A leading union has called on Hong Kong teachers to skip classes for the rest of the week after street clashes between police and residents protesting the government's extradition bill. The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (PTU), the city's biggest pro-democracy union for educators, announced it would boycott classes on June 13-14. The union condemned the government for pushing forward the legal amendments by all means, and the Legislative Council's president for cooperating with officials. "Right now, with the sentiment in society rapidly worsening, [the PTU] has decided to announce a launch of class boycotts across Hong Kong for this week," its statement read.

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**'Nearly 2 million' people take to streets, forcing public apology from Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam as suspension of controversial extradition bill fails to appease protesters (SCMP, June 17):** Nearly 2 million protesters flooded the streets of Hong Kong on June 16, organisers claimed, delivering a stunning repudiation of Chief Executive Carrie Lam's governance and forcing a public apology out of the city's leader over her campaign to bulldoze a controversial extradition bill through the legislature. A day after Lam suspended her push for the bill, expecting it to defuse a crisis that has seen violent clashes between mostly young protesters and police, the centre of Hong Kong was brought to a complete standstill as the masses marched to chastise her for refusing to withdraw the bill or apologise when first asked to, and declaring that nothing short of her resignation would satisfy them now. On June 15, Lam had said she would hit the pause button on the bill but take another shot at it to build a bigger consensus. The public apology came in the form of a government statement after the protest on June 16. "The chief executive admitted that the deficiencies in the government's work had led to substantial controversies and disputes in society, causing disappointment and grief among the people. She apologised to the people of Hong Kong for this," it read.

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**Hong Kong police chief Stephen Lo steps back from riot label (SCMP, June 18):** Hong Kong's police commissioner rolled back his official categorisation of June 12's clashes as a "riot", applying it only to specifically violent incidents. Stephen Lo clarified that only those who had attacked frontline officers with metal rods and bricks would be accused of rioting, while those who were not involved in such violence would not have to worry about riot-related charges. One of the major demands aired during June 16's rally, attended by nearly 2 million according to organisers, was for the city's leader to retract the riot label, with marchers expressing concern that it would lead to harsh punishment for young protesters. Others sources said Beijing remained staunchly behind Chief Executive Carrie Lam, with the bottom line that there should be no bloodshed on the streets of Hong Kong and that there was no question of allowing her to resign as that would make it difficult for the city's future leaders.

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**'I have heard you loud and clear,' Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam tells city in 'most sincere' apology (SCMP, June 19):** Hong Kong's embattled leader Carrie Lam has offered her "most sincere" public apology over her mishandling of a controversial extradition bill, admitting her shortcomings and promising to learn from mistakes, two days after an estimated 2 million people took to the streets in an overwhelming repudiation of her governance. However, she again rejected calls to scrap rather than suspend the bill. Lam insisted her decision was tantamount to withdrawing the bill, as it was most likely to die a natural death because it could not be debated and processed by the Legislative Council before the end of its term in July next year. Business chambers and pro-establishment politicians and groups welcomed her climbdown, but opposition pan-democrats and protesters refused to accept her apology. Dismissing relentless calls for her to step down, Lam said she had commitments to meet, starting with new initiatives to develop the city's economy and improve people's livelihood. She also ruled out the possibility of launching an independent inquiry into police actions, and refused to give any assurance that protesters would not be charged over the clashes. "Hong Kong has very well-established

mechanisms to deal with complaints against the police. We have the Capo, the Complaints Against Police Office, and we have an Independent [Police] Complaints Council, the IPCC,” Lam said.

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**Hong Kong extradition bill protesters besiege police headquarters after day of mobile rallies (SCMP, June 22):** Thousands of mostly young protesters took over Hong Kong’s main roads on June 21 in an unprecedented protest against the now-suspended extradition bill, besieging police headquarters and government buildings. Demanding the complete withdrawal of the bill and exoneration of protesters arrested during previous clashes, they trapped police inside their Wan Chai headquarters for the entire day and into the night while officers retreated inside and made no attempt to disperse them. Using an effective combination of text messaging and word of mouth on the ground to communicate and mobilise, protesters kept their actions peaceful. There was no sign of the city’s leader, Chief Executive Carrie Lam or her top officials throughout the day, but the government issued a statement at night spelling out the disruptions to public services and transport caused by the protesters.

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**Justice minister Teresa Cheng rejects Hong Kong protesters’ demands not to charge those arrested over June 12 clashes (SCMP, June 23):** Hong Kong’s Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng rejected protesters’ demands to not charge their comrades who took part in clashes during an anti-extradition bill protest. Cheng was the first government official to appear in public since a 15-hour siege of the city’s police headquarters with police vowing a “stringent follow-up” on protesters’ actions. She also reiterated in person her apology for the poor handling of the government’s contentious plans to amend the law. Cheng said: “When the Department of Justice presses charges, it is based on the law, relevant facts and our prosecution rules.” The government had previously called the intense clashes last week a “riot” before later backing down. Cheng said: “Whether it has been labelled by anyone as a riot would not affect the Department of Justice’s work to press charges.” “If the evidence accepted by the court did not have prospects of a successful conviction, we would not make the decision to prosecute,” she added.

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**Police siege aftermath: Hong Kong tense but calm as government officials dig in and anti-extradition bill protesters plan their next moves (SCMP, June 23):** Hong Kong police have vowed to pursue anti-government protesters for the 15-hour siege of their headquarters as demonstrators retreated to map out their next steps to keep public opinion on their side after a tense week in the city. The force said: “Police have shown the greatest tolerance to the protesters who assembled outside [the headquarters], but their means of expressing views have become illegal, irrational and unreasonable. Police will stringently follow up on these illegal activities.” Executive councillor Regina Ip and Chinese University political scientist Ivan Choy believed that the government and the police were trying to avoid being accused of stoking up the protests. Li Xiaobing, an associate professor of the law school at Nankai University in Tianjin, believed Beijing would like to keep Hong Kong stable before the G20 meeting.

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**Defiant Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam sticking to her guns over refusal to withdraw extradition bill (SCMP, June 26):** Hong Kong’s embattled leader is keeping a low profile to avoid fanning extradition bill protests ahead of the G20 summit in Osaka this weekend, but she is doubling down on her refusal to completely withdraw the now-suspended legislation, according to multiple sources. “It is suspended indefinitely, so essentially the bill is dead,” one source said about the unpopular legislation. Another source showed the Post speaking notes from a closed-door meeting that Chief Executive Carrie Lam held with business and community leaders after mostly young protesters laid siege to police headquarters in Wan Chai for 15-hours. The notes showed Lam indicating that she would not give in to protesters’ repeated demands for an inquiry into the use of force by police, or exonerate those arrested. She stressed the importance of supporting the police force, safeguarding the government’s dignity, defending the city’s rule of law, and embarking on a new start for Hong Kong after the conflicts caused by the bill. “[We] have the duty to defend the rule of law, and will impartially and fairly deal with the illegal and violent acts committed on June 12,” she said.

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**Former Hong Kong chief executive Donald Tsang has charges of criminal misconduct quashed by Court of Final Appeal (SCMP, June 27):** Former Hong Kong leader Donald Tsang has been cleared of criminal misconduct by the city’s top court, bringing a long legal battle punctuated by health problems to an end. The Court of Final Appeal ruled unanimously in favour of the former chief executive, who was the highest-ranking official to be jailed in the city, after finding the trial judge had failed to direct his jurors properly. The top court decided to quash his conviction and sentence once and for all, and not order a retrial. The judgment said Tsang had already suffered a “just punishment” by being jailed for 12 months. “That weighs heavily in favour of a conclusion that the interests of justice do not require a new trial,” it said. Democratic Party lawmaker Lam Cheuk-ting said the top court had only cleared Tsang on technical

grounds and the judgment reaffirmed the need for public officers to declare any potential conflict of interest.

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**Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam makes first appearance in a week to reassure under-fire police they have her full support (SCMP, June 28):** Hong Kong's embattled leader resurfaced for the first time in a week for a morale-boosting meeting with police union leaders, after a six-hour siege of the force's headquarters the night before by hundreds of protesters demanding she completely withdraw the government's now-suspended extradition bill. Chief Executive Carrie Lam office issued a statement announcing she had met the heads of four staff associations representing the city's 30,000 officers at Government House to assure them of her administration's full support, and to praise them for showing restraint while under fire from protesters. Earlier in the day, more than 100 demonstrators descended on the office of Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng, demanding she withdraw the extradition bill altogether and spare arrested protesters from prosecution. The Department of Justice (DOJ) dismissed the protesters' demands, stating: "All investigations are conducted by law enforcement agencies which will, after investigation and when necessary, refer to the DOJ for independent decisions on whether to prosecute."

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**Don't vent extradition bill fury on Hong Kong police, security chief John Lee tells protesters after force HQ besieged (SCMP, June 28):** Hong Kong's security chief John Lee has urged protesters not to vent their anger on the police, after the force's headquarters was besieged by demonstrators for the second time in a week. The minister said that while he, the city's leader Carrie Lam and the justice chief Teresa Cheng had apologised for deficiencies in the government's work on the legislation, police officers had nothing to do with those failures. "It is the police officers' job to maintain public order ... I hope people will not put the force and society on opposing sides." Commissioner of Police Stephen Lo warned that while the force tolerated the protests (the force's headquarters was besieged), it did not mean violent and unlawful acts would go unpunished.

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#### **International relations**

**US State Department and UK's Asia minister express support for Hongkongers protesting extradition bill (SCMP, June 11):** The US State Department and the UK's minister for Asia and Pacific spoke out in support of the record crowds of Hongkongers who took to the streets to protest proposed legislative amendments that would allow extraditions to mainland China. Expressing the US government's "grave concern" about the proposed changes to the law, State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus stopped short of calling on the Hong Kong government to entirely roll back the plan but said "any amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance should be pursued with great care". The US statement came as Mark Field, the UK's minister for Asia and the Pacific, spoke of a potential "chilling effect" on Hong Kong's rights and freedom. Beijing has spoken out in "resolute support" of the proposed changes to the city's Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and pushed back against criticism from foreign governments. "We resolutely oppose wrong words and actions by any foreign forces to interfere in the legislative matters of the Hong Kong SAR," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

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**Donald Trump expresses confidence that despite massive protests over extradition bill, Hong Kong and Beijing can 'work it out' (SCMP, June 13):** US President Donald Trump is sure Beijing and Hong Kong will "be able to work it out", he said after escalating protests against the city's divisive extradition bill plunged the global financial hub into chaos. Trump's comments came after Hong Kong was rocked by protests against the proposed legislation, with police firing tear gas and rubber bullets at demonstrators blocking roads outside government headquarters, injuring more than 70 people. It is important for the Hong Kong government to respect freedom of expression and "the right of people to peacefully assemble", State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi warned that Congress "has no choice but to reassess whether Hong Kong is 'sufficiently autonomous' under the 'one country, two systems' framework" if it passes. Under the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992, the US State Department issues an annual assessment of whether the city's autonomy is sufficient to warrant the continuation of the special economic and trade status that it enjoys with the US as a separate entity from mainland China. Beijing has hit back at Pelosi's statement, calling her remarks "irresponsible and incorrect" and demanding that Washington stop interfering in Beijing's affairs.

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**US forced to perform a tricky balancing act amid drama surrounding Hong Kong extradition bill protests (SCMP, June 18):** The Trump administration's measured approach over the past week as massive protests built in Hong Kong, forcing its government to back down over a proposed extradition law, reflects a delicate balancing act. At issue for the United States has been how to maintain pressure



on China without unduly penalising the Hong Kong people or pushing an angry Beijing too far. Washington's main leverage has been a threat to narrow or strip the territory's special economic and trade status and its preferential access to US markets by revising the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992. But it's a rather blunt tool that would hurt the very Hong Kong residents Washington hoped to support. The US Congress showed much less restraint. A group of senators – Marco Rubio of Florida, Ben Cardin of Maryland, Jim Risch of Idaho and Bob Menendez of New Jersey – introduced legislation to periodically review Hong Kong's status and ensure it remains sufficiently autonomous to continue receiving special US trading benefits. While it is often difficult to find consistency in the Trump administration amid high turnover, mixed messages and poor inter-agency coordination, Washington is expected to continue moving slowly and carefully, if at all, on revising the 1992 act. Congress is expected to make noise, but the legislation will likely die a quiet death, in line with most proposed US legislation, barring some violent or deadly crackdown.

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**Discussion of Hong Kong extradition bill will not be allowed at G20 summit in Osaka, Beijing says (SCMP, June 24):** The public backlash and mass protests against the Hong Kong government's now-suspended extradition bill will not be brought up or allowed to be discussed at the G20 summit in Osaka, Beijing made clear even as protesters from the city planned to take their case to an international audience there. "I can tell you for sure that the G20 will not discuss the affairs of Hong Kong. We will not allow the G20 to talk about Hong Kong matters," China's assistant minister of foreign affairs Zhang Jun said. When asked what might happen if United States President Donald Trump insisted on talking about Hong Kong, Zhang said: "We will not allow any country or anybody to meddle in the internal affairs of China by any means."

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**British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt calls for 'a robust, independent investigation' into 'violent scenes' during demonstrations (SCMP, June 26):** Britain urged Hong Kong to conduct an independent investigation into clashes between police and protesters, and suspended export licences for crowd control equipment. "We remain very concerned with the situation in Hong Kong," Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt told MPs in parliament's lower House of Commons. "I today urge the Hong Kong SAR government to establish a robust, independent investigation into the violent scenes that we saw. "The outcome of that investigation will inform our assessment of future export licence applications to the Hong Kong police. And we will not issue any further export licences for crowd control equipment to Hong Kong unless we are satisfied that concerns raised on human rights and fundamental freedoms have been thoroughly addressed."

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**Extradition bill protesters hold 'marathon petition', calling at Hong Kong consulates of G20 nations, ahead of Osaka summit (SCMP, June 27):** Hundreds of protesters were out on Wednesday to draw international attention to their campaign against Hong Kong's now-suspended extradition bill, petitioning one foreign consulate after another in a marathon march ahead of the G20 summit in Osaka. About HK\$6.7 million (US\$858,000) was raised in 11 hours by more than 22,000 people on a crowdfunding platform to run advertisements in foreign newspapers in a bid to take the protesters' case to the international community. According to organisers of the fundraising campaign, advertisements will be run in the Financial Times, The New York Times and at least 10 other newspapers in Europe, Asia, Australia and North America in the coming days. The Civil Human Rights Front also hosted the "G20 Free Hong Kong" rally at Edinburgh Place, Central District, to take their case to the international community.

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

**Gay civil servant wins final appeal on spousal benefits for husband in another victory for Hong Kong's LGBT community (SCMP, June 6):** A gay civil servant won his final appeal, ending his long battle to force the Hong Kong government to allow him and his husband spousal benefits and joint tax assessment, in yet another landmark ruling for the city's LGBT community. The judgment – in which the court affirmed that the absence of a prevailing view in society was no reason to deny the rights of a minority – was expected to bring same-sex couples, who had entered into marriage overseas, a tax assessment option they were previously unable to enjoy. Gay and lesbian civil servants would also get spousal benefits, including dental and medical ones, they had been deprived of.

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**How national anthem law is being applied more strictly in Hong Kong than in Beijing (SCMP, June 8):** The national anthem's place in schools has become a hot topic in Hong Kong, as the city's legislature scrutinises a bill which will criminalise any public and deliberate act that insults the song, with penalties of up to HK\$50,000 (US\$6,377) or three years in jail. The bill is expected to be passed by the Legislative Council and take effect later this year. The bill covers primary, secondary, international and

special schools. But while the mainland law is silent about whether international schools are covered, the Hong Kong government has said its proposed law will apply to them too. Some international schools said they were looking closely at what the proposed law would mean for them.

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**Former HKEX executive and two ‘associates’ arrested by corruption watchdog for alleged misconduct when approving two listings (SCMP, June 26):** A former senior executive at Hong Kong’s stock exchange operator, and two of his associates, have been arrested for suspected corruption in approving the listing applications of two companies, according to the Independent Commission Against Corruption ICAC. The arrests came after the ICAC, for the second time in its history, joined forces with the Securities and Futures Commission, Hong Kong’s financial regulator. Hong Kong has been ranked the world’s largest IPO market worldwide six times in the past 10 years.

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**Hong Kong journalist groups rebuke protesters for harassing TVB cameraman at anti-extradition rally (SCMP, June 28):** Hong Kong journalist groups condemned extradition bill protesters for harassing a TVB news cameraman who was covering their rally outside the justice minister’s office compound. The Hong Kong Journalists Association criticised the protesters for a “serious infringement of press freedom”. “We appeal to the people to express views in a rational manner and not to obstruct media reporting, and also to respect the reporting rights of journalists,” the association said in a statement. The TVB network has been unpopular with some activists because the station’s news coverage was perceived to be too conservative – and not critical enough of the government. The Hong Kong News Executives’ Association “strongly condemned” the incident. “Reporting news is the unshirkable duty of journalists, and protesters should not treat reporters roughly when they are performing their duty,” the group said in a statement. Some protesters at the rally reportedly offered an apology to the cameraman.

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## **Health**

**Second case of African swine fever found in pig in Hong Kong, sparking cull of 4,700 animals and closure of slaughterhouse (SCMP, June 1):** A government-owned slaughterhouse will be closed for the second time in a month from May 31 night following the latest case of African swine fever, with 4,700 animals to be culled. Health authorities detected the virus in a dead pig at Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse, health chief Sophia Chan said. The pig had been imported from a farm in Guangdong province. The city’s first case was confirmed three weeks ago, prompting the government to order the cull of 6,500 pigs at Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse to prevent the spread of the virus.

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**Labour secretary says Hong Kong government study into role overwork and exhaustion play in sudden deaths will be released next year (SCMP, June 10):** The findings of a government study looking into how physical exhaustion plays a role in sudden deaths at work will be available next year, Hong Kong’s labour chief revealed as he recognised the problems of long working hours in the city. Secretary for Labour and Welfare Law Chi-kwong said his department had commissioned the Occupational Safety and Health Council to look at cases of city workers dying of cardiovascular or cerebrovascular diseases in the workplace, and explore any links between the deaths and work-induced physical exhaustion. Critics have branded the government’s move long overdue and called for an urgent update of the statute book to strengthen workers’ rights and safety protections.

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**Dangerously high levels of trans fats found in 19 Hong Kong baked goods, posing risk of heart disease, consumer watchdog reveals (SCMP, June 17):** Popular Hong Kong baked products such as puff pastry are loaded with trans fats which could cause coronary heart disease when consumed in excessive amounts, the city’s consumer watchdog has warned. One-quarter of the total baked cakes and puff pastries – or 19 out of 75 products – in the Consumer Council’s study were found to have exceeded the suggested daily consumption of trans fats by the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agricultural Organisation. The test included 75 local food samples such as puff pastry cream soup, tarts, pies, biscuits, and Chinese pastry.

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**Hong Kong Hospital Authority denies leaking data to police after extradition bill protesters arrested in public hospitals (SCMP, June 18):** Hong Kong’s public hospital operator has denied leaking patient data to the police after it emerged that anti-extradition protesters were arrested after seeking medical help in the city-run facilities. The concern over patient privacy came as Dr Pierre Chan presented a photocopy of part of a list he said he received from a health care worker that disclosed the information of 76 patients who were treated in the emergency ward of a public hospital on June 12 and 13. The Hospital Authority, which runs the city’s public hospitals, held a news conference to clarify the

matter, stressing that it had never authorised anyone to print the patients' data for police officers.

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## **Environment**

**Hong Kong braces for cardboard pile-ups as recycling price falls in response to a major factory slashing payments and US-China trade war (SCMP, June 5):** Hong Kong faces a build-up of cardboard on the streets and in landfill with recycling prices set to drop to a new two-decade low, putting the livelihood of frontline workers at risk. A leading paper factory on mainland China has plans to cut the price it pays local waste exporters to HK\$600 (US\$77) per tonne, according to the Hong Kong Recycle Materials and Reproduction Business General Association, amid lower demand for cardboard among Chinese factories caught in the crossfire of the US-China trade war. It said manufacturers making toys, clothes and electrical appliances required fewer packaging boxes and other paper materials amid the ongoing trade dispute between China and the US. The Green Earth said elderly people who usually worked as cardboard pickers might not want to continue their collections given the low rates. As a result, more waste paper would end up in landfill.

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**Millions of oysters on city's coastline could help clean up Hong Kong's polluted waters, according to new marine ecology plan (SCMP, June 24):** A plan to deploy millions of oysters along Hong Kong's coastlines could help clear up the city's waters to nurture a more vibrant ecosystem, according to a proposal by a marine ecologist. A team of researchers from the University of Hong Kong aims to plant between 5 and 10 million oysters within the next three to five years. Education will also be a core component of the project, as students will take part. Oysters, as filter feeders, are natural purifiers, able to remove toxic microscopic algae from the water. A single adult oyster can filter between 200 and 500 litres of water a day. The project could cost at least HK\$100 million (US\$12.8 million) if 10 million oysters are deployed, at a cost of about HK\$10 each.

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**Hong Kong's power plants facing 40 per cent emissions cut as city targets future built on natural gas (SCMP, June 27):** Emission caps for Hong Kong's power plants could be cut by as much as 40 per cent after 2024 when officials hope to generate more than half the city's energy with natural gas to improve air quality. The government has proposed to tighten caps in the electricity sector for three main sources of air pollutants – sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>) and respirable suspended particles (RSP). The new targets would tighten emissions by 40 per cent, 29 per cent and 20 per cent (of SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, RSP) respectively compared to allowances given for 2020. The proposal, submitted to the Legislative Council, will be discussed by lawmakers during a panel on environmental affairs.

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**Pollution in skies over Hong Kong hits seven-year high, despite government report saying emissions in decline (SCMP, June 28):** The concentration of harmful ozone gas in the Pearl River Delta region is at a seven-year high, raising questions over the validity of a Hong Kong government report that suggested there was a general decline in pollution in the city. Annual results from the Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Monitoring Network recorded average ozone concentrations at 58 micrograms per cubic metre last year, the same as in 2017, and the worst since 2011. The network collates data from 23 monitoring stations in Hong Kong, Guangdong, and Macau, and is part of a joint effort by the governments of the three places to improve air quality in the region. While the concentration levels of air pollutants of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and respirable suspended particulates (PM<sub>10</sub>) had decreased by 81 per cent and 36 per cent respectively since 2006, the 2018 ozone concentration levels had gone up by 21 per cent over the same period.

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## **Culture and education**

**Hong Kong extradition bill: education boss Christine Choi condemns teachers and students for plotting classroom boycotts (SCMP, June 11):** Hong Kong's education authority has hit out at teachers and students for planning to strike against the government's controversial extradition proposal. Undersecretary for Education Christine Choi warned them to express their views safely and without disrupting school operations after some teacher and student groups voiced support for class boycotts and joining a rally outside the Legislative Council Complex, when the bill resumes its second reading. The agitation from the education sector is part of what is expected to be a massive strike against the fugitive plans, including more than 2,000 counsellors, carers and therapists from 50 social work organisations and religious groups.

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**Five Hong Kong universities – led by University of Hong Kong – ranked among the world's 100 best tertiary institutes (SCMP, June 19):** Five of Hong Kong's universities have been ranked among

the world's top 100 tertiary institutes – but the same schools were also urged to do more to polish their graduates' "soft skills" to boost their careers, according to the QS World University Rankings 2020. It rated the University of Hong Kong (HKU) as the city's best university, taking 25th place among the 1,000 institutions involved in the survey. The University of Science and Technology (HKUST) went up five places to 32nd, and Chinese University (CUHK) was 46th – up from 49th in the 2019 report. City University (CityU) rose to 52nd from 55th, and Polytechnic University (PolyU) was 91st, making a big jump from 106th last year.

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### **Macau**

**Macau's leadership race could be more interesting than usual, as favourite Ho Iat-seng faces three challengers (SCMP, June 23):** For the first time, four challengers are vying to be chief executive, in what some analysts have called a breakthrough in the democratic development of the former Portuguese enclave, which returned to Chinese rule in 1999. Even so, there is a clear favourite: Ho Iat-seng, a Macau industrialist, is Beijing's candidate and many see his victory as practically a foregone conclusion. The election will be on August 25, when the chief executive will be elected by a 400-member committee dominated by pro-Beijing loyalists. His three opponents are all from outside Macau's so-called small-circle political elite. Leong Kuok-chao is a pro-democracy businessman who ran in legislative polls in 2005 but failed. The other two are newsman-turned-activist Ho Weng-chong, who vowed to root out corruption, and activist Choi Teng-teng, whose platform includes improving welfare and fighting for freedoms.

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### **Press articles related to Switzerland and Swiss matters**

**Swiss investment bank UBS apologises for chief economist's 'Chinese pig' remarks, which sparked outcry online (SCMP, June 13):** A chief economist at UBS Global Wealth Management Paul Donovan and the bank have apologised after making reference to a "Chinese pig", which sparked online criticism. Donovan had attributed higher Chinese consumer prices to "sick pigs". He dismissed the global importance of the price inflation, saying "does this matter? It matters if you are a Chinese pig. It matters if you like eating pork in China. It does not really matter to the rest of the world". The bank subsequently removed the statements from circulation. "We apologise unreservedly for any misunderstanding caused by these innocently intended comments by Paul Donovan," Hong Kong-based spokesman for UBS Mark Panday said. Donovan issued a formal apology on his daily audio commentary. The Chinese Securities Association of Hong Kong, which represents over 100 Chinese securities firms, criticised the apology as insincere. It demanded Donovan be sacked as punishment and UBS's management exercise social and corporate responsibility.

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