



August in Hong Kong

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

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- Ho Iat-seng will be new city leader of Macau, China's gambling hub (SCMP, August 26)

## **Economy + Finance**

**Hong Kong follows US Fed in cutting interest rate for the first time since 2008 as trade war weighs down on world economy (SCMP, August 1):** Hong Kong's monetary authority cut the city's base lending rate for the first time in more than a decade. The city's de facto central bank reduced the base rate by 25 basis points to 2.5 per cent effective August 1, in lockstep with a widely expected cut of the same amount by the US Federal Reserve, the first such move since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority runs its monetary policy in sync with the US Fed to maintain the local currency's peg to the US dollar, in a currency board system since 1983.

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**Hong Kong extradition bill protests and US-China trade war hit city's retail sales in June, down by 6.7 per cent (SCMP, August 1):** Recent unrest in Hong Kong combined with the US-China trade war to deal a heavy blow to city retailers in June, cutting sales totals by 6.7 per cent for the fifth monthly year-on-year decline in a row. Estimated total sales for the month stood at HK\$35.2 billion (US\$4.5 billion), leaving the first half of the year down 2.6 per cent year on year. The government spokesman said the near-term retail performance would probably be subdued, because of the weak global and local economic outlooks and other headwinds weighing on consumer sentiment. "The recent mass demonstrations, if continued, would also dent the retail business further," he warned.

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**Financial Secretary Paul Chan warns that anti-government protests – paired with US-China trade war – could plunge Hong Kong's economy into recession (SCMP, August 6):** Hong Kong's finance chief Paul Chan urged protesters to step back from their destabilising actions, warning that the city's economy could plunge into recession if it continues to be rocked by the global trade war and escalating turmoil in the streets. Hong Kong recorded economic growth of 0.6 per cent year-on-year for the second quarter of 2019. Chan argued, however, that on an adjusted quarter-to-quarter comparison the GDP had in fact decreased by 0.3 per cent. "In other words, Hong Kong's economy is losing its momentum. It would 'technically' fall into economic recession if the negative growth continues in the third quarter," he said. Andy Kwan, director of the ACE Centre for Business and Economic Research, argued that if the government was determined to resolve the current political crisis by addressing the grievances and demands of the protesters the city's economy could easily rebound.

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**Commuters and businesses take hit from Hong Kong's anti-government strike (SCMP, August 6):** An anti-government strike that paralysed transport across Hong Kong not only brought chaos for tens of thousands of commuters but also hit businesses and emergency services in the international financial hub. Shop owners said they suffered a big drop in business. Some 250 flights were cancelled as various airport staff, ranging from flight attendants to air traffic controllers, called in sick in support of the day's action. In Tsim Sha Tsui, a shopping district popular with tourists from mainland China, there were noticeably fewer people on the streets than usual.

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**Hong Kong's summer of discontent could lead to 'chilly winter' for tourism and industry figure fears impact could be worse than Sars outbreak (SCMP, August 9):** A summer of discontent could lead to a "chilly winter" for Hong Kong's tourism sector, industry figures warn, after the city's visitor numbers and hotel occupancy rates suffered a double-digit percentile decline. Commerce secretary Edward Yau said that the drop in tourist arrivals had accelerated from the 1.5 per cent year-on-year decrease in mid-July to 26 per cent by the end of the month. Yau also noted that 22 countries and regions had issued travel advisories for Hong Kong, and conceded there was not much the government could do about that. Travel Industry Council chairman Jason Wong said that from July, 30 to 50 per cent inbound tour bookings from short-haul markets had been cancelled. The European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong expressed "its serious concern on the political impasses over unresolved issues" and said it would continue to monitor the situation.

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**Hong Kong's stockbrokers face a bleak second half as job cuts loom amid shrinking trading volume and dwindling fundraising plans (SCMP, August 11):** Hong Kong's stockbroking industry is making an early entry into a bleak winter, as daily transactions and fundraising shrank amid the combination of a year-long US-China trade war with unprecedented civil unrest. The industry, comprising 27,327 licensed traders in 594 firms, is likely to shrink by at least 10 per cent, beginning with back-office support staff, research and administrative clerks. The financial markets had not been spared the turmoil. Funds raised by initial public offerings (IPOs) in the first seven months dropped 30 per cent to HK\$83.95 billion this year, with three companies shelving US\$11 billion in combined fundraising since June. The average daily turnover of Asia's second-largest stock market shrank 23 per cent in July to HK\$68.7 billion (US\$8.76 billion), compared with last year.

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**Hong Kong protests take toll on city's tourism workers as earnings slump 74 per cent on average over past two months (SCMP, August 13):** The summer boom for Hong Kong's tourism industry has turned into a chilly winter of unemployment and economic hardship described as worse than the 2003 Sars outbreak by trade unions, as two months of worsening civil unrest take their toll. Average earnings for tourism workers plunged by 74 per cent in June and July, while the number of tours in the city also fell 74 per cent on average during the same period year on year, affecting an estimated 99 per cent of workers in the industry. Street protests and violent clashes between police and anti-government protesters have entered their tenth week.

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**Hong Kong still heading for recession even with relief measures announced to counter slowdown and turmoil, economists warn (SCMP, August 16):** Hong Kong will not be able to avoid a recession this year despite the financial chief's basket of help measures to shore up the struggling economy amid the downturn and political turmoil, economists say. Financial Secretary Paul Chan announced HK\$19.1 billion (US\$2.43 billion) worth of relief measures for enterprises and residents, saying they could help boost the economy by 0.3 per cent. Warning of a possible recession in the current July-September quarter, he downgraded the government's gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for the year to anywhere between 0 and 1 per cent, from 2-3 per cent previously. The relief measures come at a time when Hong Kong is reeling from the combined effect of the escalating US-China trade war and internal political and social unrest. Despite the extra budget measures, economists interviewed by the Post remained pessimistic about the city's economic outlook.

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**Hong Kong's economy shrinks worse-than-expected 0.4 per cent in second quarter, signalling looming recession as US-China trade war and other headwinds bite (SCMP, August 17):** Hong Kong's economy shrank a "much worse-than-expected" 0.4 per cent in the second quarter this year from the preceding quarter in revised figures that heralded a looming technical recession, the government said. Government economist Andrew Au attributed the poor performance to the intensifying US-China trade war and technology tensions, subdued economic conditions and various headwinds. Although there was no direct mention of the current unrest rocking the city, he warned that recent local "social incidents" had caused significant disruptions to inbound tourism and consumption-related activities, further dampening economic sentiment and hurting the city's reputation as an international financial and business centre. Chief Executive Carrie Lam said earlier this month that the unrest had played a role in the city's economic woes.

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**Hong Kong's stock market faces a drought of initial public offerings as valuations take a plunge to among the lowest in Asia (SCMP, August 22):** Companies looking to list in Hong Kong have put their initial public offerings (IPOs) on hold amid an annual decline of as much as 40 per cent in the valuations of new share offerings in some cases, making the market Asia's cheapest after Pakistan.

Protests in the special administrative region and the ongoing US-China trade war have rattled investor confidence. The average price to earnings (PE) ratio in Hong Kong currently stands at 10.46 times – its lowest in recent years. HKEX, which has ranked as the top IPO market worldwide six times in the past decade, dropped to third place in the first half of this year. “Many companies still consider Hong Kong the best market for IPOs. They also expect the outlook will turn more positive at the end of this year. That is why they have only held back deals, and are not planning to go elsewhere to list,” said Clement Chan, managing director of accounting firm BDO.

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**Hong Kong’s core industries hammered by anti-government protest crisis with deep drops in retail, tourism and stock market (SCMP, August 23):** Hong Kong’s sweeping political turmoil and destabilising protests have eaten into the city’s core industries, with knock-on effects felt across the tourism, aviation and retail sectors, as well as the job market. Economists raised concerns based on a slow burn of alarming metrics: turnover of the stock market has tumbled more than 25 per cent since June, tourist arrivals are down 30 per cent, hotel prices have been slashed more than 50 per cent – and unemployment is on the rise. Mariana Kou, head of Hong Kong consumer research for investment house CLSA, said the performance of the city’s retail sector was likely to worsen in the third quarter. Unemployment has also edged up. The latest government statistics show the city’s joblessness at 2.9 per cent in May-July, up from 2.8 per cent in April-June. It was the first increase in over a year.

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**Hong Kong exports fall 5.7 per cent as US-China trade war bites (SCMP, August 27):** Hong Kong trade started the second half of the year on a sour note, with exports tumbling 5.7 per cent in July year on year amid the deepening US-China trade war. The government said July’s performance was affected by a softening of global economic growth and US-China trade tensions. “In the face of the difficult external environment and the further escalation of US-mainland trade tensions in September, Hong Kong’s near-term export performance should remain sluggish or may even weaken further,” a government spokesman said. In the first seven months, Hong Kong exports shrank 3.9 per cent while imports decreased 5.1 per cent year on year.

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**Hong Kong Monetary Authority moves to steady ship amid protests, US-China trade war, introduces new funding facility for city’s banks (SCMP, August 27):** Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the city’s de facto central bank, has introduced new ways in which the city’s lenders can borrow from it, a move aimed at strengthening the banking system at a time of unprecedented social unrest. The new measures also enhance the current system banks can use to borrow from the monetary authority should they face an unexpected liquidity crunch. The new resolution facility can be used when the monetary authority takes control of a bank in difficulty. Under this facility, the HKMA will use several channels to inject liquidity into a bank and ensure it has money to settle its dealings with other parties. The facility can last until operations at the bank return to normal. There are three other ways through which banks can get funds from the HKMA, which have been enhanced by the new measures. In the first two facilities – the settlement facility and standby liquidity facility – banks can access overnight funds, or for up to a month, for settlement purposes. The third one, contingent term facility, will be accessed according to lender-of-last-resort arrangements, which will only be used when a bank is facing extraordinary liquidity stress and cannot get funding in the market.

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**New US-China trade war tariffs are ‘total war on commodities’ and will deal another blow to Hong Kong’s brittle economy, city’s commerce chief says (SCMP, August 28):** The US-China trade war has descended into “a total war on commodity trade” and new rounds of tariffs will deal a further blow to Hong Kong’s already fragile economy, the city’s commerce chief Edward Yau warned. Yau said the city’s gross domestic product (GDP) in the third and fourth quarter of 2019 would face even bigger pressure after a new wave of tit-for-tat tariffs were due to take effect on September 1 and October 1. Federation of Hong Kong Industries chairman Daniel Yip said the business body’s members reported a 30 per cent decrease on American orders in the past year and expected very poor sales starting from October. Yau said Washington’s decision to raise and impose tariffs on all Chinese goods meant a total war in terms of commodity trade. Yau said trade between the US and China through Hong Kong accounted for 9 per cent of the city’s total last year.

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**Hong Kong could lose foreign investment if city’s leader gives herself emergency powers to battle protesters, pro-business lawmaker warns (SCMP, August 29):** Invoking sweeping emergency powers to battle the escalating violence of anti-government protests in Hong Kong could see foreign investment pulled out of the city, Liberal Party leader Felix Chung has warned. Chung said if the government did resort to invoking the Emergency Regulations Ordinance, the impact on Hong Kong could be more serious than having clashes between police and protesters every week. “When you

introduce laws we are not familiar with, there may be an evacuation of foreign nationals and the withdrawal of investment,” Chung said.

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### **Domestic politics**

**Presidents of government-funded universities step up calls for Chief Executive Carrie Lam to meet demands of extradition protesters (SCMP, August 1):** Two university presidents have stepped up their calls for Chief Executive Carrie Lam to meet the demands of protesters so Hong Kong society can move beyond the escalating extradition crisis and start healing the city’s deep divisions. Wei Shyy, head of the University of Science and Technology, called on the Lam administration to “demonstrate its courage and leadership to respond and act [to] continuing requests to launch an investigation”. Shyy’s letter coincided with remarks by Professor Stephen Cheung, the head of Education University, who revealed that he had written to Lam and urged her to declare “the complete withdrawal of the bill”, which was another demand of the protesters. Shyy and Cheung, presidents of government-funded universities, spoke days after the president of Lingnan University Leonard Cheng took the unusual step of attend a rally in Yuen Long rally on July 27 as an observer – a gesture seen as showing sympathy to the young protesters.

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**Chinese army’s Hong Kong chief says troops are ready to protect nation’s sovereignty (SCMP, August 1):** The chief of the Chinese military garrison in Hong Kong has spoken for the first time about the ongoing unrest in the city, warning that violent clashes would not be tolerated and that the army was determined to protect China’s sovereignty. Chen Daoxiang, the commander of the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA’s) Hong Kong garrison, made the warning at a reception in Hong Kong celebrating the 92<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Chinese military on July 31. Chen said the garrison resolutely supported Hong Kong’s Chief Executive Carrie Lam and the city’s police in maintaining law and order. The Hong Kong government said earlier that the city was fully capable of dealing with its own affairs and maintaining public order, and there was no need for help from the garrison.

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**Hong Kong voter registration skyrockets to biggest gain since at least 2003 – with huge increase driven by ‘dissatisfaction’ over extradition bill crisis (SCMP, August 2):** The number of registered voters between the ages of 18 and 35 has jumped more than 12 per cent from last year – the surge resulting from hundreds of thousands of young Hongkongers signing up to vote amid the extradition bill crisis. Nearly 386,000 people have registered to vote in the past year – the most since at least 2003 – bringing the number of voters in the city to 4.12 million. “Most of these newly registered voters – despite not being all young – are dissatisfied by the government’s handling of the bill,” said Dr Cheung Chor-yung, a political scientist at City University. “They could make a fairly huge impact in the upcoming elections if they are determined to vote out the conservative candidates.”

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**Andy Chan, founder of banned Hong Kong National Party, among eight arrested in raid, while family of three detained over smoke bombs in separate operation (SCMP, August 2):** Hong Kong police arrested the founder of a banned pro-independence group during a raid on an industrial building while in a separate operation, a family of three was detained after dozens of smoke bombs were found in their home. Andy Chan, founder of the outlawed Hong Kong National Party, was among eight arrested in Sha Tin. The group comprised seven men and a woman, detained over offences including possession of explosives without licence, possession of offensive weapons, and selling poisons without licence.

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**Chief Executive Carrie Lam’s reframing of battle with protesters as about sovereignty will fuel anger, observers and pro-Beijing lawmakers warn (SCMP, August 6):** The move by Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam to define the recent unrest in the city as an attack on Beijing’s sovereignty could escalate already heightened tensions between the government and its opponents, political observers have warned. One analyst said Lam’s comments – her first in public in two weeks – would only fan the flames of discontent, and would do little to end the weeks of protests, most of which are increasingly violent. Lam said she would not accept any of the protesters’ demands, such as for her to resign and for a commission of inquiry into the clashes between demonstrators and police that have roiled the city since early June. Some Beijing loyalists were also unimpressed by Lam’s press conference, which did not offer a way out of the current crisis. Ann Chiang, a lawmaker from the pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB), wrote that Lam had raised a lot of issues at the press conference but did not come up with any solutions. Claudia Mo, convenor of the pan-democratic camp in the Legislative Council, said Lam had to be held accountable if Hong Kong became dragged down a “path of no return”, a phrase used by Lam. Mo said Lam was responsible for the damage to society, which the city leader had instead pinned on protesters.

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**Anti-government protesters unleash chaos across Hong Kong in unprecedented citywide rampage (SCMP, August 6):** Defiant protesters unleashed chaos and violence across Hong Kong in an unprecedented escalation of radical action against the government and police, even as the city's embattled leader toughened her stance and warned that they had gone beyond protests to attack the nation's sovereignty. After calling a citywide strike aimed at crippling traffic and daily business, protesters throughout the day and into the night besieged some police stations. More than 80 people were arrested. Asked if Chief Executive Carrie Lam, or any member of her cabinet, would take responsibility for the social unrest and step down, Lam insisted she would not resign, especially when Hong Kong's future was at stake.

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**'Liberate Hong Kong; revolution of our times': Who came up with this protest chant and why is the government worried? (SCMP, August 6):** When pro-independence activist Edward Leung first declared his election slogan "Liberate Hong Kong; revolution of our times" in 2016, not many could relate to it, let alone understand what it meant. But over the past week, the rallying cry of the now-jailed student leader has become the most commonly heard chant in the city. "They ... called for a revolution to liberate Hong Kong. These actions challenge national sovereignty, threaten 'one country, two systems', and will destroy the city's prosperity and stability," Chief Executive Carrie Lam said. But political scientist Dr Ma Ngok, of Chinese University, said the slogan itself was vague and open to different interpretations. He said people opted for the term "revolution" because they felt Lam's administration had already lost its moral basis to govern. Some also felt they were indebted to Edward Leung because of his jail term (now serving a six-year jail term over his role in the 2016 Mong Kok riot), as well as those protesters who were charged with rioting over recent protests, he added.

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**Defend your home against radical protesters, Beijing urges Hongkongers amid ongoing extradition bill unrest (SCMP, August 7):** Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) has made clear it will be up to the city itself to restore law and order upended by two months of anti-government protests, and appealed to citizens to stand up against radical protesters to defend their home or face the consequences of endless violence and chaos. HKMAO spokesman Yang Guang warned that the central government would not tolerate any attempt to separate the city from China. Yang also made it clear the People's Liberation Army (PLA) would not look on if Hong Kong's protest crisis escalated beyond the local government's control, even though Beijing was firmly behind Chief Executive Carrie Lam's embattled administration and the city's police, and was confident they were fully capable of restoring public order. Opposition lawmaker Helena Wong of the Democratic Party said she feared Beijing had misjudged the situation and added fuel to the fire. "We are not challenging national sovereignty," she said. But Lau Siu-kai, vice-chairman of The Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macau Studies, a semi-official think tank, said: "The central government needs to weigh in when the city's internal conflict has evolved into an attack on Beijing."

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**Protests are like 'colour revolution' threatening Hong Kong with abyss, top Beijing official warns amid 'worst crisis since 1997 handover' (SCMP, August 8):** Beijing's top official overseeing Hong Kong affairs has denounced the anti-government protests sweeping the city as bearing the "obvious characteristics of a colour revolution" and warned that the worst crisis since the handover to Chinese sovereignty could not be resolved by bowing to protesters' demands. Zhang Xiaoming, director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO), put the emphasis on ending the protest chaos and violence that began two months ago. "The most pressing and overriding task at present is to stop violence, end the chaos and restore order, so as to safeguard our homeland and prevent Hong Kong from sinking into an abyss," Zhang said. Laying out these priorities before 500 of Hong Kong's top business leaders and pro-Beijing politicians at a seminar in neighbouring Shenzhen, he called on allies of Chief Executive Carrie Lam's embattled government to do their part in safeguarding Hong Kong's prosperity and stability. Speaking at the same event, Wang Zhimin, director of Beijing's liaison office, warned that the crisis gripping Hong Kong was a "battle of life and death", with the city's future at stake. Zhang warned that if the protest crisis escalated beyond the local government's control, Beijing would not sit by and watch. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) could be deployed to restore law and order, while national laws could also apply in a state of emergency.

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**Hong Kong's justice department denies prosecution of protesters is politically motivated, as 3,000 of city's legal profession take part in second silent march (SCMP, August 8):** Thousands of legal professionals in Hong Kong took part in a second silent march in two months, to voice their discontent at the "political prosecution" of anti-government protesters. "Why are the assailants who attacked citizens yet to be prosecuted, while the young protesters are charged with rioting?" said legal sector lawmaker Dennis Kwok. The group also called on the government to formally withdraw the now-

abandoned extradition bill, and launch an independent inquiry into the whole political crisis. In response to the march and rally, a justice department spokesman said Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng, Director of Public Prosecutions David Leung and the prosecution team had discharged their duties fairly and without prejudice or favour, so as to safeguard criminal justice.

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**Hong Kong's anti-government protesters versus the police: understanding the psychology of hate (SCMP, August 12):** What began as a protest against the controversial and now-shelved extradition bill has metastasised into deep anger and hatred towards the police force, the government's bogeyman as the administration refuses to accommodate any of the protesters' demands. The clashes have become almost routinised, with protesters provoking the police and the force responding with tear gas, beanbag rounds and rubber bullets to disperse them. By July 21 and many clashes later, another turning point came for the protesters when a white-shirted mob attacked passengers and protesters in Yuen Long MTR station. Police had failed to show up in time, and worse, video clips quickly circulated showing police vehicles in the same area when the men were gathering. If ever they needed evidence of police indifference or even collusion, the incident offered protesters incontrovertible proof which they capitalised on to win over those who might have otherwise sided with police. The antipathy has spread across the city and split society into two camps, among colleagues, friends and even within families. The atmosphere of hate is much worse than the pro-democracy Occupy movement, and the healing might take years, they warn. Complicating the situation further is a perceptible shift in Hongkongers' attitudes towards aggression. Where before they were known for their peaceful demonstrations, analysts and surveys suggest they now have a greater tolerance towards the use of force. As the protests have dragged on, hostilities between the two blocs – and also the use of violence – have intensified.

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**Hong Kong protesters cripple airport as Beijing raises stakes with 'terrorism' warning (SCMP, August 13):** Thousands of anti-government protesters crippled Hong Kong International Airport on August 12 and forced the cancellation of all flights in an unprecedented disruption, even as Beijing raised the stakes by warning that escalating protest violence against police in particular was displaying "signs of terrorism". Airport officials said they hoped to resume flights from 6am on August 13, after more than 180 departures were cancelled. The impact was severe on one of the world's busiest airports, which handles 800 flights a day. Many wore eye patches in a show of solidarity with a protester who was hit in the eye by a beanbag round that they say was fired by riot police, although the force said it could not identify the exact cause after watching news and online footage. Weeks of protest violence, including repeated arson attacks on police stations, prompted the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office to characterise it as "budding shoots of terrorism", taking its condemnation to a new level. But police played down Beijing's characterisation, with Senior Superintendent Steve Li saying: "Based on the current situation, we will handle it as violent protest." Hong Kong was rocked by some of the worst violence on August 11, with police using tougher tactics as protesters rampaged across several districts. Academic Eric Cheung, a former member of a police watchdog, said the use of force by police at the two train stations could be potentially criminal if it went against guidelines.

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**Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam fights back tears as she warns protesters they are pushing city 'into an abyss' (SCMP, August 13):** Hong Kong's leader has warned protesters they are pushing the city "into an abyss" by attacking its institutions, in what she called attempts to "destroy the rule of law". Lam said: "Hong Kong is seriously wounded. It will take a long time to recover." She asked protesters whether they wanted to "push Hong Kong into an abyss". Lam said she was worried about the city's international image. But she brushed aside questions about whether she would resign. She declined to say if police had done anything wrong over the past two months. She also declined to say if Beijing had been stopping her from meeting protesters' demands, such as fully withdrawing the now-shelved extradition bill, and appointing a judge-led commission to look into the whole controversy. Lawmaker Claudia Mo, convenor of the pro-democracy camp, said Lam's reluctance to answer the question was tantamount to confirming Beijing was running the city. Separately, 40 pro-Beijing lawmakers issued a joint statement to support the police, saying the force was stopping violence and chaos in the city.

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**Court order bans protests at Hong Kong airport, apart from designated areas, as airlines in recovery mode after demonstration chaos (SCMP, August 14):** Demonstrations are banned at Hong Kong International Airport apart from in designated areas under an injunction obtained by the Airport Authority, as protest-stricken airlines scrambled to return services to normal. The airport was in recovery mode after anti-government demonstrations the day before grounded flights as the protests brought unprecedented violence to one of the world's busiest passenger hubs. Travellers were stranded at Hong Kong International Airport for the third day in a row. A group of demonstrators detained and assaulted a young man they suspected was an undercover agent from mainland China at the check-in area, with



riot police moving in. Another man from mainland China, later confirmed to be a reporter for mainland news outlet Global Times, was also surrounded and assaulted.

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**Chinese diplomats warn Beijing ‘won’t sit on its hands’ if Hong Kong spirals out of control (SCMP, August 16):** Liu Xiaoming, Chinese ambassador to Britain, said that the central government would have to act if the situation became “uncontrollable” and “would not sit on its hands and watch”. “We have enough solutions and enough power within the limit of the Basic Law to quell any unrest swiftly,” Liu said. His comments came just hours after a group of legal analysts told a press conference in Beijing organised by the State Council that the city’s Basic Law has provisions that would allow for the deployment of Chinese military forces within Hong Kong. “We hope this will end in an orderly way. In the meantime we are fully prepared for the worst,” Liu said, adding that “extremists masquerading as democracy protesters are dragging Hong Kong down a dangerous road”.

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**Hong Kong protests see sharp rise in number of residents wanting to move to Taiwan (SCMP, August 18):** Taiwan is speeding up the processing of applications from Hongkongers who want to move to the island after seeing a sharp rise in requests since the start of the protests two months ago. The island has been one of the most popular destinations for those looking to leave the city amid growing concerns for its future. According to Taiwan’s National Immigration Agency, the number of Hongkongers applying to come to the island has nearly doubled in the past 10 years, from 3,677 in 2009 to 6,556 in 2018. Between June and July, the agency received 681 applications to stay on the island, 636 of which were approved – an increase of 45.5 and 57.4 per cent respectively.

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**Three nights of tear gas-free protests as Hong Kong’s anti-government movement gives peace a chance (SCMP, August 19):** Hundreds of thousands of anti-government protesters braved torrential rains on August 18 as they marched along the main thoroughfares of Hong Kong Island, determined to show the movement could regain its peaceful moorings despite the recent escalation of violence. Hong Kong recorded three straight days of demonstrations that ended with no physical clashes between protesters and police, in a break from the troubling pattern of the past few weeks, which had prompted condemnation from the central and local governments. Organisers from the Civil Human Rights Front estimated 1.7 million people were at the core of the march. In a change of tone, a government spokesman this time did not use the word “condemn” and described the rally as “generally peaceful”. “The most important thing currently is to restore social order as soon as possible. The government will begin sincere dialogue with the public, mend social rifts and rebuild social harmony when everything has calmed down,” the spokesman said.

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**Hong Kong protests: city’s leader Carrie Lam commits to ‘creating a platform for dialogue’ but again dismisses calls for independent inquiry into police conduct (SCMP, August 20):** Hong Kong’s embattled leader offered to create a platform for dialogue to end nearly three months of anti-government protests, but she again rejected widespread calls for an independent investigation into police conduct and a formal withdrawal of the now-abandoned extradition bill that sparked the political crisis. Ivan Choy, a political scientist at Chinese University, said he doubted the effectiveness of Lam’s approach, pointing out that protesters who wanted their demands met might see it as a delaying tactic. As for investigating police conduct, Lam insisted the force’s watchdog was best positioned to do the job, and more members might be appointed to the IPCC in light of its heavy workload, with overseas experts being called in to offer advice. Lam once again ruled out a full withdrawal of the extradition bill, but said there was “no plan to revive this, especially in light of the public’s concern”. Democratic Party chairman Wu Chi-wai said Lam’s proposals would not stem the protests. “The platform has no statutory status and how are you going to build credibility for it?” he said.

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**Chief Executive Carrie Lam pressed by range of Hong Kong leaders to meet top demands of anti-government protesters, sources say (SCMP, August 25):** Nineteen city power brokers and politicians gathered at the official residence of Chief Executive Carrie Lam to brainstorm about how to broker a dialogue with those behind Hong Kong’s crippling anti-government protest crisis. The Post has learned that more than half of the guests Lam invited urged her to meet protesters’ demands to launch a public inquiry into the turmoil, including police conduct, and completely withdraw the reviled extradition bill. Among the guests were former chief secretary Henry Tang, former president of the legislature Jasper Tsang and former vice-chancellor of Chinese University Joseph Sung. Most of Lam’s cabinet was also at the meeting. Three sources with knowledge of the meeting said Lam made clear she had not given a definitive “no” to the suggestions, but she also hedged about timing, tone and tactics.

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**Police officer fires gun, water cannon used for first time on protesters in Hong Kong (SCMP, August 26):** A gunshot was fired on August 25 and water cannon were deployed for the first time in Hong Kong's increasingly violent anti-government protests. No one was injured by the gunshot. It was the first time a gun had been discharged since the protests triggered by the now-shelved extradition bill began 12 weeks ago. Superintendent Leung Kwok-wing confirmed the incident, saying the warning shot was fired because "officers' lives were under threat". Water cannon were also used as riot police battled protesters who turned violent after a peaceful and lawful rally earlier in the day. A government spokesman said it severely condemned the escalating violence of the protesters, which would push Hong Kong to the verge of a very dangerous situation. The police will seriously take enforcement actions.  
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**Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam leaves door open on invoking sweeping emergency powers to deal with violent anti-government protests (SCMP, August 28):** Hong Kong's embattled leader Carrie Lam signalled her readiness to get tough in quelling violent anti-government protests, declaring that her administration would consider all the city's laws, including those granting her sweeping emergency powers. Her suggestion, however, fuelled concerns she would imminently invoke the powerful emergency law, a move two members of her cabinet cautioned against, while legal experts warned it could deal a blow to the city's rule of law. A government source later told the Post that the administration would not rule out the option, but stressed that it had not been formally discussed. The Emergency Regulations Ordinance, which would not need the approval of the legislature, grant a wide range of powers, including on arrests, detentions and deportations, the control of ports and all transport, the appropriation of property, and authorising the entry and search of premises and the censorship and suppression of publications and communications.  
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**Hundreds gather in Central to protest against Cathay Pacific's sacking of cabin crew union leader Rebecca Sy – who says she was fired over Facebook posts (SCMP, August 29):** Hundreds of demonstrators gathered in Central to support a cabin crew union leader Rebecca Sy who was fired by Cathay Pacific and to protest against the airline's alleged treatment of employees linked to the protest movement. At least 20 aviation professionals had been sacked or had resigned after Beijing exerted pressure on companies to crack down on the anti-government movement sweeping the city. The Confederation of Trade Unions (CTU) has accused Cathay Pacific of intimidating its staff and making some fear for their jobs. Hong Kong's biggest airline Cathay Pacific and its subsidiaries have warned their staff members to avoid protests or face disciplinary action, including dismissal. Employees had also been warned about their social media accounts and online presence.  
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**Police will ban mass rally and march on August 31 to call for universal suffrage on fifth anniversary of failed Hong Kong electoral reform package, sources say (SCMP, August 29):** Hong Kong police will ban a rally and march on August 31 by the organiser of three record-breaking mass protests over the past two months, citing heightened safety concerns after last weekend's escalation of violence, the South China Morning Post has learned. The Civil Human Rights Front would be informed of its application's rejection, a police source said. The move was likely to spark more chaos and turmoil over the weekend, given the symbolic import of the event. It was scheduled to mark the fifth anniversary of the announcement of a restrictive electoral reform package by Beijing that was eventually rejected by Hong Kong. The rally and march were supposed to call for genuine universal suffrage, organisers said, rather than having pre-vetted candidates for chief executive, and to reiterate the five key demands of the anti-government protests of the past two months. The front had originally planned to gather at Chater Garden in Central and march to the liaison office, Beijing's representative body in the city. "Both the rally and the march will be objected to. The risk is too big. You can see the number of petrol bombs the protesters threw last weekend," the source said.  
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**Can Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam issue an emergency edict? Yes, but the legislature needs to approve it (SCMP, August 30):** Hong Kong lawmakers will have the final say on any potential regulations emanating from the use of emergency powers, a Post review has found, but these will have to wait until after the legislature is back in session in mid-October. Embattled Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam has not ruled out issuing a directive under the Emergency Regulations Ordinance as the city entered the 81st day of unrest, surpassing the 79 days of the Occupy protests in 2014. The legislation would confer upon the administration very broad powers, if Lam eventually decided the prevailing situation in the city could be one "of emergency or public danger". Local authorities could have the power to arrest, detain, censor media and amend or suspend any laws in operation. In a response to the Post, the Security Bureau confirmed the regulation was a subsidiary legislation that needed Legco approval.  
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## International relations

**China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi accuses US of 'fanning the fires' of Hong Kong extradition bill protest (SCMP, August 2):** China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi accused the United States and other Western countries of "fanning the fires" of unrest in Hong Kong by supporting "violent radicals" who seek to destabilise the city. Yang, the highest-ranking Chinese official to publicly weigh in on the escalating protests triggered by a controversial proposed extradition bill, demanded through the official Xinhua news agency that the US "immediately stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs in any form". Yang is a member of the Communist Party's top decision-making body, the Politburo, and head of the Central Leading Group on Foreign Affairs. On July 31, former Hong Kong chief executive Tung Chee-hwa, who is now a vice-chairman of China's top political advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, blamed the US and Taiwan for serving as the "masterminds" of the city's unrest.

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**China's envoys try to rally Europe to Beijing's side on Hong Kong protests (SCMP, August 8):** China is stepping up its attempts to rally global support for its handling of protests in Hong Kong, with its ambassadors in Europe calling for condemnation of the violence in the city. In a series of statements, Chinese envoys to Britain, the Netherlands and Spain have added their voices to a global campaign to promote Beijing's line on the demonstrations. Liu Xiaoming, China's ambassador to Britain, said ending violence in Hong Kong was a "top priority" for the city. After a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Thailand, British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said "peaceful protest is a basic right and should be respected". In the Netherlands, Chinese ambassador Xu Hong criticised "the United States and other countries" for failing to denounce violent protesters, and for "supporting troublemakers, [which] fuels the deterioration of the situation". And in Spain, Chinese ambassador Lyu Fan took aim at Britain, saying "Hong Kong is no longer a colony under the orders of British politicians".

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**US government increases travel warning for Hong Kong, telling its citizens to exercise caution due to civil unrest and steer clear of protest areas (SCMP, August 9):** The US Department of State raised its travel advisory on the city to level two, asking the public to "exercise increased caution in Hong Kong due to civil unrest". It puts the city on the same level as mainland China, Britain and Sri Lanka. It advised US citizens travelling to Hong Kong to monitor local media for updates, avoid areas of the demonstrations and exercise caution if they were in the vicinity of large gatherings or protests. The Australian government on August 6 also raised its advice level for Hong Kong, warning its citizens in the city to "exercise a high degree of caution".

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**China says US is using 'gangster logic' after Washington calls Beijing a 'thuggish regime' (SCMP, August 9):** China hit back at the United States, accusing Washington of applying "gangster logic" after an official described Beijing as a "thuggish regime". The US accused the Chinese government of being behind the leak of a Hong Kong-based US diplomat Julie Eadeh's personal information, after a pro-Beijing newspaper disclosed details of the official's private life. Eadeh met Hong Kong pro-democracy activists including student leader Joshua Wong. Foreign ministry commissioner's office in Hong Kong lodged a formal complaint with the US consulate in Hong Kong over the meeting, urging Washington to make a "clean break" from anti-China forces that stirred up trouble in the city. US State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus objected "to the Chinese saying they issued a formal protest when in fact they harassed an American diplomat". She said meetings between diplomats and local political figures were the established protocol of the US foreign service.

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**Canada's Justin Trudeau extremely concerned about Hong Kong, urges China to be careful (SCMP, August 13):** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that he was very worried about events in Hong Kong, which has a large Canadian population, and urged Chinese authorities to handle the protests there with tact. His comments were the most expansive yet by a senior Canadian official about anti-government protests that have swept Hong Kong over the past two months. His remarks came as US Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell warned China that any violent crackdown on protests in the city would be "completely unacceptable", while Trump administration officials urged all sides to refrain from violence. Increasingly violent demonstrations in Hong Kong have plunged the Chinese-ruled territory into crisis, presenting Chinese leader Xi Jinping with one of his biggest popular challenges and raising fears of direct intervention by Beijing.

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**US Congress support for Hong Kong protests adds to pressure on White House to take firmer stance towards Chinese government (SCMP, August 16):** A growing tide of US bipartisan support for pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong has raised the pressure on the White House to act in the event of a crackdown – including the threat of removing the city's special trade status. US President Donald

Trump urged his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping to resolve the situation “humanely” after growing criticism of his previous comments – including the acceptance of Beijing’s characterisation of the protests as “riots”. As tensions escalate in Hong Kong, US politicians have renewed calls to pass the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. The bipartisan legislation would require the White House to carry out an annual review to determine whether Hong Kong’s special trade status, which allows it to be recognised as a separate customs territory to mainland China, can still be justified.

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**US President Donald Trump says a Tiananmen Square-style crackdown in Hong Kong would harm trade deal with China (SCMP, August 19):** US President Donald Trump warned China that carrying out a Tiananmen Square-style crackdown on Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters would harm trade talks between the two countries. Trump’s comments came as Washington and Beijing look to revive pivotal talks aimed at ending their trade war. Chinese state media has run images of military personnel and armoured personnel carriers in Shenzhen, across the border from the semi-autonomous city. In the bloody 1989 crackdown in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, China deployed tanks to end student-led protests. If such a situation was repeated in Hong Kong, “I think there’d be ... tremendous political sentiment not to do something,” Trump said, referring to the trade negotiations with China. Analysts say any intervention in Hong Kong by Chinese security forces would be a disaster for China’s reputation and economy.

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**Canadian consulate in Hong Kong halts mainland China visits after Simon Cheng detention (SCMP, August 23):** The Canadian consulate in Hong Kong has suspended all work travel including to mainland China for local staff, after a British consulate employee was detained at the border while returning from neighbouring Shenzhen on a business trip. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China respected the Canadian consulate’s choice but warned those who harboured ill intent would become anxious and fearful and feel the need to “be extra careful in China”. China’s foreign ministry confirmed that Simon Cheng, a Hong Kong national who works as a trade and investment officer for the British consulate, had been placed under administration detention for 15 days in Shenzhen. Global Times, a nationalist tabloid published under the auspices of Communist Party mouthpiece People’s Daily, reported that Cheng had been detained for soliciting prostitutes, which is illegal on the mainland.

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**China accuses G7 countries of ‘meddling’ in Hong Kong affairs (SCMP, August 28):** Beijing has condemned “irresponsible comments” by the G7 leaders, who made reference to Hong Kong in a joint statement at the end of their meeting in France. China also accused the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US of having “ulterior motives” and of meddling in Hong Kong affairs, after they expressed “deep concern” about the situation in the city. The joint statement said: “The G7 reaffirms the existence and the importance of the 1984 Sino-British agreement on Hong Kong and calls for avoiding violence.” China’s foreign affairs spokesman Geng Shuang said Hong Kong was an internal matter for China and foreign nations had no right to interfere. “Regarding the Sino-British Joint Declaration, I would like to stress once again that the ultimate purpose and core content of the joint declaration is to confirm that China will resume its sovereignty over Hong Kong. No country or organisation has the right to intervene in Hong Kong affairs by making use of the Sino-British Joint Declaration,” he said. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the G7 countries had “expressed, collectively, deep concern about what is happening in Hong Kong,” adding that the leaders remained “collectively committed to the ‘one country, two systems’ framework.”

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

**Hong Kong anti-fraud squad intercepts nearly HK\$1.3 billion from online and phone scams – half the swindled cash that has moved through city in 2019 (SCMP, August 6):** More than HK\$2.6 billion (US\$331 million) from nearly 830 victims of internet and phone scams has been transferred in and out of Hong Kong bank accounts in the first half of 2019. Half of the illegal money moving through the city was intercepted by officers of the Anti-Deception Coordination Centre. The remaining HK\$1.3 billion was pocketed by international fraudsters. Force insiders said the defrauded money was usually laundered through several “layers” of bank accounts before being channelled out of the city – generally in less than 24 hours.

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**Hong Kong’s legal reputation still intact, say Singapore-based lawyers (SCMP, August 12):** Ongoing anti-government protests in Hong Kong have raised eyebrows in Singapore’s legal community, leaving some lawyers concerned about the impact on the city as a legal centre. British Queen’s Counsel Toby Landau, who serves as an arbitrator in Singapore, said the situation in Hong Kong was damaging in terms of perception of judicial independence and this could play to Singapore’s advantage. Another

senior lawyer, a partner in a major Singapore law firm, remained confident in the city. "Protests like this were common in the United States and Europe yet their reputation for strong rule of law remains intact," he said. "The same should apply to Hong Kong." Singapore and Hong Kong have been competing to be the leading dispute resolution centre in Asia, closely following each other's policies.

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**Hong Kong privacy watchdog refers 600 cases of doxxing to police (SCMP, August 29):** The Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD) said it had received 683 complaints of "doxxing", the practice of posting a person's private data online, and cyberbullying, as well as 85 inquiries as of August 28. It had transferred 608 cases to the police. "The doxxing and leaks are large-scale and have started to form a trend, with some cases even involving threats and causing the victim psychological harm," privacy commissioner Stephen Wong said. More than 70 per cent of the cases involved police officers and their families, including threats against their children, he said. The cases were referred to police because the PCPD lacked the authority to prosecute cases, Wong said. "All the cases referred to police involve all types of victim, not just the police," he said.

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**Thousands gather at #MeToo rally to demand Hong Kong police answer accusations of sexual violence against protesters (SCMP, August 29):** Thousands gathered at Chater Garden to demand answers from Hong Kong police over alleged instances of sexual violence during extradition bill protests. "In the name of law enforcement, police are using sexual violence as an instrument of intimidation," said Linda Wong, spokeswoman for the Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities, the organiser of the event. "The coalition resolutely demands the police force seriously investigate and make accountable acts of sexual violence committed by officers during the anti-extradition bill protests." The coalition estimated that the rally was attended by 30,000 people. The police said 11,500 people took part in the rally at its peak.

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## **Health**

**Hospital Authority strengthens control measures against superbug Candida auris after Hong Kong outbreak (SCMP, August 12):** The Hospital Authority has stepped up control measures in the fight against deadly superbug Candida auris after a month-long outbreak in Hong Kong hospitals. The multidrug-resistant fungal species has been increasingly prevalent around the world since 2009, with 16 cases recorded in the city in a breakout earlier this summer. In response to the recent outbreak, the Hospital Authority has strengthened its control measures, including screening all patients who had been admitted to hospital overseas in the past year and were going to stay in high-risk wards such as intensive care units and clinical oncology. There have also been laboratory upgrades to improve the identification and speciation of the pathogen.

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**Hong Kong health authorities aim to introduce HIV self-testing kit by end of year to make diagnosis more accessible (SCMP, August 28):** People could start ordering HIV self-testing kits from a website under Hong Kong health authorities by the end of this year at the earliest. Between April and June, the city recorded 137 new HIV infections and 33 cases of Aids, which is caused by the virus. Hong Kong has recorded some 9,998 HIV infections since 1984, when the virus was first detected in the city. There have been 2,051 Aids cases since 1985. "We have to make HIV tests very accessible," Dr Kenny Chan, a special preventive programme consultant at the Centre for Health Protection, said.

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**Half of Hong Kong youngsters who sought help for emotional problems related to anti-government protests suffer from depression, study finds (SCMP, August 29):** Half of the young people who sought help from a youth group on problems relating to the ongoing anti-extradition bill protests suffered from depression, with some giving up goals to enter a university or find a good job. The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups released its report and revealed secondary school heads, social workers and psychologists were working together to provide support to students suffering from problems related to the protests. The group is also imparting relevant training to teachers and other members of school staff to help students with emotional problems over the protests from the coming academic year.

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## **Environment**

**Most Hong Kong residents oppose government's new air-quality proposals, survey finds (SCMP, August 2):** More than 70 per cent of Hongkongers interviewed in a survey are not satisfied with the government's proposed tightening of the city's five-year air-quality goals. While the proposal lowered the maximum amount of two pollutants allowed in the air per day, the government's move to raise the number of times that limit could be exceeded in a year would "drastically increase public health risks", a

local pollution watchdog and other green groups said. The proposal was approved by the Advisory Council on the Environment in March despite criticism from local watchdogs and is now open for a three-month public consultation, which will conclude on October 11.

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**Greenpeace survey finds major Hong Kong supermarkets inconsistent in use of plastic wrapping for produce (SCMP, August 10):** Hong Kong's supermarkets are inconsistent in their use of plastic wrapping for produce across their stores and even add extra layers to existing packaging from suppliers, environmental watchdog Greenpeace has found. The findings were made after Greenpeace ran a survey in April which revealed 70 per cent consumers preferred shopping in plastic-free supermarkets. In June, the green group followed up with a survey on the use of plastic wrap for fresh produce and cooked foods. At least half of more than 12,100 products analysed had packaging added in store. The same supermarket chain may use different amounts of plastic wrap for the same product in various store locations, while some may even have left the product unwrapped.

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**Hong Kong biologist warns about dangers of reclamation after discovering new species of fireworm on city islet (SCMP, August 28):** A new species of fireworm has been discovered in Hong Kong by a team of biologists, becoming the 28th species of the creature found across the world. "The government should also exercise more prudence in major development planning like reclamation. Otherwise, many species might become extinct before they are found," Professor Qiu Jianwen, who led a team of biologist from Baptist University, said and noted the discovery which reflected the rich biodiversity of the city. The newly discovered fireworm species will officially become the 28th found across the world – and the fourth in the past 100 years. Qiu named the species *Chloeia bimaculata*, combining its genus *Chloeia* and the characteristics of its appearance.

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#### **Culture and education**

**Tycoon Li Ka-shing donates HK\$500 million to Hong Kong University of Science and Technology for new synthetic biology research lab (SCMP, August 16):** Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-shing has made a HK\$500 million (US\$64.1 million) donation to a local university to build the city's first synthetic biology institute. The research facility will be established at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). A spokesman for the university said the institute would provide advanced facilities for the world's top scholars, bidding to make Hong Kong a global pioneer in biotechnology. HKUST said the new lab would "first develop scientific infrastructure and technologies to integrate genetic engineering with artificial intelligence".

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**Hong Kong University of Science and Technology nets HK\$45 million in mainland Chinese funding under Greater Bay Area (SCMP, August 20):** More than HK\$45 million in research funds from mainland China are making their way to a Hong Kong university in the first cross-border grants for scientific collaboration within the Greater Bay Area. Recipients at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) said demonstration of knowledge in national policies and fulfilling key industrial needs were ways to stand out among applicants. The grants come six months after Beijing rolled out a Greater Bay Area blueprint to turn nine cities in Guangdong province, plus Macau and Hong Kong, into a world-class cluster for technology and innovation to rival Silicon Valley by 2035. Under the scheme, universities and research institutions in Hong Kong and Macau can apply for research funds provided by authorities in Guangdong province and the nine cities.

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**Education Bureau to check with universities on class boycotts but will allow institutions to decide how to deal with planned mass action by Hong Kong students (SCMP, August 21):** Hong Kong's education authorities will check with schools about the number of students and teachers who fail to show up when classes resume next month as guidelines are issued to schools on how to deal with a looming class boycott. Education minister Kevin Yeung stressed that the authorities had the responsibility to grasp a general picture of how the boycott campaign was going in schools and would leave it to individual schools to decide if punishment was needed. While university students are still finalising the format and duration of their strike, Demosisto called for a class boycott by secondary school students every Monday. The Professional Teachers' Union, the city's biggest teachers group, said the union respected the students' plan but there was no plan to mobilise teachers to strike.

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**Hong Kong anti-government protests: class boycott organisers claim support of thousands (SCMP, August 30):** Up to 10,000 students from close to 200 Hong Kong secondary schools could walk out of classes on Sept. 2, as the new term begins against a backdrop of continuing street protests. Elsewhere, students at 10 universities will organise a boycott, starting with a sit-in at Chinese University

on Sept. 2, followed by a series of lectures held across campuses under the principle of “boycotting classes but not education”. As the class strike movement mushroomed, Secretary for Education Kevin Yeung called on students to refrain from joining the boycott, saying that schools should be free from political interference.

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### **Macau**

**Ho Iat-seng will be new city leader of Macau, China’s gambling hub (SCMP, August 26):** Ho Iat-seng was elected uncontested as Macau’s chief executive by a 400-strong committee comprised mostly of pro-Beijing elites. He received 392 out of 400 votes. After the results were announced, Ho pledged to “safeguard the prosperity and social stability” of the city. Ho, a businessman, will be sworn in as the next Macau chief executive on December 20. Macau, one of two Chinese special administrative regions, has so far avoided the domestic turmoil that has embroiled Hong Kong, where anti-government protests erupted in June.

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