



Contents

Switzerland in the local press	2
Swiss vote to keep freedom of movement with EU (RTHK, Sept. 28)	2
Department of Justice must drop charges against Swiss photographer (RSF, Sept. 22)	2
UBS and Credit Suisse explore merger (The Standard, Sept. 15)	2
Travel bubble talks with 11 countries (SCMP, Sept. 8)	2
Foreign Policy/International Relations	2
Hong Kong officials ordered to avoid engaging with American diplomats (SCMP, Sept. 29)	2
US labelling rule breaks WTO rules (RTHK, Sept. 17)	2
US State Department tells Americans to reconsider travel to Hong Kong (SCMP, Sept. 15)	2
Keep your promises to HK, EU tells China (RTHK, Sept. 15)	2
US-China row over detention of 12 Hongkongers (RTHK, SCMP, Sept. 13)	3
Mainland Relation	3
Liaison office slams calls for October 1 protests (RTHK, Sept. 30)	3
HK identity will fuel more simmerings (RTHK, Sept. 26)	3
Powers conferred by the central government, Beijing agencies say (SCMP, Sept. 8)	3
Domestic Policy/Politics	3
Most of opposition lawmakers to serve out extended term in Legislative Council (SCMP, Sept. 30)	3
FCC accused of 'endorsing rioters' over media policy (RTHK, SCMP, Sept. 24)	3
Chief Justice warns against politicising courts (SCMP, Sept. 23)	3
Seven journalism schools blast police's media access restrictions (SCMP, Sept. 23)	4
Legal system as robust as ever: Carrie Lam (RTHK, Sept. 22)	4
No record of China's coast guard in HK waters, police say (The Standard, Sept. 21)	4
Mass testing scheme ends with 32 Covid-19 carriers identified overall (SCMP, Sept. 15)	4
Nearly 300 arrested in street protests (RTHK, Sept. 6)	4
Economy/Finance	4
Hong Kong-mainland China border could reopen soon (SCMP, Sept. 29)	4
Hong Kong to widen Bond Connect (SCMP, Sept. 24)	4
Fitch issues warning on banks over HK sanctions (RTHK, Sept. 23)	4
Jobless rate unchanged at 6.1 per cent (SCMP, Sept. 18)	4
August arrivals down nearly 80 per cent from July (SCMP, Sept. 16)	5
Fraser Institute gets mixed response from government (RTHK, Sept. 11)	5
Mainland cities leapfrog HK (The Standard, Sept. 8)	5
Next round of Covid-19 relief funding will be under HK\$30 billion (SCMP, Sept. 4)	5
Technology/Innovation	5
HKU gets green light for nasal Covid vaccine trials (RTHK, Sept. 9)	5
Macao	5
Macao hotels and casinos look forward to upcoming golden week holiday (SCMP, Sept. 17)	5
Special Focus	5
Separation of powers has no place in Hong Kong (SCMP, Sept. 9)	5

Switzerland in the local press

Swiss vote to keep freedom of movement with EU (RTHK, Sept. 28): Swiss voters overwhelmingly rejected a right-wing party's attempt to scrap a pact allowing the free movement of people from the European Union, opting for stability amid the economic uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic. "The bilateral path is the right one for Switzerland and for the EU. The Swiss people have confirmed this path again today," Justice Minister Karin Keller-Sutter told reporters in Bern. "Today is a great day for the relations between the European Union and Switzerland," European Council President Charles Michel tweeted. "The Swiss people have spoken & sent a clear message: together we have a great future ahead of us."

Department of Justice must drop charges against Swiss photographer (RSF, Sept. 22): Swiss national Marc Progin was tried from 9th to 16th September for "aiding and abetting public disorder" while he was documenting a violent episode of a demonstration in Hong Kong on 14th October 2019. In a video published by Bloomberg, the photographer can be seen unintentionally obstructing the path of a man who was arguing with demonstrators and who moments later was physically assaulted. The verdict is expected on 13th November 2020. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on the Department of Justice "to drop these charges that are clearly abusive and risk setting a precedent that could discourage photojournalists from getting close to the action while documenting demonstrations".

UBS and Credit Suisse explore merger (The Standard, Sept. 15): The chairmen of UBS Group and Credit Suisse Group are exploring a potential merger to create one of Europe's largest banks, Inside Paradeplatz reported. This came as Europe's banking industry faces pressure to consolidate as the coronavirus pandemic adds to headwinds from negative interest rates. While a deal between the two Swiss banks would allow for overlap to be eliminated, executing such a transaction could be difficult, said an analyst at Vontobel.

Travel bubble talks with 11 countries (SCMP, Sept. 8): The administration revealed it was in discussion with about 11 countries, including Japan, Thailand, Germany, France and Switzerland, on forming travel bubbles. "We need to ensure that a coronavirus test – that is mutually recognised – can be carried out before travelling, and another verification is needed after arrival. Our health authorities would then proceed to further discussion with those countries," commerce minister Edward Yau said.

Foreign Policy/International Relations

Hong Kong officials ordered to avoid engaging with American diplomats (SCMP, Sept. 29): Hong Kong officials have been told to refrain from meeting American diplomats or engaging with them over the phone, after Beijing retaliated against restrictions imposed on the activities of Chinese envoys in the US. A spokesman for the Chief Executive's Office said: "The Hong Kong government fully supports the central government to adopt countermeasures against the US and will facilitate its enforcement." American diplomats must obtain approval from Beijing's foreign ministry before they could meet with Hong Kong government officials or personnel from the city's education institutions and societies.

US labelling rule breaks WTO rules (RTHK, Sept. 17): The Hong Kong government has written a letter to US trade representative Robert Lighthizer, saying Washington is infringing WTO rules and rights of Hong Kong as a separate customs entity by enforcing 'Made in China' tags for goods produced here. The letter expresses Hong Kong's opposition to the new labelling rule and called on the US to withdraw it immediately. The new rule was made in response to Beijing's imposition of a national security law on Hong Kong and Washington's decision to end the SAR's special status

US State Department tells Americans to reconsider travel to Hong Kong (SCMP, Sept. 15): The United States urged citizens to "reconsider travel" to Hong Kong, citing an environment in which the central Chinese government "unilaterally and arbitrarily exercises police and security power" in Hong Kong. Citing the legislation's extraterritorial application, the State Department's new advisory warned that the new security law "could subject US citizens who have been publicly critical of the [People's Republic of China] to a heightened risk of arrest, detention, expulsion or prosecution."

Keep your promises to HK, EU tells China (RTHK, Sept. 15): The video-conference with President Xi Jinping included European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and EU Council President Charles Michel. "The national security law for Hong Kong continues to raise grave concerns. The EU and our Member States have responded with one clear voice -- democratic voices in Hong Kong should be heard, rights protected, and autonomy preserved," Michel said. "We called on China to keep their promises to the people of Hong Kong and the international community."

[Top of the Document](#)

US-China row over detention of 12 Hongkongers (RTHK, SCMP, Sept. 13): The Foreign Ministry claimed that 12 Hong Kong people detained as they tried to flee to Taiwan by speedboat are "separatists" who have been trying to split Hong Kong from China. Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying made the allegation on Twitter as she fired back at her counterpart at the US State Department, Morgan Ortagus, who condemned the detention of the 12 on the mainland. After Mike Pompeo released a statement to express concern that the suspects had "been denied access to lawyers of their choice", Beijing's foreign affairs arm in Hong Kong hit back and called on US politicians to stop interfering in the city's affairs.

Mainland Relation

Liaison office slams calls for October 1 protests (RTHK, Sept. 30): Beijing's liaison office has hit out at those calling for the release of 12 Hong Kong activists detained on the mainland, and sounded a warning to those planning to organise protests on National Day. The 12, all of whom are suspected or charged with protest-related offenses, are accused of crossing the mainland border illegally while heading for Taiwan. The spokesperson went on to say some radicals had called for attacks on police stations, or even inciting people to buy weapons, and that these actions are blatantly challenging the national security law in the SAR.

HK identity will fuel more simmerings (RTHK, Sept. 26): Legal scholar and Basic Law Committee member Albert Chen said that Hong Kong is likely to simmer for a while as questions of collective identity – whether members of society consider themselves Hongkongers and Chinese – won't easily be resolved. "The National Security Law can prohibit people from advocating secession, but it cannot prohibit people from thinking in certain directions," he said. He recalled that in 2012 a national education scheme was proposed partly to address the issue, but that was eventually shelved following protests and backlash.

Powers conferred by the central government, Beijing agencies say (SCMP, Sept. 8): Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO), as well as the central government's liaison office, said in separate statements that the city had adopted an executive-led governance system, under which checks and balances were provided among the executive branch, legislature and judiciary, and that judicial independence would not be compromised. The HKMAO said the powers of administration, lawmaking and judiciary were all conferred by the central government and it would be wrong to compare Hong Kong's governance system with that of other sovereign nations.

Domestic Policy/Politics

Most of opposition lawmakers to serve out extended term in Legislative Council (SCMP, Sept. 30): Nineteen out of 22 opposition lawmakers have decided to remain in the legislature and hope to heal the rift with those who wanted to quit, after supporters narrowly backed them serving out their extended terms in an opinion poll. Chinese University political scientist Ivan Choy said pan-democrats might become more radical as they had to heed the calls of the leave camp. The issue of whether to remain for the duration of the extended term has put the opposition in the hot seat ever since the National People's Congress Standing Committee approved the local government's decision on July 31 to delay elections in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Foreign Correspondents' Club accused of 'endorsing rioters' over media policy (RTHK, SCMP, Sept. 24): The Chinese Foreign Ministry has accused the Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) of "attempting to endorse the rioters" and "sowing more trouble" in Hong Kong for criticising the new media accreditation policy that took effect on Sept. 23. It demanded that the FCC "stop meddling with Hong Kong affairs on the pretext of press freedom". In a controversial move, the police said they will only recognise journalists registered with the government's Information Services Department, or are a member of an internationally-known media group. The FCC, local media organisations, and universities all warn that the restrictions damage press freedom.

Chief Justice warns against politicising courts (SCMP, Sept. 23): Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma has warned against politicising the judiciary in a lengthy plea, advising that any criticism of the courts and judges without proper grounds would be detrimental to public confidence in the system. His statement was issued in the wake of recent controversies over the impartiality of judges in protest-related hearings as they were condemned by both government critics and supporters. The judiciary has also come under greater scrutiny over the newly enacted national security law banning secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces.

[Top of the Document](#)

Seven journalism schools blast police's media access restrictions (SCMP, Sept. 23): Seven Hong Kong journalism schools have slammed police for limiting access to press briefings and restricted areas to only media from government-recognised news outlets, warning the move will damage city freedoms. Universities urged the force in a rare joint statement to reverse the "ill-advised" policy, saying it would effectively restrict news reporting. The Hong Kong Journalists Association said it was taking legal advice and might consider applying for a judicial review to see if the amended guidelines infringed Basic Law guarantees of press freedom.

Legal system as robust as ever: Carrie Lam (RTHK, Sept. 22): Chief Executive Carrie Lam gave assurances that Hong Kong's legal system is "as robust as ever" as she expressed hopes that an Australian judge who resigned from the city's top court would soon be replaced by another foreign judge. Justice James Spigelman had told Australian broadcaster ABC that his decision to step down as a non-permanent judge from the Court of Final Appeal two years before the end of his tenure was "related to the content of the national security legislation". Lam added that both the local and central governments have done all they can to address what she described as incorrect perceptions by some people about the national security law.

No record of China's coast guard in HK waters, police say (The Standard, Sept. 21): The police in Hong Kong say they reviewed marine traffic records from the day when a group of 12 residents were intercepted while heading to Taiwan and have not found signs of the Chinese coast guard vessels entering SAR waters. The 12 have been detained by the authorities in Shenzhen since that date on suspicion of illegally crossing the border. The 12, all of whom are suspected or charged with protest-related offenses, are understood to have been heading for Taiwan. One of the 12 was also charged with offenses under the National Security Law.

Mass testing scheme ends with 32 Covid-19 carriers identified overall (SCMP, Sept. 15): Hong Kong ended its two-week mass testing programme to report that at least 32 Covid-19 carriers had been identified overall among 1.78 million people (a quarter of the population) who voluntarily took part. Now that the programme has ended, the government will focus on testing high-risk groups. Medical experts said that while the programme had indeed identified some Covid-19 cases, it was not conducted at the best time as the number of infections had already fallen when the screening started.

Nearly 300 arrested in street protests (RTHK, Sept. 6): Police arrested 289 people following a day of chaos in Kowloon, as people took to the streets for an anti-government rally on what would have been the day of the Legislative Council election. It all began with online calls for a rally in Kowloon to denounce the government's decision to postpone the Legco election, as well as the national security law and the launch of the "health code". In a statement, a government spokesman denounced the action by protesters as unlawful and selfish.

Economy/Finance

Hong Kong-mainland China border could reopen soon (SCMP, Sept. 29): Hong Kong is in advanced internal talks to reopen the border for local residents living in mainland China to return to the city, with officials hoping the move will help revive the beleaguered economy. Chief Executive Carrie Lam said Hong Kong residents living on the mainland should be given priority to return to the city, without undergoing the 14-day mandatory quarantine if they were able to show a negative Covid-19 test.

Hong Kong to widen Bond Connect (SCMP, Sept. 24): Hong Kong, the largest offshore trading centre for the renminbi, plans to strengthen its role as mainland China's gateway to the global capital markets, as it expands its transborder investment channel to augment the country's bond market and attract overseas funds. Under the Bond Connect, it will introduce more currency and bond products in the coming months, said Charles Li, chief executive of the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited.

Fitch issues warning on banks over HK sanctions (RTHK, Sept. 23): The credit rating agency, Fitch, has warned that banks with links to China could be caught up in US sanctions aimed at punishing those who are believed to be undermining Hong Kong's autonomy. Banks and financial institutions complying with the sanctions could draw the wrath of Beijing and put their China business at risk. On the other hand, they could be penalised in their home countries for helping their clients evade sanctions and tariffs.

Jobless rate unchanged at 6.1 per cent (SCMP, Sept. 18): Jobless rate remained unchanged at 6.1 per cent in August but the number of people underemployed hit a 17-year high. Secretary for Labour and Welfare Dr Law Chi-kwong said the underemployment rate rose 0.3 percentage points to a post-Sars high of 3.8 per cent, with increases concentrated in the food and beverage services, transport, insurance and education sectors. "The labour market remained austere in June-August 2020," he said.

[Top of the Document](#)

August arrivals down nearly 80 per cent from July (SCMP, Sept. 16): Hong Kong tourism declined further in August, with some 78 per cent fewer visitors than the previous month and a 99.9 per cent year-on-year slump. Worldwide travel restrictions and fears of imported coronavirus cases have paralysed global tourism, and arrivals to Hong Kong in the first eight months of the year plummeted by almost 92 per cent, to 3.54 million, compared to the same period last year.

Fraser Institute gets mixed response from government (RTHK, Sept. 11): The SAR government has welcomed the Fraser Institute once again ranking Hong Kong as the world's freest economy in its Economic Freedom of the World 2020 Annual Report, though it went on to criticise the Canadian public policy think-tank's decision to predict lower scores for the SAR in future because of concerns about the rule of law.

Mainland cities leapfrog HK (The Standard, Sept. 8): Hong Kong has been leapfrogged by Guangzhou, Shenzhen and a few second-tier cities to place ninth in a ranking of 42 Chinese cities with regional opportunities, while the SAR topped the others for resilience to absorb shocks and stresses, mainland research shows. Hong Kong, which has been hard hit by the social unrest last year and three waves of coronavirus infections, dropped six places in 2020 from a year before.

Next round of Covid-19 relief funding will be under HK\$30 billion (SCMP, Sept. 4): The next phase of coronavirus relief package is expected to involve less than HK\$30 billion (US\$3.9 billion) aimed at businesses most battered by the pandemic, leaving out sectors deemed to be less affected. Officials had adopted a more cautious approach in drawing up plans for a third round of anti-epidemic funding given the city's dire budgetary position.

Technology/Innovation

HKU gets green light for nasal Covid vaccine trials (RTHK, Sept. 9): The University of Hong Kong says mainland authorities have allowed clinical trials of a nasal spray vaccine for Covid-19 it has been developing with mainland institutions. The State Key Laboratory of Emerging Infectious Diseases of the university's Department of Microbiology has been working on the vaccine with Xiamen University and Beijing Wantai Biological Pharmacy. It says it is the only nasally-administered vaccine against the disease to be allowed for clinical trials so far by the National Medical Products Administration.

Macao

Macau hotels and casinos look forward to upcoming golden week holiday (SCMP, Sept. 17): The upcoming "golden week" holiday will come as a relief for Macau's struggling casinos and hotels, as hordes of Chinese tourists are expected to travel to the gaming destination after restrictions for visitors from across the mainland are eased. Travel restrictions between Zhuhai and Macau were eased in early August and that was expanded to cover all residents of China's southern Guangdong province from August 26. People from the rest of the mainland will be allowed to travel to Macau from September 23. Gross gaming revenue in the gaming destination has fallen by more than 90 per cent year on year for the past five months.

Special Focus

Separation of powers has no place in Hong Kong (SCMP, Sept. 9): Justice minister Teresa Cheng has argued that it is an "oversimplification" to suggest that the concept of "separation of powers" is a given, as the city's executive-led political system has been repeatedly affirmed by the courts. "The doctrine of separation of powers is commonly used in the context of political structures of sovereign states," she wrote in a commentary. "This doctrine has no place in the political structure of HKSAR." Education Secretary Kevin Yeung first made the assertion that Hong Kong has no separation of powers while defending changes to school textbooks about the concept. Chief Executive Carrie Lam backed up Yeung's remarks, saying there was no mention of such a thing in the Basic Law.

612.0 - FRE/SFA/FIT/CHW/KUR

Disclaimer

This is a review of the Hong Kong media and does not necessarily represent the opinion of the Consulate General of Switzerland. The Consulate General of Switzerland in Hong Kong does not bear any responsibility for the topicality, correctness, completeness or quality of the information provided. Liability claims regarding damage caused by the use of any information provided, including any kind of information which might be incomplete or incorrect, will therefore be rejected.

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