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## **Economy + Finance**

**Hong Kong retail sector marks sixth consecutive month of growth (SCMP, Oct. 3):** Hong Kong's retail sector is on track for a steady recovery, with sales rising 2.7 per cent year on year for August, boosted by a strong local jobs market and improved tourist numbers. The latest numbers confirmed the sector's sixth consecutive month of growth, but expansion was smaller than the previous month. Sales added 4 per cent in July, year on year. And analysts said they expected the sector's recovery, after a two-year slump, to continue for the rest of 2017, thanks to the "wealth effect" of an upbeat stock market, the luxury sector's long-awaited rebound and the launch of new iPhone devices. "The near-term outlook for retail sales should remain positive given the favourable job and income conditions and stabilisation of inbound tourism," a government spokesman said in a statement.

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**Mega-bridge artificial island has big business potential, Lantau group says (SCMP, Oct. 6):** The multibillion-dollar artificial island that is a crucial element of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge should be transformed into an information technology centre and a go-to location for medical tourism, the Lantau Development Alliance has proposed. The alliance said it had submitted a proposal to the

government on how best to capitalise on the potential offered by the artificial island.

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**Tax breaks and R&D touted to keep Hong Kong competitive as Carrie Lam delivers policy speech (SCMP, Oct. 11):** Lower taxes on profits, tax deductions for businesses that invest in research and development (R&D) and the expansion of conference space in a prime area of Hong Kong were announced by the city's leader Carrie Lam, as she seeks to diversify the economy and draw more investors from abroad. In announcing these measures in her maiden policy address, Chief Executive Carrie Lam offered an optimistic view on the city's growth, saying that she expected it to be higher than 3.5 per cent. Companies will soon pay tax of 8.25 per cent on the first HK\$2 million of profits, down from the existing flat rate of 16.5 per cent. Profits above HK\$2 million will still be subject to the 16.5 per cent tax rate. Lam also announced tax breaks for companies that invest in R&D, which she wants to implement next year.

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**Hong Kong to open doors for more lawful sharing economy businesses (SCMP, Oct. 13):** Innovation and technology minister Nicholas Yang has struck a more welcoming tone on online and sharing economy businesses, saying that he will explore removing regulatory barriers and update laws to help them operate. Information technology sector lawmaker Charles Mok welcomed the government's efforts but claimed that there were other reasons, including protecting vested business interests, behind the government's reluctance to legalise Uber and Airbnb. Mok suggested that the government consider a "sandbox" approach for sharing economy technology, similar to recent efforts to grow the fintech sector. This would allow sharing economy businesses to first operate on a pilot basis without adhering to traditional supervisory requirements.

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**Lawmakers, district councillors rally against review of Hong Kong's milk powder export restrictions (SCMP, Oct. 14):** A government review of the amount of infant formula a person can legally carry out of Hong Kong has triggered a backlash from local lawmakers and district councillors. Restrictions were introduced in 2013 that banned travellers transporting more than two tins of milk powder, or 1.8kg, per person out of the city. The policy was aimed at easing a shortage of the product experienced by local parents, who found themselves competing with parallel traders snapping up supplies for resale across the border in mainland China, where many consumers harbour concerns about the safety and quality of local produce. The city's leader Carrie Lam said in her maiden policy address on Oct. 11 that the government would carry out a review of the export controls in the hope of addressing the concerns of "different stakeholders".

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**Will Starter Homes really be affordable? Carrie Lam pledges to consult Hong Kong residents, lawmakers to ensure scheme delivers (SCMP, Oct. 15):** Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam has promised to consult the city's residents and lawmakers to ensure her proposed Starter Homes scheme delivers on its pledge to provide affordable flats for middle-class first-time buyers. A pilot project for the scheme is expected to provide 1,000 flats for households earning between HK\$52,000 and HK\$68,000 a month, and single people who earn HK\$26,000 to HK\$34,000. It is part of a series of initiatives proposed by the chief executive to counter Hong Kong's dubious distinction of being the most expensive city in the world to buy a home.

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**Hong Kong businesses and students struggling to access mainland market, poll finds (SCMP, Oct. 20):** More than half of Hongkongers working in major mainland cities are frustrated with insufficient support from Hong Kong government offices stationed there, a cross-border survey has found. The report, claimed by pollsters to be the biggest of its kind, involved interviews with 1,017 university students as well as 137 professionals and entrepreneurs across Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. Wesley Chiu, co-founder of an international school in Changshu, said common obstacles faced by Hong Kong businessmen included restricted market access, difficulties in hiring and handling legal issues, as well as government red tape.

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**'Disruption needs to take place in Hong Kong': tourism industry veterans discuss how city can reinvent itself (SCMP, Oct. 20):** Hong Kong needs authenticity, fresh blood, technology, Victoria Harbour and some "disruptions" to reinvent its flagging inbound tourism, according to industry veterans. To attract the growing demographic of millennial travellers who prefer cultural experience over luxury, Hong Kong government officials should think out of the box, and even break some rules. Allan Zeman, who is an adviser to Chief Executive Carrie Lam, said the government needed an "overhaul" to catch up with the fast-changing world.

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**Boosting R&D in Hong Kong requires more than just funds, scientists say (SCMP, Oct. 22):** Hong Kong scientists have cast doubt on the government's vision for the city as an "international hub for scientific research" but claim its pledge to double spending on research and development is a step in the right direction. They were responding to Chief Executive Carrie Lam's maiden policy address earlier this month, when she announced a plan to double R&D spending to 1.5 per cent of GDP and encourage more local postgraduate and postdoctoral research. But researchers in the field contend that money alone will not be enough to drive more research and innovation activities. They urge a focus on creating opportunities to nurture talent, arguing career prospects in the city's research sector were viewed as lagging behind other places.

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**Hong Kong financial chief dashes hopes for wide-ranging tax cuts for corporations (SCMP, Oct. 24):** There are no plans to cut Hong Kong's corporate taxes across the board because the government needs to reserve funds to protect the city against economic fluctuation, the city's financial chief Paul Chan said. Chief Executive Carrie Lam unveiled a tax policy in her first policy address this month that lowers profit tax rate for first HK\$2 million (US\$256,000) in profit to 8.25 per cent from the existing 16.5 per cent. The new policy aims to ease financial burden on small and medium companies. Lam said she hoped the bill would be voted on by the Legislative Council this year.

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**Hong Kong stock exchange backs down on demand for third board to let start-ups raise funds (SCMP, Oct. 24):** The Hong Kong stock exchange seems to be backing down on plans for a new board and hopes to reach a consensus with the government to allow start-ups and multiple-class shareholding structures raise capital on the main board. "We have looked at both possibilities" of whether to introduce so-called weighted voting rights, or multiple-class structure, on the proposed board or the main board, Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury James Lau said. "The chance is higher on the main board." Hong Kong's market ranked third among global destinations for IPOs in the first three quarters of this year, with 106 companies raising a combined HK\$85 billion in the city, according to Deloitte's data.

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**Face scans will get you through security and onto your flight from Hong Kong from next year (SCMP, Oct. 27):** Hong Kong International Airport is one of the world's busiest airports, passed through by 70 million people in 2016. And it will be one of the first major adopters of facial recognition technology, which it plans to roll out for the second quarter of 2018. Fred Lam, chief executive of the Hong Kong Airport Authority, said the innovative overhaul was meant "to enhance the passenger's experience and digitise all the facilities and make the airport operation smarter". The authority said travellers, under the plan, would show their passport at their first check-in, and give a face scan. After that, they would use the face scans to get through security and immigration and for boarding.

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**Hong Kong still the gateway to mainland China for foreign companies, commerce chief says (SCMP, Oct. 29):** Foreign companies are still attracted to Hong Kong for its "super connector" role to mainland China even though a lot now go north directly, the city's commerce minister Edward Yau said. "When you talk about whether some companies would go straight to mainland China, of course a lot would go and that's why the service sector there has expanded dramatically," Yau said. "But the number of firms using Hong Kong as the local or regional office, or even global headquarters, has been on the rise." Last year, there were 7,986 such offices in Hong Kong, which was an increase of 1 per cent or just 82 from 2015. So far this year, the figure has already reached 8,225, an increase of 239 year on year.

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**Hong Kong's competitiveness fades with record home prices, while New York keeps its allure (SCMP, Oct. 31):** New York is the most competitive city on earth, taking into account its technological innovation, housing cost, global connectivity, productivity with its population size, according to a collaborative report by the United Nations (UN) with China's foremost think tank. Five of the world's 10 most competitive cities are in the United States, according to the UN's survey of 1,007 cities with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). The highest-placed Chinese city is Shenzhen at sixth spot, while Hong Kong's ranking fell six places to 12th, undermined by its record property prices.

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### **Domestic politics**

**Unite and seize opportunities, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam says in National Day speech (SCMP, Oct. 1):** Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam said the city could continue to contribute to mainland China as long as it stayed united. In her first National Day speech since taking office in July, Lam

claimed the city had benefited and taken part in national reform and progress over the past two decades as a special administrative region of China. "President Xi Jinping visited Hong Kong to join us in celebrating the 20th birthday of the Hong Kong SAR ... [he] stated clearly that Hong Kong has always had, and will continue to have the strong backing of our motherland," she said. Lam also cited the president's remarks that China's prosperity would not only help Hong Kong in overcoming challenges, but would also provide opportunities for the city "to seek new impetus as well as an expanded scope for such development".

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**National Day protest in Hong Kong draws 40,000 to streets, organisers claim (SCMP, Oct. 1):** Hongkongers took to the streets to reject "authoritarian rule" and demand the justice minister resign for damaging the city's rule of law. Organisers claimed 40,000 people took part. They had projected a turnout of 20,000. Police put the figure at 4,300. Most of the protesters wore black T-shirts, heeding organisers' call to show support for the jailed activists. In addition, University of Hong Kong associate professor of law Benny Tai came to rally alongside his Occupy movement co-founders, Dr Chan Kin-man and Reverend Chu Yiu-ming. The three men face charges relating to public nuisance over their roles in the 2014 protests. In a statement, the government reiterated its claim that political consideration had not "come into play at all" in the legal cases the protesters cited.

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**High-speed rail link border checkpoint in Hong Kong 'has public support' says city leader Carrie Lam (SCMP, Oct. 4):** Chief Executive Carrie Lam is pressing ahead with controversial plans to set up a joint checkpoint in the city for the cross-border high-speed rail link, citing opinion polls showing that the "majority of Hong Kong people" support the arrangement. Lam said the government would present a non-binding motion to the Legislative Council on October 25 to debate the so-called "co-location" plan. The pan-democrats are strongly opposed to the co-location of immigration checkpoints, as this would give mainland Chinese officers almost full jurisdiction over the zone leased to them at the West Kowloon terminus of the rail link to Shenzhen and Guangzhou. They argue it contradicts Article 18 of the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution, which states that mainland Chinese laws shall not be applied in Hong Kong under the "one country, two systems" policy.

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**Carrie Lam steers clear of politics, pledges billions on technology sector and new housing schemes (SCMP, Oct. 11):** In a concise 40-minute speech, Lam stays focused on the economy, outlining major cuts to tax rates, housing schemes and plans to expand innovation and technology sector. During her policy address, she avoided sensitive issues such political reforms, or enacting the national security law. She also resisted using the word "independence" even as she urged Hongkongers to have "the obligation to say 'no' to any attempt to threaten our country's sovereignty, security and development interests, as well as the duty to nurture our next generation into citizens with a sense of national identity, an affection for Hong Kong and a sense of social responsibility." In concluding her speech, she called for unity.

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**Divisions remain despite Lam's promise of a new beginning (SCMP, Oct. 11):** Most in the pro-establishment majority praised Chief Executive Carrie Lam's policy address for providing solutions to the city's social and economic woes while opposition lawmakers were critical, saying Lam seemed to evade the political chasm that they say exists in the city. However, at least one person in the pro-Beijing camp was critical of Lam's speech. New People's Party chairwoman Regina Ip, a former candidate for chief executive, noted that Lam stopped short of saying that she will push forward any political reform. "Those who are hoping for more democracy in Hong Kong would be disappointed," she said, although she also praised Lam for "focusing on livelihood and economic issues".

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**Xi Jinping gets credit for solving Hong Kong's 'unprecedented challenges' (SCMP, Oct. 16):** The Chinese Communist Party's committee overseeing Hong Kong affairs has credited President Xi Jinping's leadership for overcoming "unprecedented challenges" the city has faced over the past five years through the "accurate and unswerving" implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle. In an article, the party committee under the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office noted that the vast majority of Hong Kong people were "deeply proud of their Chinese identity" and admired Xi for Beijing's achievements. On governing Hong Kong according to the law, the committee said Beijing fully supported the city's government in dealing with the 2014 Occupy protests, during which roads were blocked for 79 days by activists demanding greater democracy. "Through judicial procedures, such as the relevant stakeholders' application for court injunctions, the sites were cleared smoothly, and bloody incidents were avoided. It set an international example on the appropriate handling of similar incidents."

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**Hong Kong's opposition legislators want more than a free lunch from Carrie Lam (SCMP, Oct. 17):** Hong Kong's opposition lawmakers said it would take more than a free lunch to mend deep political rifts and called for renewed debate on political reforms after meeting the city's leader Carrie Lam. Taking a decidedly different tact than her predecessor, Chief Executive Carrie Lam hosted a lunch meeting with legislators from both sides of the political spectrum at her official residence, the Government House. The gesture was an apparent attempt to improve the relations between the executive and legislative branches, which have soured over the past few years amid an intense debate on the city's stalled political reform.

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**Carrie Lam pushes for Legco to prioritise debate on high-speed rail link border checkpoint (SCMP, Oct. 18):** Chief Executive Carrie Lam said that the government wanted to ensure that lawmakers debate her border checkpoint plan giving mainland officials almost full jurisdiction over a section of a Hong Kong train terminal. Lam said that it was crucial for the debate to take place as planned. "We still need time to discuss it and sign an agreement with mainland authorities, and then there will be a local legislative process ... If we don't finish this on October 25, the time will be very tight," she said. Lam's announcement drew heavy criticism from opposition lawmakers, who said the chief executive was disrespecting them and backtracking on her promise to improve ties between the executive and the legislature.

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**President Xi's speech shows Beijing's 'comprehensive jurisdiction' works well with Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, top official says (SCMP, Oct. 19):** President Xi Jinping's reference to Beijing's "comprehensive jurisdiction" over Hong Kong showed the central leadership's authority would work well with the city's high degree of autonomy, according to a top Beijing official. "A special administrative region's power of high degree of autonomy was delegated by the central government, it originated from Beijing's sovereignty and comprehensive jurisdiction over it," Zhang Xiaoming, director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office. Earlier in the day, Xi had set the course for Hong Kong and Macau's governance, calling for the melding of the central leadership's authority over the two cities' high degree of autonomy to be done in a flexible and natural way. Beijing's position on having complete jurisdiction over the two special administrative regions and the "one country, two systems" model in which they enjoy a high degree of autonomy will now become part of the ideological canon of the party. Xi also promised to support Hong Kong and Macau in integrating national strategies such as the "Greater Bay Area" development project, and roll out initiatives to help the city's residents on the mainland. However, he warned against the promotion of separatism. In a veiled reference to regions such as Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

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**First Hong Kong Legco meeting ends abruptly, as divisions appear to deepen (SCMP, Oct. 20):** Hong Kong's opposition lawmakers resorted to familiar tactics to force an early end to the second day of the new Legislative Council session, dashing hopes for better ties with the administration and its allies. The rift between the pan-democrats and the government often paralysed the workings of the legislature during the last administration – a problem Chief Executive Carrie Lam has vowed to solve. The pro-Beijing camp managed to adjourn a stamp duty bill, paving the way for discussion on Lam's highly controversial plan for border checks at a new high-speed train line to the mainland. Both camps blamed each other for the abrupt ending.

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**Hong Kong teachers must love China to do their job properly, education chief says (SCMP, Oct. 23):** China's education minister Chen Baosheng has advised the government of Hong Kong to strengthen its teachers' sense of national identity so they can do a better job of instilling patriotism in the city's youth. National education has been a source of controversy for years in Hong Kong, with the government forced to shelve plans to make it a compulsory school subject in 2012 after strong opposition from parents and educators. Growing calls for Hong Kong independence have also stoked Beijing's concerns, with President Xi Jinping calling for more patriotic education during his visit to the special administrative region in July.

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**Communist Party taps Beijing's top men in Hong Kong for spots in elite Central Committee (SCMP, Oct. 25):** Beijing's top representatives in Hong Kong and Macau, along with its point man on the two cities' affairs, have been elevated into the Communist Party's newly reshuffled Central Committee. It marks a shift from the arrangement five years ago, when only the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) chief, based in Beijing under the State Council, was part of the body that helps guide the country's policy and major personnel decisions. The appointments are seen as another way the central government has pulled Hong Kong into the national agenda. However, some

observers say the move shows Beijing's reignited focus on what it considers to be potential sources of instability.

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**Hongkongers want high-speed rail link and mainland border plan could progress without Legco support, Carrie Lam warns (SCMP, Oct. 27):** Carrie Lam warned that the government could push ahead with joint border checkpoints for the city's high-speed rail link to mainland China, and not "sit back and watch" as lawmakers filibuster. The chief executive's comments came as opposition legislators succeeded in postponing the debate on the so-called co-location plan. Under the plan, the city would lease part of a new rail terminal to the mainland, giving its officials almost full jurisdiction over immigration and customs there. Pan-democrats have lambasted the plan for undermining the autonomy granted to the city in its mini-constitution, the Basic Law. Lam said Hongkongers hoped to see the HK\$84.4 billion (US\$10.8 billion) rail link open on schedule in the third quarter of next year.

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**Don't exaggerate Xi's comments on Beijing's 'comprehensive jurisdiction' over Hong Kong, city's justice minister says (SCMP, Oct. 29):** President Xi Jinping's recent assertion of Beijing's "comprehensive jurisdiction" over Hong Kong does not undermine the city's high degree of autonomy, justice minister Rimsy Yuen said as he sought to assuage persistent fears over the mainland's encroaching powers. The phrase "comprehensive jurisdiction" only explained why the country could set up the Hong Kong special administrative region which thereby exercised its high degree of autonomy and enjoyed executive, legislative and independent judicial power, Yuen said. "It would be fundamentally impossible for the country to authorise a high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong if it did not have full jurisdiction over the city," he said. "The two things are not contradictory." Breaking his silence on the subject, Yuen also spoke against the politicising of legal issues as he brushed aside "unfair accusations" that government prosecutors had acted with political motivations when they pushed for the jailing of several local activists.

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### **International relations**

**Future of 'one country, two systems' increasingly uncertain, US congressional panel says (SCMP, Oct. 6):** The long-term viability of the "one country, two systems" governance model for Hong Kong has become increasingly uncertain after going through "further erosion", according to an annual report by a US congressional panel tasked to monitor China's rule of law. It cited the disqualification of six popularly elected legislators, Beijing's interpretation of the Basic Law, and the jailing of young democracy activists as examples that Hong Kong's autonomy and freedom were under growing threat. The panel urged the US government to reiterate its interest in ensuring an independent judiciary and democratic governance in Hong Kong, and said it planned to nominate three jailed leaders of the 2014 Occupy protests for the Nobel Peace Prize. In response, the Hong Kong government urged "foreign legislatures" not to interfere in the city's internal affairs. "Since the return to the motherland, the HKSAR has been exercising a high degree of autonomy and 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong' in strict accordance with the Basic Law," a statement read.

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**British human rights activist refused entry to Hong Kong (SCMP, Oct. 12):** The UK government has demanded an "urgent explanation" after a British human rights campaigner known for raising concerns about political freedom and human rights in Hong Kong was refused entry to the city on Oct. 11. Benedict Rogers, deputy chairman of the UK Conservative Party's human rights commission, said the refusal showed "there is a problem with 'one country, two systems'". Asked if Beijing made the decision to bar Rogers from Hong Kong, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said: "I can't reveal the details. But under the Basic Law, the central government is responsible for foreign affairs. I hope that everyone can understand that." She would not specifically say whether Rogers' denial came under foreign affairs, but said the Basic Law does not guarantee Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy in every respect.

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**Theresa May wants 'one country, two systems' respected in wake of Hong Kong barring activist from entering city (SCMP, Oct. 20):** Britain wants to ensure the "one country, two systems" model under which Hong Kong is guaranteed a high degree of autonomy from Beijing for half a century is respected, Prime Minister Theresa May said. Responding in parliament to a question from a British lawmaker, May vowed Hong Kong and China would continue to be pressed about the barring of activist Benedict Rogers from the city. China's ambassador to Britain was summoned on Oct. 17 to the British Foreign Office to explain the Rogers' incident, and ministers said they would write to Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam to further express their concerns. Britain warned in its latest six-monthly report on Hong Kong that "important areas" of the "one country, two systems" model were

coming under “increasing pressure.”

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**Beijing’s top diplomat in Hong Kong tells foreign envoys to respect China’s sovereignty (SCMP, Oct. 31):** Foreign countries must respect China’s sovereignty and understand Beijing’s strategy on Hong Kong in a “comprehensive and accurate manner”, the head of foreign ministry office in Hong Kong told diplomats. Xie Feng briefed officials from 56 consulates in the city – more than 90 per cent of the total. Xie also said the “one country, two systems” policy was one of the basic strategies for China to develop socialism with Chinese characteristics. “It was hoped the consulates in Hong Kong could understand the Chinese government’s new strategy toward Hong Kong in a comprehensive and accurate manner,” said a Chinese language press release posted on the foreign ministry commissioner’s office website. “The hope is that the consulates observe international law, Chinese and Hong Kong laws, and respect China’s sovereignty, security and development interests.”

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

**Police investigate threatening letters sent to Hong Kong news website (SCMP, Oct. 5):** Hong Kong police were investigating a string of threatening letters sent to staff and contributors at an online news outlet, one of which was sent to the website’s co-founder’s family. The letter was posted to the family of Tom Grundy, chief editor of the Hong Kong Free Press, in the UK. It warned of “major risks” in politics. Grundy said it had also involved lawmakers, lawyers and local and international journalism watchdogs, in light of the threat. Hong Kong Free Press was launched in 2015 after raising HK\$600,000 in a crowdfunding campaign.

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**Jailing of Hong Kong Occupy trio a ‘serious threat’ to city’s rule of law, top foreign lawyers say in joint letter (SCMP, Oct. 16):** A group of 12 senior foreign lawyers issued a joint letter to express concern over the imprisonment of three political activists in Hong Kong, calling the jailing “a serious threat” to the city’s rule of law and the “one country, two systems” principle. They also said that under a white paper released by Beijing in 2014, Hong Kong’s independent judiciary “risks becoming a charade, at the beck and call of the Chinese Communist Party”. The 12 senior foreign lawyers who signed the letter included Charles Falconer – a former British lord chancellor – and five other queen’s counsels. American lawyer Jared Genser, who represented the late Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo and Myanmar’s Aung San Suu Kyi when she was under house arrest, was also among the signatories. In a lengthy response, a spokeswoman for the Department of Justice wrote: “We regret that the contents of the joint letter display either a misunderstanding or a lack of understanding of the case in question and the legal system [in the city].”

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**New police division for Hong Kong mass protests sparks fears community relations will worsen (SCMP, Oct. 22):** A new police division set up under Hong Kong’s organised crime bureau in the wake of mass protests and rallies has sparked consternation from lawmakers and activists who claim community relations and official practices will worsen. Secretary for Security John Lee revealed the new team was prompted by lessons learned from investigating the Mong Kok riot last year. The new unit, coded D Division, started “partial operation” on July 1 under the Organised Crime and Triad Bureau, a police spokesman said, adding it was created in view of “the global trend of terrorism” and the force’s “experience in tackling massive disasters and cross-district public events”.

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**Missing Hong Kong bookseller Gui Minhai ‘released’, but family cannot find him (SCMP, Oct. 24):** Confusion erupted over the fate of missing Hong Kong-based bookseller Gui Minhai following his “release” from custody in mainland China, two years after he disappeared while on holiday in Thailand. Gui’s daughter, Angela, said he was not necessarily free, as he had neither been seen nor heard from since his release on Nov. 17 and might have “disappeared again”. “From our understanding, Gui Minhai has already completely served the sentence imposed for a traffic offence, and was released on October 17,” the foreign ministry said in a statement. That traffic offence refers to Gui’s earlier confession on state television that he had surrendered to mainland Chinese authorities for a drink-driving death he caused in 2003. The statement made no mention of the earlier accusation that Gui had run an “illegal business” since October 2014 to deliver across the border about 4,000 books banned on the mainland to 380 customers.

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### **Health**

**Flu vaccines still useful despite mismatch with WHO recommendations, Hong Kong experts say (SCMP, Oct. 4):** Hong Kong health chiefs and local doctors said that the city’s flu vaccinations should still be effective, despite the shots containing a different strain to the one most recently

recommended by the World Health Organisation. The World Health Organisation announced that the vaccine strain to be used against influenza A H3N2 for the southern hemisphere next year had been changed to the Singapore strain. The Hong Kong strain is found in the city's 460,000 doses of flu vaccine, which will be given out under the government's vaccination programme.

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**Is your workplace toxic? Mental health of many Hongkongers on the brink due to long hours and overbearing bosses, experts warn (SCMP, Oct. 14):** Last year Hong Kong clocked up the longest weekly working hours of 71 cities worldwide, at 51.1, according to a survey by Swiss banking giant UBS. Dr Ivy Wong, assistant professor at the Department of Psychology at the University of Hong Kong, said workplaces needed to “provide more flexible working hours and stop treating overtime work as something to be expected”. This heavy work-life imbalance coupled with challenges outside of work meant mental health problems in the city were particularly severe, Wong said. But it isn't just long hours toiling that impacts mental health. Hong Kong's competitive culture and the often excessive demands of employers mean workers take on more than they can handle, leading to stress, according to psychiatry specialist Dr Tony Lai.

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**Hong Kong warns manufacturers not to lie on new labels that promote healthy food (SCMP, Oct. 20):** The Hong Kong government launched a new set of healthy food labels that came with a warning for manufacturers: misrepresenting your product is a crime. The warning coincided with the launch of voluntary labels that indicate if a food has low levels of sugar or salt. Using a label on food that does not meet the official standards could lead to fine or prison – despite the companies not needing approval to use the labels. While food manufacturers only need to notify the Centre for Food Safety to use the labels, they have to ensure level of nutrients meet the legal requirements before making the claims.

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## **Environment**

**Can Starter Homes occupy part of rural land rezoned by Hong Kong developers? (SCMP, Oct. 15):** More space could be freed for the Starter Homes scheme by raising the plot ratio on rural sites to allow private developers to build more flats, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said. Lam told TVB's On the Record that the government could explore ways to boost the plot ratios of land in the New Territories that had been rezoned by developers for residential use. Under the new ratio, more flats for the Starter Homes scheme could be built. Plot ratios – the total built area of a development divided by total site area – are set to control population density and protect the quality of the living environment.

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**Hong Kong throws away 5.2 million bottles every single day – is it time to ban sale of the plastic disposables? (SCMP, Oct. 20):** Environmentalists called for a citywide ban on the sale of disposable plastic bottled water, warning that if Hongkongers continued to throw away millions of these items every day, landfills would quickly fill up and harmful pollutants would seriously affect public health. Last year, Green Earth estimated 5.2 million plastic bottles were dumped in Hong Kong every day. They weighed 136 tonnes. “The best approach to waste management starts with avoidance,” said Edwin Lau, a founder and executive director of local environmental group Green Earth, who supports a ban on the sale of disposable plastic bottled water.

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**Hong Kong landslide barrier research could help city and Belt and Road countries save lives and money (SCMP, Oct. 23):** Researchers led by a Hong Kong civil engineer are hoping to formulate the world's first standardised system for cost-effective landslide barriers that can be deployed in the city and countries in Beijing's “Belt and Road Initiative” where such incidents often happen. Multiple flexible barriers are inexpensive, lightweight, cost-effective and easy-to-build and can be installed between mountain passes and gorges. The system is designed to prevent rapid debris flow and rockfall from accelerating as they tumble downhill. It absorbs and dissipating energy in each catchment. Charles Ng, a professor at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology leading the research, said the only challenge was incomplete knowledge of how far apart barriers should be spaced and how high each barrier should be erected.

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**'Polluter pays' waste scheme expanded with 80 per cent of Hong Kong's rubbish going into prepaid bags (SCMP, Oct. 27):** A proposed “polluter pays” scheme in which Hong Kong's municipal waste is disposed of in prepaid bags has been expanded and will be tabled before the Legislative Council in the next two months. Under the new arrangement, 80 per cent of the rubbish generated by the estates, houses and shops using government refuse collection services will go into one of nine types of bag, varying in size and priced at an average 11 cents per litre. The original proposal,

announced in March, was 50 per cent, with the rest levied through a contentious landfill “gate fee”, that waste contractors had to recover from customers.

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### **Culture and education**

#### **Hong Kong groups call for review of pay scales for primary school educators (SCMP, Oct. 3):**

Four groups representing the primary school sector have called for a thorough review of educators’ pay scales ahead of policy address by Hong Kong’s leader. The groups said the pay scale for primary school teachers had not been revised for more than 20 years. The organisations argued that primary school teachers had been treated unfairly, saying that their work requirements were on par with those of their secondary schools counterparts, who were more highly paid.

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#### **Roundabout route to national education? Chinese history rule for Hong Kong secondary schools stokes fears of renewed push (SCMP, Oct. 12):**

All Hong Kong secondary schools will be required to teach Chinese history as an independent compulsory subject at the junior levels from next year, the city’s leader Carrie Lam has announced, in a move that has revived fears of a renewed push for a controversial national education curriculum. The decision comes at a time of heightened youth disaffection amid concerns about independence advocacy in the city.

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#### **HKUST ranked No 3 university in Asia, ahead of HKU (SCMP, Oct. 17):**

Four Hong Kong universities have been listed among the top 10 institutions in Asia in the latest regional version of the QS World University Rankings. HKUST was ranked third in Asia, up from fourth last year, behind Nanyang Technological University and the National University of Singapore. HKU was ranked fifth – dropping three places from last year – while City University and Chinese University were ranked eighth and 10th respectively. Three other Hong Kong institutions made it to the top 100: Polytechnic University (27,) Baptist University (64) and Lingnan University (100).

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#### **Teaching controversial parts of Chinese history ‘up to textbook publishers and teachers’ in Hong Kong (SCMP, Oct. 31):**

Hong Kong’s junior secondary school pupils will spend less time on ancient Chinese history and more on political, economic and social developments related to modern China and the city, according to the revised curriculum unveiled by the Education Bureau. Teachers and textbook publishers will also be given freedom to decide how to broach the more controversial chapters of Chinese history, with neither the Tiananmen Square crackdown nor Hong Kong’s 1967 riots mentioned in the revised syllabus. Chief Executive Carrie Lam has announced that all Hong Kong secondary schools would teach Chinese history as an independent compulsory subject at the junior levels from next year in a bid to equip pupils with a sense of national identity.

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

#### **New cross-border agreement allows eligible funds from Switzerland and Hong Kong to be sold in each other’s markets (SCMP, Oct. 4):**

BEA Union Investment Management and Harvest Global Investments have become the first batch of Hong Kong-based fund houses to gain approval to sell its products in Switzerland under a new cross-border trading scheme. The FINMA and the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC), Hong Kong’s securities watchdog, signed an agreement to establish the Switzerland-Hong Kong Mutual Recognition scheme, which allow eligible public funds to be sold in each other’s market through a streamlined vetting process. The scheme also established a framework for exchange of information, regular dialogue as well as regulatory cooperation in relation to the cross-border offering of public funds. It is the second cross-border fund sales agreement signed by the SFC with overseas regulators, after Hong Kong and the mainland launched the first mutual recognition schemes two years ago to cross-sell fund products.

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