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### **Economy + Finance**

**Another boost for Hong Kong tourism, as visitor numbers up again for September (SCMP, Nov. 1):** The recent uptick in Hong Kong's visitor numbers has gained further momentum, with tourist arrivals up 4.8 per cent year on year for September as more mainland travellers flock to the city. Based on that trend, industry insiders forecast annual growth of between 2 and 3 per cent. The upturn comes after two consecutive years of decline for the industry, which employs more than 280,000 people in the city. The number of visitors to Hong Kong dropped 2.5 per cent in 2015 and 4.5 per cent in 2016.

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**Open up city to foreign talent or risk lagging behind in innovation: Hong Kong Science Park chief (SCMP, Nov. 2):** The shortage of skilled professionals and red tape in hiring overseas talent must be solved or Hong Kong will risk falling behind other cities in innovation and technology, the head of the Science Park has warned. Fanny Law called on Hongkongers to embrace opening up the city's labour market to foreigners, but she admitted that public consensus must be gained before such a move. Currently, companies looking to hire from outside Hong Kong must first prove that the job vacancy cannot be filled by a local – a process which can take months. She suggested that one way of streamlining this process was to provide pre-authorised positions to accredited firms from high value-added industries, so they could bypass long application procedures when hiring foreign professionals. But Law stressed that this should only apply to industries where there was a shortage of skilled labour.

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**World Bank ranks Hong Kong No 5 on list of easiest places in the world to do business (SCMP, Nov. 2):** Hong Kong slipped one place to fifth in the World Bank's ranking of the easiest places to do business, prompting a government spokesman to say officials were working to strengthen legislation to improve the score. Hong Kong ranked well in four indicators: starting a business (third), paying taxes (third), access to electricity (fourth) and construction permits (fifth). But the city performed poorly in the areas of trading across borders, resolving insolvency and registering property – although the report did credit the city for improving “the quality of its land administration system by enhancing its reliability and establishing a complaints mechanism”.

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**Hong Kong's future depends on reclamation, committee says, as it backs plan for work at six sites (SCMP, Nov. 7):** Hong Kong's future depends on reclamation, a government-appointed committee declared as it endorsed a plan to create a 1,000-hectare artificial island to the east of Lantau. The Task Force on Land Supply gave its approval for six sites recommended by the government to undergo reclamation, to meet the city's need for at least 1,200 hectares of new space before 2030 and beyond. Stanley Wong, chairman of the committee, said its members had reached a consensus that to boost land supply, Hong Kong must rely on reclamation, which had so far created 7,000 hectares of new land – 6 per cent of the city's total area.

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**Why is Singapore much smarter than Hong Kong? City left trailing rival in global technology index (SCMP, Nov. 8):** Hong Kong has been ranked 68th in a global smart city index – way behind its main rival Singapore, which came in second, and trailing its neighbours in the region like Taipei, Tokyo and Seoul. Despite recent efforts by the government to make the city smarter, Hong Kong scored poorly in several factors including transport and mobility, sustainability, innovative economy, digitisation, and experts' perception. The city also lost out for its lack of car-sharing services, such as Uber, and the low level of “citizen participation”, sitting at fifth from bottom in both categories. Copenhagen topped the list (Zürich ranked the 4<sup>th</sup> while Geneva ranked the 9<sup>th</sup>) in the 2017 Smart City Index, compiled by Swedish firm EasyPark.

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**Exports and domestic demand drive another quarter of strong growth for Hong Kong economy (SCMP, Nov. 10):** Hong Kong's economy grew more quickly than expected in the third quarter on this year, at 3.6 per cent over a year ago, thanks to robust exports and vigorous domestic demand driven by strong wealth effects. The latest GDP figures, heralding the fourth consecutive quarter of above-trend expansion, put the revised growth estimate for 2017 at 3.7 per cent. Benefiting from a broad-based global economic upturn, Hong Kong's total exports of goods recorded notable growth of 5.5 per cent in the third quarter, with exports to Taiwan, Singapore and Japan attaining double-digit growth. Exports of services grew by 3.7 per cent, up from the 2.6 per cent in the preceding quarter, signalling the recovery of inbound tourism after three years of decline for the sector. Private consumption registered robust growth of 6.7 per cent on a year ago.

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**Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam affirms city's commitment to free trade at her first Apec summit (SCMP, Nov. 10):** Hong Kong remains committed to international free trade despite its potential to cause social problems – that was the message the city's leader Carrie Lam took to her debut appearance at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. Lam was closely toeing President Xi Jinping's line by calling for open trade, which is seen as a competing vision to US President Donald Trump's. “Free trade is blamed for social problems from time to time, giving rise to trade protectionism,” the chief executive said at a discussion session at the Apec CEO summit. “Every government should formulate policy initiatives and measures to respond to different social issues, including maintaining people's standard of living, so they can benefit from free trade and economic development.”

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**Hong Kong's Asean deals are 'loud and clear' vote against rising regional trade protectionism (SCMP, Nov. 13):** Hong Kong signed long-awaited free trade agreements with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which means the city's businesses will enjoy lower tariffs, fewer restrictions and better protection in 10 countries in the region in the years to come. Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Edward Yau, representing Hong Kong at the talks, called the agreement a "loud and clear" vote against rising regional trade protectionism. "Asean is Hong Kong's second largest trading partner in merchandise trade and the fourth largest in services trade. The two agreements are of great importance to Hong Kong," Yau said. The agreements, which had been in discussion since 2014, will take effect on New Year's Day 2019 at the earliest. They cover a wide range of areas of trade in goods and services, such as Hong Kong's core industries of tourism and professional and financial services, as well as telecommunications, technical cooperation and dispute settlement and arbitration. Yau said the agreements will create a "more conducive environment" for the city and the region's economy.

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**Hong Kong workers to see 1.8 per cent salary rise next year after inflation, placing them near bottom in Asia (SCMP, Nov. 15):** Hong Kong workers are set to see their salaries rise by a mere 1.8 per cent next year after factoring in inflation, putting them near the bottom of 20 Asia-Pacific economies for the second straight year. Between August and September every year, human resources consulting firm ECA International surveys multinational companies around the globe to gauge salary adjustments for the year ahead. Hongkongers are estimated to see a 4 per cent salary increase next year – the same increment for the third year in a row. But after factoring in inflation, which is expected to be 2.2 per cent next year, the real wage increase diminishes to 1.8 per cent.

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**Poverty in Hong Kong hits record high, with 1 in 5 people considered poor (SCMP, Nov. 18):** The number of impoverished Hongkongers hit a record high last year, with one in five people living below the poverty line, the latest official figures revealed. The Hong Kong Poverty Situation report for 2016 showed that 1.35 million of the city's 7.35 million residents were living below the official poverty line, 7,000 more than the figure in 2015. The poverty rate rose 0.2 percentage points to 19.9 per cent. The city's poverty line is drawn at half the median monthly household income according to household size. Those living below the line are considered poor.

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**'Innovation' needed to capitalise on Greater Bay Area, Hong Kong official says (SCMP, Nov. 19):** Chief Executive Carrie Lam and Guangdong governor Ma Xingrui hosted the annual joint conference on strengthening cooperation between the two sides. Seven agreements were signed this year. The highlight is an arrangement fostering exchange on innovation and technology, which fits into the Greater Bay Area plan of creating a world-class technology hub in the region. In the press conference, Lam laid down the prerequisites for a capable technology hub: the free flow of people, logistics, capital and information. To achieve this, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Patrick Nip said there must be "innovation and breakthrough" when formulating policies.

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**Hong Kong finance chief seeks mainland tax break for city's researchers (SCMP, Nov. 22):** Hong Kong's financial secretary said that he wanted researchers from the city who go to the mainland to develop new technology to be exempted from paying tax there. But Paul Chan admitted that the response to that idea in Beijing had "not been very enthusiastic". Chan noted that tax on the mainland is "much heavier than that in Hong Kong". Under mainland rules, Hongkongers who spend more than 183 days north of the border within a year have to pay mainland tax. The rate varies, but can get up to 45 per cent if the person's net taxable monthly income is more than 80,000 yuan (HK\$94,240).

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**SAR slips in world talent rankings (The Standard, Nov. 22):** Hong Kong fell three places to 12th in the ranking of world talent, although it maintained its top position in Asia, according to a new study by the Swiss-based International Institute for Management Development. The slip was primarily due to the falling level of salaries and the high living expenses in the city. **Switzerland**, Denmark and Belgium remain the most competitive countries in the ranking. The report said that the top economies in the list share similar attractiveness indicators. "They invest significantly in their outstanding educational systems, they offer a superior quality of life, and they offer substantial opportunities for career advancement throughout the entire professional life span," said the report.

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**Hong Kong's future lies in helping Chinese firms go global, official investment adviser says (SCMP, Nov. 26):** Hong Kong's economic future increasingly lies in being the springboard propelling

mainland Chinese companies into the global arena, the associate director general of the government's investment promotion body has said. With China's "belt and road" global trade initiative and plans to link up the cities of Guangdong plus Hong Kong and Macau into a "Greater Bay Area", the city will no longer only be a stepping stone for overseas companies to ride the Chinese boom, but more a base to help mainland firms go global, Charles Ng said. Ng, associate director general of InvestHK, envisaged that mainland companies would in turn increasingly move to capitalise on Hong Kong's advantages as an international financial, capital-raising and service centre to expand their horizons and tap overseas markets.

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**Hong Kong overtakes London as the world's most expensive urban centre for renting an office (SCMP, Nov. 28):** It's official: Hong Kong, the world's most expensive city to live in, is also the planet's most expensive urban centre for renting an office. Hong Kong's office space rent, measured by workstation, surpassed London for the first time since 2013, as Britain's decision to withdraw from the European Union caused the pound sterling to depreciate, rendering the British capital's property prices to become cheaper in US dollar terms. The average cost for operating an office space in Hong Kong has risen 5.5 per cent to US\$27,432 per workstation per year at the end of the second quarter, from the same period in 2016, according to Cushman & Wakefield's annual Office Space Across the World report.

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### **Domestic politics**

**Beijing official says Xi Jinping has given 'one country, two systems' a status boost (SCMP, Nov. 1):** A top Chinese diplomat in Hong Kong said that the "one country, two systems" principle under which the city is governed had been elevated to a new status in the nation's political system, after President Xi Jinping laid out his guiding principles in October. "This shows that one country, two systems, has a new political position in the overall work of the party and the state since Hong Kong was reincorporated into the national governance system," Song Ruan (deputy commissioner of Beijing's foreign ministry office in Hong Kong) said. He said achieving the kind of blend that Xi spoke of "holds the key to a sound relationship between the central government and Hong Kong."

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**Jail stint gave him insight into future of Hong Kong pro-democracy movement, Occupy leader Alex Chow says (SCMP, Nov. 8):** Alex Chow and fellow activists Joshua Wong and Nathan Law were jailed in August over their roles in a protest during the run-up to the 2014 pro-democracy Occupy movement. The period of reflection also gave him new insights on the future of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, he said. He said interim proposals, such as changes to chief executive nominating committee, should be considered even if universal suffrage is not currently achievable. Chow's stance appeared have softened compared to three years ago, when he and other student leaders insisted on open nominations, as opposed to vetting of candidates. The government had stood firm, saying the process should go through the nominating committee.

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**Hong Kong Legco panel calls city's ex-leader CY Leung 'uncooperative' as probe into HK\$50m payment intensifies (SCMP, Nov. 9):** Former Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying was called "uncooperative" by a Legislative Council committee that is investigating a HK\$50 million payment he received from an Australian firm for possible corruption. Leung agreed to the payment before his 2012 election as chief executive, but received the money during his tenure, which ended on June 30 this year. He was promised the money as a director of a company, formerly listed in Britain, that the Australian firm had acquired. The criticism against Leung came a day after Democratic Party lawmaker Lam Cheuk-ting said he would report the case to Britain's corruption-fighting agency.

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**Hong Kong leader reveals backing for legislature changes, says some rules are backward (SCMP, Nov. 10):** Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam gave her backing to a bid by pro-establishment lawmakers for a tighter rule book in the legislature that would effectively curb filibustering, describing some current clauses as backward and "out of touch". The chief executive also admitted that her administration had encountered a bumpy ride since she took office on July 1 amid controversy over the jailing of three Occupy protest leaders. But she remained confident about mending social divisions in the city. Good policies would help mend ties, she said.

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**New mainland think tank hopes to take 'objective' view on Hong Kong issues (SCMP, Nov. 13):** The leader of a top mainland think tank's newly-established Hong Kong branch has vowed to conduct "neutral, objective and academic" policy research on China and Hong Kong issues, and distinguish itself from the Beijing government's representatives in the city. Zhang Yichen, senior vice-chairman of

the Centre for China and Globalisation (CCG), confirmed that the Hong Kong Council was set up in a bid to help the city to play key roles in Beijing's "Belt and Road Initiative" and the "Greater Bay Area" development project.

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**Beijing signals impatience at Hong Kong's delay in enacting national security law (SCMP, Nov. 17):** Beijing has signalled its impatience at Hong Kong for making no progress in rolling out a controversial national security law, suggesting the city is already paying the price with independence advocates exploiting the lack of such legislation. Li Fei, a senior mainland Chinese official who specialises in the city's mini-constitution, also made it clear at a Basic Law forum that Beijing would "jointly govern" Hong Kong with direct control over "important issues", while the city's autonomy would be limited to local affairs. While praising Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng's economic policies, Li devoted most of his 50-minute speech to Hongkongers' lack of respect for China's sovereignty and constitutional authority over the city.

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**Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam says Beijing committed to city's semi-autonomy (SCMP, Nov. 17):** Hong Kong's chief executive played down concerns over Beijing's perceived tighter control of the city, and said the central government was committed to upholding the "one country, two systems" principle that guarantees the city's semi-autonomy. The comments came after President Xi Jinping told the 19th party congress in Beijing that the central government's "overall jurisdiction" over Hong Kong should be combined with the city's high degree of autonomy in an "organic" way. Lam said maintaining Hong Kong's characteristics under one country, two systems was not only the wish of the city's people, but also a commitment made by the central government.

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**Hong Kong signs joint checkpoint deal for high-speed rail project, allowing mainland Chinese officials to work on city soil (SCMP, Nov. 18):** Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam signed a controversial deal that will allow mainland Chinese officials to enforce national laws in the heart of the city, but questions remained over the arrangement's legality. Under the agreement made between Lam and Guangdong provincial governor Ma Xingrui, the West Kowloon terminus of the HK\$84.4 billion (US\$10.8 billion) Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong express rail link will house a facility for Hong Kong and mainland Chinese authorities to carry out immigration and customs procedures. A designated area, which will include two office floors, the waiting hall for departing passengers, the station platforms and the connecting passageways and escalators, as well as the compartments of the train itself, will be subject to the jurisdiction and laws of mainland China. Pan-democrats have expressed fears that the "one country, two systems" governing principle would be infringed. "There is a very solid legal basis for making the co-location arrangement as we have repeatedly discussed this matter with mainland Chinese authorities. This arrangement must comply with the Basic Law principles," Lam said. "We will be able to explain clearly how Basic Law articles are applied at a later stage, when the National People's Congress Standing Committee issues the decision."

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**Beijing has 'zero tolerance' for separatism, mainland official warns Hongkongers seeking role in China's legislature (SCMP, Nov. 22):** Hongkongers aspiring to represent the city on China's legislature must swear to uphold the Chinese constitution and the "one country, two systems" principle, as Beijing would not tolerate any bid by Hong Kong to be independent, a senior mainland official said. National People's Congress (NPC) vice-chairman Wang Chen was speaking in Hong Kong to a 1,400-strong audience, made up of mostly pro-establishment politicians and businessmen, ahead of a poll that takes place every five years to choose 36 local deputies to serve in the NPC. "The central government's clear stance is that there is 'zero-tolerance' for independence advocacy," Wang said.

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**Hong Kong justice minister Rimsky Yuen expected to step down in January (SCMP, Nov. 23):** Secretary for Justice Rimsky Yuen is expected to resign in January to resume his private practice in a top barrister's chamber in the heart of the city, the Post has learned. A source said Yuen was expected to leave the government after the mainland's top legislative body, the National People's Congress Standing Committee, endorsed the controversial joint checkpoint arrangement for the high-speed rail link to Guangzhou in December. Since Carrie Lam won the city's top job in March, it had been widely reported that Yuen – who has served in the post since July 2012 – was determined to leave after his five-year term expired. But he agreed to serve Lam's administration to help sort out the joint checkpoint arrangement.

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**Beijing seeks better understanding of Communist Party's work and goals from Hong Kong establishment (SCMP, Nov. 24):** Beijing mobilised a senior Chinese Communist Party theorist and its

top official in Hong Kong to drive home an unusually direct message to the city's establishment about better understanding and improving cross-border ties after China's recent leadership reshuffle. In a move reflecting the central government's more hands-on approach in steering the city, Leng Rong, head of the Communist Party's literature research office, and Wang Zhimin, director of Beijing's liaison office, gave a talk at government headquarters on President Xi Jinping's report at the Communist Party's five-yearly congress last month. His 240-strong audience included Chief Executive Carrie Lam, her top policy officials, advisers and senior civil servants.

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**Hong Kong delegate to China's legislature vows to push local officials to enact national security legislation within five years (SCMP, Nov. 25):** Cheng Yiu-tong and Stanley Ng, two Hong Kong representatives in China's legislature have vowed to push the local government to enact national security legislation within the next five years, as nominations opened on Nov. 24 for a local poll to elect 36 deputies to the Beijing body next month. Cheng said he would urge Hong Kong officials to enact national security legislation, as stipulated under Article 23 of the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution. Secretary for Justice Rimsky Yuen responded that the government would enact the legislation when there was "a suitable environment and sufficient time".

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**Former Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying threatens legal action over 'false statements' about his HK\$50 million UGL deal (SCMP, Nov. 29):** Hong Kong's former leader has threatened a Democratic Party lawmaker with legal action for making "false statements" about a past business deal, as it emerged the complaint was being handled by Britain's top anti-crime officer. Leung Chun-ying, who is now a vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said he "reserved the right to take legal action" against Lam Cheuk-ting in a statement issued on Nov. 29. Commenting on the legal threat, Lam said his accusation was based on facts as he had strong reasons to doubt Leung had betrayed the interests of the DTZ's directors and shareholders. Leung received a total of HK\$50 million in 2012 and 2013 in the deal, which was concluded shortly before he was elected chief executive in 2012, and exposed by Australian media in 2014.

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**Legco Commission members say disqualified lawmakers may not have to repay full salaries (SCMP, Nov. 30):** Several key pro-establishment members of a Legislative Council's commission have come out in support of four disqualified lawmakers paying a partial rather than full refund of their allowances, in a surprise non-partisan move. On Nov. 27, Legislative Council President Andrew Leung said Legco would issue the four with salary repayment bills, ranging from HK\$2.7 million to HK\$3.1 million per person. He said it was the Legco Commission's duty to recover the full amount. His remarks sparked an outcry from the pro-democracy camp, describing it as being akin to "political persecution" as the bills would be backdated to their first day in office – October 1 last year – despite them doing their legislative work for nine months before Hong Kong's High Court stripped them of their seats on July 14. The four disqualified lawmakers are Nathan Law, Leung Kwok-hung, Lau Siu-lai and Edward Yiu. They were ousted for taking their oaths of office in ways that Beijing later ruled unconstitutional when the national legislature interpreted the city's mini-constitution last November.

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### **International relations**

**UK's duty to Hong Kong 'non-negotiable' in post-Brexit trade talks with China, Paddy Ashdown says (SCMP, Nov. 29):** The UK government was called upon to fulfil its "very special duty" to Hong Kong, as a British political grandee said that the city's interests are "non-negotiable" when London speaks to Beijing about post-Brexit trade deals. Paddy Ashdown, in the city for a two-day fact-finding mission, added that it was important for China to respect the Sino-British Joint Declaration as well as to avoid a "repressive" attitude towards the city if President Xi Jinping wants the country to be seen as a global superpower. Saying that Britain "bears the responsibility for the position in Hong Kong," Ashdown, who sits in the UK's House of Lords, argued that the former colonial power had failed to "set a direction of travel" for the city's democratic development.

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

**New national anthem law will draw on Hong Kong's laws protecting the Chinese flag, minister says (SCMP, Nov. 2):** Hong Kong's constitutional affairs minister said the government would refer to existing laws against disrespecting the Chinese flag or emblem, while drafting a new law protecting the national anthem. That suggested anyone convicted under the new law could spend up to three years in prison. In September, the National People's Congress Standing Committee approved the law, which came into effect on the mainland at the beginning of October. If the standing committee endorses, as expected, a plan to introduce it in Hong Kong, the city's government will need to make a local version

of the law.

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**Hong Kong prosecutors decide against third trial for former leader Donald Tsang over bribery charge (SCMP, Nov. 6):** The criminal prosecution of former Hong Kong leader Donald Tsang over corruption allegations has come to an end, as prosecutors have decided not to press for a third trial, a source told the Post. The ex-top official had found himself in legal limbo on Nov. 3 when eight jurors were unable to come to a majority decision on whether to find him guilty of a bribery charge. Tsang faced a similar situation earlier this year, when the jury in a previous trial also failed to reach a verdict on the same charge, necessitating the present second trial, which ended on Nov. 3.

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**Hong Kong national anthem law to punish only those who deliberately disrespect it, Carrie Lam says (SCMP, Nov. 8):** Hong Kong's top official said the city's looming national anthem law would only seek to punish those who deliberately disrespect the song, and that there was no need to worry about breaking the law accidentally. Chief Executive Carrie Lam said she would pursue a bill on the matter at the Legislative Council within the present legislative term, or before next July. "Any deliberate act to insult the anthem would be unacceptable, but we would also make sure that [the law] complies with the city's constitutional and legal systems," she said. Lam said she hoped Legco could "fulfil its constitutional responsibility" in discussing the matter and approving the bill "efficiently".

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**'Large-scale' breach of new anthem rules could see law applied retroactively, top Beijing adviser Elsie Leung says (SCMP, Nov. 13):** Hong Kong's looming national anthem law may not be retroactive, but the city's legislature has the power to make it so if there is any "large-scale" breach of the rules after the government submits a draft bill, a top Beijing adviser has said. The remarks by Elsie Leung, vice-chairwoman of the Basic Law Committee, which advises Chinese state leaders on the implementation of Hong Kong's mini-constitution, came after hardcore city soccer fans again booed the national anthem on Nov. 9 at the start of a friendly against Bahrain, despite a heavy police presence. Leung said Legco, when examining the draft bill, could add a stipulation that the law would be effective from a specific time to make it retroactive, if there was a serious breach that caused "great impact on society".

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**Funnel foreign domestic workers overseas illegally and face full force of law, Carrie Lam warns Hong Kong employment agencies (SCMP, Nov. 15):** Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam vowed to take "vigorous enforcement action" against any local employment agencies that illegally arranged for foreign domestic helpers to work abroad in the wake of a clampdown by the Philippine government. Lam's pledge came after the Philippine Department of Labour and Employment announced a three-week suspension of new applications for overseas employment certificates – a document necessary for all Filipinos planning to work abroad – due to "persistent reports of illegal recruitment activities". "I, alongside the chief secretary and the secretary for labour and welfare, are all very concerned about the issue and have been consistently in touch with the Philippine Consul-general in Hong Kong," Lam said.

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**Former Hong Kong home secretary Patrick Ho arrested in US over alleged Africa bribery scheme (SCMP, Nov. 22):** US authorities have arrested Hong Kong's former home affairs secretary and the ex-foreign minister of Senegal for allegedly leading a multimillion-dollar bribery scheme in Africa on behalf of a top Chinese energy company, with some deals supposedly arranged in the halls of the United Nations. US officials announced that former Senegalese top diplomat Cheikh Gadio and Hong Kong's Patrick Ho sent huge bribes to high-level officials in Chad and Uganda to secure business advantages for the Chinese company. Ho was ordered detained after appearing in court on Nov. 20, the US Justice Department statement said.

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## Health

**Hong Kong government reviews services after recent elderly deaths (SCMP, Nov. 6):** A strategic review is under way to plug the loopholes in elderly care after recent family tragedies involving the killing of old people exposed the plight of the city's carers, Hong Kong's labour and welfare chief has said. The minister Dr Law Chi-kwong said he had tasked the Social Welfare Department to work closely with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service in exploring technical solutions which would help different service units match appropriate services to elderly people at risk. He added the government should devise evidence-based methodology for assessing risks to ensure help could be offered at the right time.

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**'Horrible' number of Hongkongers take antibiotics, leading microbiologist says (SCMP, Nov. 10):** Almost half of Hongkongers surveyed said they had taken antibiotics in the past year, up from 35 per cent in 2011, prompting one of the city's top microbiologists to describe the results as "horrible". "This is really horrible," said professor Yuen Kwok-yung, chair of infectious diseases at University of Hong Kong, at a HKU conference discussing global issues of antimicrobial resistance. The overuse of antibiotics has long been a concern of the local and international health community because it contributes to the rise of so-called superbugs, which are bacterial strains that are resistant to common antibiotics. Misuse of antibiotics on both humans and animals has been a problem in Hong Kong.  
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**Hong Kong's food safety checks for imported fruits and greens 'too lax', governance watchdog says (SCMP, Nov. 14):** Food safety checks for imported fruits and vegetables are too lax, with 'hasty' or no inspection of items at checkpoints, slow laboratory test results and lax rules on lead residue in leafy greens, according to the city's governance watchdog. The Office of the Ombudsman said that these loopholes in gatekeeping had raised the risks of unsafe produce entering the city's markets, potentially jeopardising the health of residents. The watchdog also criticised current lenient regulations on harmful residue in commonly consumed vegetables.  
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**Half of Hongkongers over 15 now overweight or obese, damning government health study reveals (SCMP, Nov. 28):** Half of Hongkongers aged 15 or older are overweight or obese, and the number of alcohol drinkers has doubled over the past decade, according to a citywide health survey by the government. More than 86 per cent were found to be consuming too much salt, nearly 50 per cent had high cholesterol, and almost 60 per cent suffered from one or more conditions of hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol. The survey predicted a 10.6 per cent risk of cardiovascular problems, including coronary heart disease, stroke, peripheral artery disease and heart failure, among people aged 30 to 74 over the next 10 years. "The government should lead cross-sectoral action to change unhealthy lifestyles and curb the prevalence of chronic diseases as the city is ageing quickly, otherwise the public medical system as well as the economic impetus will be under great pressure," Director of Health Constance Chan said.  
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## **Environment**

**Hong Kong's historic Blue House wins Unesco's highest heritage conservation award (SCMP, Nov. 2):** A cluster of historic tenement buildings revamped into a modern residential and community complex in Hong Kong has won a prestigious international award for heritage conservation. The Blue House cluster – three 20th century shophouse blocks in Wan Chai – was given the Award of Excellence, the highest level in four categories, in this year's Unesco Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. It is the first time Hong Kong has received the highest level of achievement from Unesco, but 17 other projects in the city have also been given honourable mentions or merit prizes since the awards began in 2000. An international panel of conservation experts was impressed by the government-funded project's "truly inclusive approach to urban conservation".  
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**Lai Chi Wo village chief insists on go-ahead for revitalisation plan despite opposing homeowners (SCMP, Nov. 7):** A HK\$50 million project to revitalise a 400-year-old Hong Kong village in Lai Chi Wo would not be derailed by a small group of opposing locals, the enclave's leader said. Village chief Tsang Wai-yip's remarks were part of a bid to clear the air on "overblown" claims that some disgruntled villagers were against the plan to convert empty dwellings in the area into guest houses. Launched by the Hong Kong Countryside Foundation – a charity dedicated to conserving the city's countryside – the development is aimed at revitalising the area and promoting Hakka culture.  
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**Two in three Hongkongers use plastic disposables for dining, adding to city's 'waste crisis' (SCMP, Nov. 15):** While most Hongkongers consciously avoid using plastic bags, at least two in three still use disposable utensils and straws when eating out, adding to the massive amount of plastic waste dumped in landfills daily, environmental group Greenpeace said. Government figures show that more than 2,000 tonnes of plastic, enough to fill 100 shipping containers, is sent to Hong Kong's landfills daily. For plastic utensils and foam takeaway containers, the figure is 179 tonnes, or the weight of 10 double decker buses.  
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**Hong Kong sewage plant to move into caverns in 11-year plan (SCMP, Nov. 20):** Drainage officials will seek funding next year for the first phase of works to move a Sha Tin sewage treatment plant into a rock cavern in a massive project expected to last 11 years, according to Hong Kong

authorities. The first phase is expected to cost about HK\$1 billion out of a total of HK\$30 billion, if not more, Drainage Services Department chief Edwin Tong said. The 13 hectares of caverns will provide just half the space of its original footprint, but the project will be the largest sewage works relocated into a rock cavern in Asia. If all goes according to plan, the preliminary works are to commence as soon as 2019 and finish by 2022.

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**No room for lower limit on Hong Kong water supply from mainland China river, expert says (SCMP, Nov. 23):** Hong Kong should not seek to lower its water supply ceiling from the Dongjiang to ensure adequate provision in emergencies and extreme weather events, the head of a government advisory committee said. But Dr Chan Hon-fai, who chairs the Advisory Committee on Water Supplies, declined to comment on whether the city was getting a fair deal on the fixed annual supply agreement signed with Guangdong province, or whether it should be revised to a pay-as-you-go arrangement. The Dongjiang – or East River – supplies Hong Kong with 70 to 80 per cent of its consumption needs. The government revealed that the new agreement with Guangdong for 2018 to 2020 would retain a guaranteed annual supply ceiling of 820 million cubic metres of water for a lump sum of HK\$14.4 billion, about 7 per cent more expensive than the previous 2015-17 deal.

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**Rubbish sacks which double up as shopping bags to go on sale for Hong Kong waste charging (SCMP, Nov. 27):** Rubbish sacks which double up as shopping bags will be introduced for Hong Kong's waste charging scheme in 2019 and available to buy in supermarkets, the government said. The Environmental Protection Department said it would discuss with retailers making the designated bags available at major chains, as officials look for ways to reduce waste in the city. It said a similar plan was set to go live in Taipei to reduce plastic consumption by preventing citizens buying other bags with which to throw away their rubbish.

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### **Culture and education**

**Don't dwell on 'one or two events', Hong Kong education chief says on why Tiananmen crackdown not in Chinese history plan (SCMP, Nov. 1):** Hong Kong's education minister has urged against dwelling on "one or two events" as lawmakers grilled him on why neither the Tiananmen Square crackdown nor the city's 1967 riots were mentioned in a revised compulsory Chinese history syllabus for secondary school pupils. Teachers would be free to cover related historical events not included in the syllabus, Secretary for Education Kevin Yeung said during a meeting of the Legislative Council's education panel. 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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**Hong Kong pupils 'have poor knowledge' of modern Chinese history (SCMP, Nov. 7):** Secondary school pupils in Hong Kong were found to have poor knowledge of contemporary Chinese history in the Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) examination. The findings were part of a report on DSE performance released by the Examinations and Assessment Authority. The Education Bureau is currently conducting a public consultation on the curriculum for Chinese history, under which pupils aged 12 to 15 will spend more time on studying China's affairs in the 20th century.

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**One in 10 Hong Kong primary pupils suffer from serious depression, survey shows (SCMP, Nov. 19):** About one in 10 primary schoolchildren in Hong Kong have symptoms of serious depression and should be given medical treatment, according to a survey of more than 1,300 pupils released. The survey by the Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service also found that 21.7 per cent of the schoolchildren polled complained of constant stress, up 5.5 percentage points from a similar poll last year and also a three-year high. The agency advised parents to care more for their children, help them broaden their social circles, and teach them how to deal with bullying and say no to bullies in school.

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