



HONG KONG SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: March 14, 2026 - March 21, 2026

This report was produced using open-source intelligence analysis. The assessment is grounded in publicly available reporting and should be cross-referenced with primary sources. RSS feed articles are listed in the annex for reference.

Security Analysis Report: Hong Kong (March 14-21, 2026)

Executive Summary

During the period of March 14-21, 2026, Hong Kong's security landscape remained primarily shaped by the ongoing implementation and implications of its national security legislation, particularly the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (Article 23). Cybersecurity emerged as a significant concern, with the Hong Kong government issuing warnings and restricting the use of certain AI agents due to potential risks. Geopolitical tensions, including the Middle East conflict and evolving US-China relations, continued to cast a shadow over Hong Kong's economic outlook and diplomatic positioning. While no major military exercises or defense acquisitions were reported within the city during this specific week, the broader context of national security enforcement and regional strategic dynamics underscored a persistent focus on internal stability and external influence.

Key Security Developments

- Continued Enforcement of National Security Legislation (Article 23)

The Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO), enacted on March 19, 2024, and effective March 23, 2024, continued to be a central pillar of Hong Kong's security framework. A white paper titled "Hong Kong: Safeguarding China's National Security Under the Framework of One Country, Two Systems," released in February 2026, reiterated the central government's fundamental responsibility for national security in Hong Kong and the HKSAR's achievements in fulfilling this duty. This ongoing emphasis highlights Beijing's sustained efforts to solidify its control over the city's political and legal environment, with implications for civil liberties and international perceptions.

- Cybersecurity Risks from AI Agent "OpenClaw"

On March 12, 2026, the Digital Policy Office warned of security risks associated with the popular open-source AI agent OpenClaw, urging precautions. This was followed on March 16, 2026, by a report that the Hong Kong government had barred its units from installing OpenClaw on government computers due to potential risks such as

excessive system permissions, data leakage, and system intrusion. Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po, while acknowledging concerns, called for improvements to the technology rather than an outright ban, emphasizing Hong Kong's role in supporting national ambitions in technological self-reliance.

- Implementation of Cybersecurity Law for Critical Infrastructure

Hong Kong's first cybersecurity law for critical infrastructure, the Protection of Critical Infrastructures (Computer Systems) Bill, became effective on January 1, 2026. This legislation requires large organizations responsible for critical services to secure their computer systems and report security incidents within a prescribed timeframe, with criminal fines up to HKD5 million (approximately USD640,000) for violations. This development signifies a proactive step to enhance the city's digital resilience against growing cyber threats.

- Geopolitical Tensions Impacting Hong Kong's Economy

The Middle East conflict and US-China relations were cited as significant geopolitical uncertainties impacting Hong Kong's economic outlook. Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po stated on March 7, 2026, that while the Middle East war might hurt the trading sector, it could benefit the financial market, and Hong Kong would remain vigilant over Sino-US relations. This indicates Hong Kong's vulnerability to global political instability and its efforts to navigate complex international dynamics.

- Delayed US-China High-Level Summit

A highly anticipated visit by US President Donald Trump to China, originally scheduled for March 31 to April 2, was delayed by "a month or so" due to the escalating war with Iran, as reported on March 20, 2026. This postponement, following Foreign Minister Wang Yi's earlier remarks on March 8, 2026, calling 2026 a "big year" for Sino-US ties, underscores the fragility of diplomatic engagements amidst global crises and their potential impact on regional stability.

- Espionage Allegations Against Hong Kong Nationals in the UK

British prosecutors brought two dual Hong Kong and UK nationals to court on March 4, 2026, for allegedly spying on UK-based Hong Kong pro-democracy dissidents. The individuals, a former superintendent in the Hong Kong Police employed by the Hong Kong Economic Trade Office (HKETO) and a UK Border Force officer, were accused of surveilling pro-democracy protesters and British political figures. This incident highlights the extraterritorial reach of national security concerns and the ongoing tensions between Beijing and Western nations regarding Hong Kong's political landscape.

- China-Vietnam "3+3" Strategic Dialogue

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong, and Defense Minister Dong Jun were invited to Vietnam for the first ministerial meeting of

the China-Vietnam "3+3" strategic dialogue on diplomacy, defense, and public security from March 15-17, 2026. This high-level engagement signifies China's active diplomatic efforts in the region, focusing on political and security issues, crime fighting, and defense cooperation, which indirectly contributes to the broader regional security environment impacting Hong Kong.

- PLA Hong Kong Garrison Training

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Hong Kong Garrison held a mobilization ceremony for its 2026 training year on January 4, 2026. Troops from the Army, Navy, and Air Force stationed in Hong Kong commenced new year's military training to enhance combat capabilities and strengthen their ability to fulfill Hong Kong's defense responsibilities. While this event occurred before the reporting period, it provides context for the continuous military presence and readiness within the Special Administrative Region.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Hong Kong's security developments during this period are deeply intertwined with broader geopolitical shifts, particularly the intensifying competition between China and Western powers, and the impact of global conflicts. The continued robust enforcement of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (Article 23) and the earlier National Security Law (NSL) reinforces Beijing's assertion of sovereignty and control over the city, a move that has drawn significant criticism from the US, UK, and EU. This divergence in views contributes to ongoing diplomatic friction, with Western nations expressing concerns about the erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy and civil liberties, while Beijing frames these measures as essential for stability and national security.

The escalating Middle East conflict and its impact on global trade and finance, as acknowledged by Hong Kong's financial chief, highlight the city's exposure to international instability. While Hong Kong aims to leverage its financial market stability amidst such crises, the uncertainty surrounding global supply chains and energy prices poses inherent risks to its trade-dependent economy. The delay in the planned US President Trump's visit to China due to the Iran war further illustrates how external conflicts can disrupt high-level diplomatic efforts between major powers, indirectly affecting the strategic environment in which Hong Kong operates.

Regionally, China's active diplomatic engagement, exemplified by the China-Vietnam "3+3" strategic dialogue, demonstrates its efforts to strengthen security and political ties within Southeast Asia. These initiatives, while not directly involving Hong Kong, contribute to a broader regional security architecture where China plays a dominant role. The allegations of espionage involving Hong Kong nationals in the UK underscore

the global reach of national security concerns and the persistent efforts to monitor and counter perceived threats from pro-democracy movements abroad, further complicating Hong Kong's international standing and diplomatic relations with Western countries.

Military and Defense Analysis

Hong Kong, as a Special Administrative Region of China, does not possess its own independent military force. Its defense is the responsibility of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Hong Kong Garrison. While no specific military activities or exercises were reported within Hong Kong during March 14-21, 2026, the PLA Hong Kong Garrison commenced its 2026 training year on January 4, 2026, with troops from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This ongoing training is aimed at enhancing combat capabilities and strengthening their ability to fulfill Hong Kong's defense responsibilities, signaling a continuous state of readiness and commitment to maintaining security within the territory.

The broader context of China's military modernization, as highlighted by the PRC's increased military spending and emphasis on technological self-reliance in its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), indirectly impacts Hong Kong's defense posture. While Hong Kong does not engage in defense acquisitions or have its own defense industry, it benefits from the overarching capabilities and strategic shifts of the PLA. The focus on national security within Hong Kong, reinforced by the SNSO, aligns with Beijing's holistic approach to national security, where military and internal security are seen as interconnected.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Hong Kong is likely to continue experiencing the full effects of its national security legislation, with authorities maintaining a firm stance on perceived threats to national security. The focus on cybersecurity will intensify, particularly concerning AI technologies, as the government seeks to balance technological advancement with security imperatives. Economically, Hong Kong will remain susceptible to global geopolitical headwinds, including the ongoing Middle East conflict and the evolving dynamics of US-China relations, which could impact trade and investment flows.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: A critical flashpoint remains the potential for further international criticism and diplomatic pressure regarding Hong Kong's human rights and political freedoms under the national security laws. Any new arrests or

prosecutions under the SNSO, particularly involving foreign nationals or those with overseas ties, could exacerbate these tensions. Cybersecurity vulnerabilities, especially concerning critical infrastructure and the adoption of new AI technologies, represent a significant risk area for potential disruption or data breaches. The broader US-China strategic competition, including any developments in the Taiwan Strait or South China Sea, could also indirectly heighten security vigilance in Hong Kong.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the frequency and nature of arrests and prosecutions under the national security laws, particularly any cases involving sedition, espionage, or external interference. Developments in Hong Kong's cybersecurity policy and the implementation of its critical infrastructure protection law will be important, alongside any reported cyber incidents. Economically, tracking foreign direct investment, trade figures, and the performance of the Hang Seng Index will provide insights into the impact of geopolitical factors. Diplomatic statements from major international actors regarding Hong Kong, as well as the trajectory of US-China high-level engagements, will also be crucial.

Strategic recommendations: For Hong Kong authorities, a strategic recommendation would be to enhance transparency regarding the application of national security laws to mitigate international concerns, while simultaneously bolstering cybersecurity defenses across both government and critical private sectors. Economically, diversifying trade partnerships and strengthening resilience against global shocks would be prudent. For international businesses and individuals operating in Hong Kong, it is essential to remain fully aware of the implications of the national security legislation and cybersecurity regulations, conducting thorough risk assessments and ensuring compliance.

Structured Assessment

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ANNEX: COLLECTED ARTICLES BY SOURCE

Source: HK Free Press

- [Hongkongers are suffering as oil prices spike. There's a better way to help them.](#)

(2026-03-21 03:00)

I have sympathy for people who rely on fuel for their living. Truckers, cabbies and drivers have all had their costs increased because of the hateful and unnecessary war in Iran. Hong Kong lawmakers have asked the government to intervene, subsidising fuel costs during the price spike to help them through the rough patch. I [...]

- [Three charged with sneaking Nvidia AI chips from US into China](#) (2026-03-21 01:59)

Employees of a US computer company raked in billions of dollars diverting Nvidia artificial intelligence chips to China in violation of export controls, according to an indictment unsealed Thursday. Yih-Shyan “Wally” Liaw, 71, of Silicon Valley conspired with 53-year-old Ruei-Tsang “Steven” Chang and 44-year-old Ting-Wei “Willy” Sun of Taiwan to smuggle computer servers containing high-performance [...]

- [Philippines accuses China of ‘provocative’ target tracking on ship](#) (2026-03-21 00:05)

The Philippines said Friday that a Chinese navy ship directed its fire control radar towards one of its vessels in the disputed South China Sea this month, slamming the “provocative” move. The specialised radar provides precise targeting coordinates to a ship’s weapons systems. Chinese and Philippine ships regularly clash in the crucial waterway, which Beijing claims [...]

- [Tiananmen vigils ‘always promoted love, responsibility,’ Hong Kong activist tells subversion trial](#) (2026-03-20 23:30)

Hong Kong’s Tiananmen vigils had “always promoted love and responsibility” rather than “hatred and despair,” a democracy activist has told her national security trial. Chow Hang-tung, a former leader of the now-defunct Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, testified on Friday that the vigils had the power to unite participants, [...]

- [Businessman and construction graft whistleblower Jason Poon released on bail after fraud arrest](#) (2026-03-20 14:55)

A Hong Kong businessman who has taken on corruption in the construction sector has said he will focus more on his family following his arrest over alleged government-loan fraud. Jason Poon wrote on Facebook on Friday that he was safe and sound, shortly after local media reported he had been released on bail from the [...]

- [Tai Po fire probe: Blaze revealed systemic issues from potential collusion to ‘rubber-stamp inspections,’ inquiry hears](#) (2026-03-20 11:34)

The deadly blaze that killed 168 at a Tai Po housing estate in November revealed “widespread systemic issues” ranging from potential collusive tendering to rubber-stamp inspections and unauthorised proxy votes, a public inquiry has heard. Senior Counsel Victor Dawes, the lead lawyer for the independent committee probing the fire, said on Friday – the second [...]

- [Tai Po fire probe: Hong Kong fire department dismissed residents’ complaints about foam boards](#) (2026-03-20 10:34)

Wang Fuk Court residents’ complaints about flammable foam boards used to protect their buildings under renovation were dismissed by the Fire Services Department, which said the matter was not under its remit. On the second day of public hearings probing the deadly November fire in a Tai Po housing estate, senior counsel Victor Dawes presented [...]

- [Trump’ s Mideast muddle could play into Xi’ s hands at planned summit](#) (2026-03-20 09:37)

China will be in a stronger position to extract concessions from Donald Trump when the US president finally visits Beijing after becoming entangled in his Middle East war, analysts say. Trump had been due in the Chinese capital at the end of this month for talks with President Xi Jinping, but has delayed his trip [...]

- [Panama rejects CK Hutchison unit’ s claim of ignoring arbitration](#) (2026-03-20 07:41)

Panama’ s president denied Thursday that officials failed to respond to an arbitration lawsuit by the Hong Kong firm opposing the takeover of its Panama Canal operations, saying the government would “strongly” defend itself. The dispute stems from a Panama court ruling in January striking down the contract that let Panama Ports Company (PPC), a unit [...]

- [Police seize HK\\$200k of drugs in Lamma Island raid, Filipino couple arrested for alleged trafficking and child abuse](#) (2026-03-20 07:29)

Hong Kong’ s marine police arrested a Filipino couple on Lamma Island as officers seized around HK\$200,000 worth of cannabis and cocaine during a 5am raid on Thursday. Police told HKFP on Friday that the 42-year-old man and 36-year-old woman were also arrested on suspicion of child abuse and neglect after their 26-month-old son was reportedly [...]

- [Hong Kong sinks in World Happiness Report index to lowest-ever position](#) (2026-03-20 05:29)

Hong Kong has fallen to its lowest-ever position on the World Happiness Report, falling down the index for the sixth consecutive year to 90th out of 147 territories. The study was released on Thursday to coincide with the UN’ s International Day of Happiness on Friday. The city dropped from 88th to 90th in the latest index, sandwiched [...]

- [100 people evacuated after fire hits Tsuen Wan village](#) (2026-03-20 05:00)

A hundred residents have been evacuated after a No. 3 alarm fire broke out at Lo Wai village in Tsuen Wan, according to the Fire Services Department (FSD). Lee Ho-yin, an FSD commander, told reporters shortly after midnight on Friday that the blaze was extinguished around five hours after firefighters arrived at the scene. The [...]

- [Housing Bureau’s inspection unit alerted renovation consultant before safety checks, Tai Po fire inquiry hears](#) (2026-03-19 23:30)

A Housing Bureau inspection unit disclosed advanced details of safety checks to the consultant in charge of renovation at Wang Fuk Court, weeks before a fatal fire burned down the housing estate, a public inquiry has heard. The independent committee tasked with investigating the deadly Wang Fuk Court fire heard on Thursday that the Housing [...]

- [Macau’s new security law allows for trials behind closed doors](#) (2026-03-19 14:38)

Macau passed a bill on Thursday that will allow judges to hear national security cases behind closed doors and require defence lawyers to obtain clearances before appearing in such cases. The national security bill buttresses Macau’s Committee for Safeguarding National Security (CDSE), which was created in 2018 to support the Chinese city’s leader in security [...]

- [MPs call on UK gov’t to ‘urgently’ extradite manosphere influencer Andrew Tate from Hong Kong](#) (2026-03-19 12:44)

UK members of parliament have reportedly called for Andrew Tate to be extradited from Hong Kong, prompting the controversial manosphere influencer to taunt the British government to “come get” him. “Here I am, I’m in Hong Kong. I’m going nowhere, come get me,” the British-American influencer said in a four-minute video posted on Wednesday afternoon, [...]

- [Deadly Wang Fuk Court fire ‘most likely’ caused by smoking, public inquiry hears](#) (2026-03-19 11:39)

The massive blaze at a Tai Po housing estate in November was “most likely” caused by smoking, a public inquiry has heard, as a committee investigating the fatal disaster began hearing evidence on Thursday. The independent committee tasked with investigating the Wang Fuk Court fire also heard that firefighter Ho Wai-ho, who died in the [...]

- [Mainland Chinese woman denies using fake degree for Hong Kong Top Talent visa, blames agent](#) (2026-03-19 07:20)

A mainland Chinese woman is facing trial after allegedly using fake academic credentials in order to obtain Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) visas for her family of five. 36-year-old Xu Lina appeared at Shatin Magistrates’ Court on Wednesday. She pleaded not guilty to the charge of conspiracy to defraud, Ming Pao reported. The defendant said [...]

- [Hong Kong democracy activist says ‘no enmity’ for Chinese Communist Party](#) (2026-03-19 05:48)

A veteran Hong Kong pro-democracy activist said during his trial on national security charges on Wednesday that ending one-party rule would not mean ending the Chinese Communist Party’s leadership. The Chinese financial hub used to hold annual candlelight vigils to mark Beijing’s deadly crackdown on demonstrators in and around Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, [...]

- [Hong Kong to introduce campsite booking system by National Day, environment chief says](#) (2026-03-19 04:49)

Hong Kong’s environment minister has said that the government plans to introduce a booking system for campsites by the National Day holiday in October. Speaking at the Legislative Council on Wednesday, Secretary for Environment and Ecology Tse Chin-wan said the government would study the feasibility of a reservation-and-payment system. “I really hope we can launch [...]

- [Hong Kong gov’t urges primary schools with low enrolment to merge as 15 risk closure](#) (2026-03-18 23:30)

The Hong Kong government has urged primary schools with low enrolment to merge, after 15 public schools were banned from operating Primary One classes in the coming academic year due to insufficient students. Secretary for Education Christine Choi made the suggestion on RTHK on Wednesday, a day after the Education Bureau (EDB) released the results [...]

- [Macau woman hospitalised after being startled by humanoid robot](#) (2026-03-18 10:10)

A woman on an evening walk in Macau was briefly hospitalised after a humanoid robot startled her and left her feeling unwell, police told AFP on Wednesday. Police said they had received a call for assistance for the woman, who “was startled when she suddenly noticed a robot behind her while using her mobile phone” . [...]

- [Nvidia chief says tech firm restarting production of China-bound chips](#) (2026-03-18 06:16)

Nvidia chief Jensen Huang on Tuesday said the AI technology powerhouse is restarting production of its high-performance chips for clients in China. “We have received purchase orders from many customers, and we’re in the process of restarting our manufacturing,” Huang told journalists at Nvidia’s annual developers conference in San Jose, California. “Our supply chain is [...]

- [Hong Kong actor among 7 who lose appeals over 2019 storming of legislature](#) (2026-03-18 05:41)

A Hong Kong actor is among seven people who have lost their appeals in a rioting case over the storming of the city’s legislature in 2019, at the height of pro-democracy protests and unrest that year. Actor Gregory Wong appealed against his conviction and six-year-and-two-month jail

term for rioting on July 1, 2019, when demonstrators [...]

- [Hong Kong parents charged with child abuse after son, 5, swept into sea during Super Typhoon Ragasa](#) (2026-03-18 04:38)

A Hong Kong couple whose five-year-old son was swept into the sea during Super Typhoon Ragasa have been granted bail after being charged with child abuse. The couple appeared at the Eastern Magistrates' Court on Tuesday for the first mention and were granted bail of HK\$2,000 each, local media reported. The case was adjourned until [...]

- [‘No such meaning’ : Demand for end to one-party rule not call to ‘overthrow’ CCP, Tiananmen vigil activist says](#) (2026-03-17 23:30)

A Tiananmen vigil activist standing trial in Hong Kong has taken the stand and denied that his demand for an end to one-party rule in China amounted to a call to overthrow the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Activist and former lawmaker Lee Cheuk-yan took the stand on Tuesday and said that he simply hoped the [...]

- [Yahoo Hong Kong to begin ‘phased wind-down’ of news business in April](#) (2026-03-17 11:25)

Yahoo Hong Kong is winding down its news operation in line with its “strategic evaluation and long-term business planning.” Above The Line, a PR company representing Yahoo Hong Kong, told HKFP on Tuesday that the tech firm “will begin a phased wind-down of its media content operations in Hong Kong starting in April, with completion [...]

- [China says takes note of US ‘clarifications’ on possible delay to Trump visit](#) (2026-03-17 11:05)

China said on Tuesday it had “noted” clarifications from the United States about the reasons for a possible delay to President Donald Trump’s planned trip. Trump expected to visit Beijing at the end of March, but said on Monday he had asked Beijing to delay his summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping by around a [...]

- [CK Hutchison unit says Panama failed to respond to lawsuit over ports seizure](#) (2026-03-17 07:06)

A subsidiary of Hong Kong conglomerate CK Hutchison said Panamanian officials had not responded to its lawsuit opposing the suspension of its Panama Canal operations because they had failed to hire lawyers. A Panamanian court declared in January that a contract, which had allowed CK Hutchison unit Panama Ports Company (PPC) to manage the Pacific [...]

- [Hong Kong seeks to complete Northern Metropolis legislation this year to speed up development, city leader says](#) (2026-03-17 06:32)

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee has said the government plans to complete legislation for the Northern Metropolis in 2026 to speed up the mega-project’s development along the

city’ s border. Lee spoke during a weekly press conference on Tuesday, hours before the government was expected to submit documents for the Northern Metropolis legislation to the [...]]

- [Hong Kong to see ‘shocks, volatility’ in oil supply amid Middle East war, leader John Lee says](#) (2026-03-17 05:29)

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee has warned of “shocks and volatility” in the city’ s oil supply amid the ongoing war in the Middle East, saying that the government is in talks with airlines and fuel suppliers. Addressing reporters at a weekly press conference on Tuesday morning, Lee said he was “very concerned” about the [...]]

- [Over 400 homeowners from fire-hit Tai Po complex petition city leader for help meeting estate management](#) (2026-03-16 23:30)

More than 400 homeowners from the fire-hit Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po have petitioned Hong Kong leader John Lee to facilitate a meeting between residents and the government-appointed administrator, Hop On Management. As of Monday afternoon, 431 flat owners – including representatives of those killed in the November inferno – had signed the letter, [...]]

- [China says ‘maintaining communication’ with US over Trump’ s visit](#) (2026-03-16 11:42)

Beijing said on Monday it is in talks with Washington over an expected visit by US President Donald Trump, who has pressured NATO allies and China to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Trade is set to take centre stage in the potential talks between President Xi Jinping and Trump expected at the end of [...]]

- [Mui Wo-bound ferry caught in fishing net, stranded at sea for an hour](#) (2026-03-16 10:05)

A Mui Wo-bound ferry was stranded at sea for an hour after getting stuck in what appeared to be a fishing boat’ s net, HKFP has learned. A Sun Ferry vessel, which departed the Central Pier No. 6 at 3.10pm on Monday, got stuck in a fishing boat’ s net at around 3.35pm, passenger Nicky Blokhoff told [...]]

- [Google’ s Gemini AI chatbot finally rolling out to all Hongkongers](#) (2026-03-16 08:00)

Google has said it will gradually open its Gemini Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool to all users in Hong Kong, with the accompanying mobile app to follow. For years, Hong Kong has been ranked alongside mainland China, Syria and North Korea as a place where tech firms avoid rolling out their AI chatbots. OpenAI and Microsoft [...]]

- [Trump pressures NATO, China over Iran’ s closure of strategic waterway](#) (2026-03-16 07:17)

By AFP teams in Jerusalem, Tehran, Manama, Dubai, Baghdad and Washington President Donald Trump on Sunday sought to pressure NATO allies and China to help reopen the Strait of

Hormuz, the critical oil transport conduit that Iran has effectively closed in retaliation for the US and Israeli war against Tehran. Global oil prices have surged [...]

- [Kai Tak Sports Park named one of TIME’ s World’ s Greatest Places 2026](#) (2026-03-16 06:41)

Hong Kong’ s Kai Tak Sports Park has been included on TIME’ s World’ s Greatest Places 2026 list, with the American magazine praising the stadium as a “technological standout.” The mention on the annual list comes as Kai Tak Sports Park – which cost HK\$30 billion to build – marks its first anniversary. Kai Tak Sports Park [...]

- [Manosphere influencers Andrew and Tristan Tate, accused of rape and trafficking, revel in Hong Kong](#) (2026-03-16 05:52)

Controversial influencers Andrew and Tristan Tate, British-American brothers who face human trafficking and rape charges in Romania and the UK, have made an appearance in Hong Kong. Andrew Tate, 39, posted a video on his X account at around 1.30am on Saturday, showing himself and his brother, Tristan, 36, in the city’ s nightlife district Lan [...]

- [Hong Kong couple arrested for suspected child neglect after boy, 1, falls to death from Tsuen Wan flat](#) (2026-03-15 23:30)

A Hong Kong couple have been arrested after their one-year-old son fell to his death from their Tsuen Wan flat. Police told HKFP they received a call at around 10.37am on Sunday that a boy had been found lying on a podium at Hanley Villa, a housing complex in Tsuen Wan. He was suspected of [...]

- [China, South Korea power into Women’ s Asian Cup semifinals](#) (2026-03-15 07:26)

Defending champions China scored twice in extra-time to book a blockbuster semi-final against hosts Australia at the Women’ s Asian Cup on Saturday, with a dominant South Korea joining them in the last four. Hard-working Shao Ziqin brilliantly fired into the right corner in the 94th minute at Perth and China sealed a tense 2-0 victory [...]

- [Trump, Xi prepare to meet amidst Iran war, uncertain goals](#) (2026-03-15 02:00)

By Danny Kemp and Beiyi Seow with Isabel Kua in Beijing Just over two weeks before President Donald Trump is due to meet his counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing, Chinese uncertainty over the US leader’ s goals and the impact of the Iran war hang over the highly anticipated state visit. Trump’ s trip, his first to [...]

- [Hong Kong to retire 22-year-old ‘Symphony of Lights’ show – but few tourists will miss it](#) (2026-03-15 00:30)

On a Friday evening in March, the Avenue of Stars was packed with tourists jostling for the perfect selfie spot against the Tsim Sha Tsui harbourfront. When the clock struck 8pm, more phones went up in the air as green lasers flickered across the nightscape. In the background,

tourists could make out the faint sound [...]

- [UN human rights chief concerned by China's 'ethnic unity' law](#) (2026-03-14 06:01)

UN rights chief Volker Turk voiced concerns Friday about China's so-called "ethnic unity" law, saying it could restrict freedom of religion and culture. The law, passed Thursday by the National People's Congress, formalises policies to promote Mandarin as the "national common language" in education, official business and public places. Rights advocates warn the law could [...]

- ['We're family': AI agent 'lobster fever' grips China despite risks](#) (2026-03-14 03:00)

Chinese entrepreneur Frank Gao used to spend long hours running his social media accounts but now outsources the chore to AI agent tool OpenClaw, which is taking the country by storm despite official warnings over cybersecurity. OpenClaw, created in November by an Austrian coder, differs from bots like ChatGPT because it can execute real-life tasks [...]

- [Clearer statistics the missing link in Hong Kong's waste reduction](#) (2026-03-14 02:00)

By Steven Chan, The Green Earth Ten years ago, the government introduced the Food Wise Hong Kong campaign featuring the unforgettable mascot Big Waster – a cartoon character with eyes literally bigger than his stomach. His catchy rap still rings in our ears: "Order only portions you can finish, buy only what you need... Stop [...]"

Source: RTHK English News

- [Hygiene urged on public to ward off meningitis risk](#) (2026-03-21 05:37)

A prominent paediatrician has urged people to maintain good personal hygiene, warning the public that sporadic cases of a life-threatening bacterial infection will continue to surface. Dr Mike Kwan, president of the Asian Society for Paediatric Infectious Diseases, made the remarks after the Centre for Health Protection reported on Friday that a three-year-old boy had contracted an invasive meningococcal infection. According to the centre, the toddler developed a fever and vomiting spell on March 17, a day before he was taken to Kwong Wah Hospital's accident and emergency department the following day and warded. Health officials said he remains in a serious condition. Laboratory tests on samples of his blood and cerebrospinal fluid came back positive for meningococcus, with a clinical diagnosis of meningitis. Four cases have been recorded in Hong Kong so far this year. The centre is also monitoring developments with a recent outbreak of invasive meningococcal infections in Kent, England. Kwan noted that while such infections were very rare in Hong Kong, cases could show up sporadically. "I believe there will continue to be cases. On average, last year, there was about one case a month," he said on a radio programme on Saturday. "Relatively speaking, cases will keep appearing, but it also depends on environmental factors and whether there are group gatherings." Kwan pointed to a previous cluster as an example. "Last year, at a renovation site for a hospital, two workers were

infected, showing that the disease can easily spread in the workplace if there is contact," he said. "That's something everyone should be careful about." Symptoms can include fever and skin rashes, Kwan added. Kwan said he did not believe the case involving the three-year-old boy was linked to the cluster in the UK. "I believe it is not related to the UK cluster, and this indicates that in Hong Kong, we really have asymptomatic carriers of the meningococcal infection whomake up around 10 percent of our population," he said. Edited by Robert Kemp

- [Motorists to get weekly pump price updates from April](#) (2026-03-21 05:20)

The government will publish pump prices on a weekly basis from April to help motorists make better comparisons in their choice of petrol stations. The information provided will include discounts offered by oil companies as well as international prices for refined oil. Speaking on a radio programme on Saturday, Secretary for Environment and Ecology Tse Chin-wan also said oil supply to Hong Kong would remain stable – at a time when the US-Israeli attacks on Iran have led to supply and price shocks – as the mainland provided most of the fuel that the city needed. For example, he pointed out, supplies to the SAR were unaffected when the start of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022 triggered an oil crisis internationally. However, Tse said prices charged for fuel in Hong Kong would be left up to the market to decide and that the announcements of price changes would boost transparency. "The public can accurately monitor changes in oil prices through such information and tell whether there have been any incidences where prices have risen quickly but come down slowly – or where prices have been raised by a greater quantum but lowered by a lesser one," he said. Writing on social media, the Environment and Ecology Bureau said major suppliers of automotive fuels were asked in a meeting this week to keep fuel supply stable. It cited suppliers as saying that price increases at local petrol stations had been relatively moderate compared to the sharp surge in international refined oil prices and price increases in other regions. It said the government would continue to closely monitor geopolitical developments and trends in international fuel prices to ensure the SAR's energy supply. Edited by Robert Kemp

- [Five shots fired as knife man charges at officers](#) (2026-03-21 02:35)

Police say a 43-year-old man is in hospital after being shot by officers in Kwai Chung on Saturday morning. According to police, the incident began just after midnight when officers received a report that a man was wandering near Tsuen Wan MTR station holding a sharp weapon. Officers searched the area but were unable to locate anyone. Around half an hour later, police received another report that a man armed with a weapon had been spotted on Cheung Wing Road in Kwai Chung. Again, officers found no one. Then, at about 1 am, several drivers reported seeing a man walking along Castle Peak Road with a knife and a metal rod. Senior Superintendent Iu Wing-kan said that as officers were searching the area, the man jumped out from the bushes and charged at them. He said police immediately issued a verbal warning, and then used pepper spray when the warning proved ineffective. "The man continued to charge towards our colleagues with the weapons he was carrying, shouting, 'I'll slash you'. At the same time, after the warning was ineffective, one of our emergency unit officers fired two

shots at the man in an attempt to stop him," he said. "After the shots were fired, the man did not cease his assault; he continued to chase after our colleagues, attempting to harm them with his sharp weapon. "Then another emergency unit officer fired one shot, hoping to subdue him, but it still did not have the desired effect. Finally, our third emergency unit officer fired two shots at him, successfully subduing him." Iu said that the shooting took place at a distance of approximately two to five metres and that the environment was well lit. The suspect was taken to Princess Margaret Hospital for surgery. Iu described him as a 43-year-old construction worker who holds a Hong Kong identity card and has no prior criminal record. Iu said he believed his colleagues had no other viable options and had issued ample warnings before making what he called a "difficult decision". Edited by Robert Kemp

- [No conclusions drawn on Wang Fuk Court blaze: govt](#) (2026-03-20 15:10)

The government said on Friday that a probe into the Wang Fuk Court blaze is still ongoing, and that no conclusions have been drawn so far. In a statement, a spokesperson said a government-appointed independent committee is currently investigating the fire in an open, fair and impartial manner; and that the committee's senior counsel has simply been laying out the evidence that had been collected so far. The statement made clear that no conclusions have been reached, and that it would be inappropriate to infer that the committee has already drawn up a judgment at such an early stage. The government stressed it would continue to cooperate with the committee, while at the same time implement follow-up and remedial measures. Edited by Priscilla Ng

- [One-stop platform to help mainland firms go global](#) (2026-03-20 13:09)

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Algernon Yau, on Friday said Hong Kong is prepared to help more mainland enterprises go global, as authorities launched a one-stop platform to better match professional services with businesses. The "GoGlobal" thematic website, launched by InvestHK, also includes the first phase of a cross-sector professional services platform rolled out by the Trade Development Council. The platform brings together service providers in eight major sectors, including finance, legal, accounting, branding and marketing, logistics, communication tech, infrastructure and real estate, as well as testing and certification. "We have specially established a cross-sector professional service platform, enabling mainland enterprises planning to expand their overseas business to systematically connect with professional service teams from various sectors in Hong Kong," Yau told participants at a seminar in Beijing. "It'll [also] provide mainland enterprises with confidence and high-value-added services for their overseas expansion." Meanwhile, Alpha Lau, director-general of InvestHK, noted that Hong Kong offers a reliable and strategic platform for mainland companies to expand overseas amid heightened geopolitical tension. "Whenever there're crises, there're also opportunities, no matter its overseas enterprises seeking for expansion, or mainland businesses going global, they are looking for growth, and the highest economic growth is in Asia," she said. The seminar also saw InvestHK sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the China Council for International Investment Promotion to jointly

promote and assist mainland businesses with their expansion plans. Edited by Priscilla Ng

- [Swire Coca-Cola wins HK\\$32m government water deal](#) (2026-03-20 10:27)

Swire Coca-Cola has been awarded a contract to supply more than 1.46 million bottles of water, valued at nearly HK\$32 million, to government offices on Hong Kong Island and parts of the outlying islands. According to a Government Logistics Department notice, the contract was awarded on Tuesday, following an open tender launched in December. At the time, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau said the procurement process featured strengthened requirements at various stages – covering document preparation, tender evaluation and contract management – to prevent fraudulent acts and ensure a stable supply. The department was at the centre of a major procurement scandal last year, after it was revealed that it had awarded a HK\$52 million contract for supplying various government offices with bottled water to Xin Ding Xin – a firm that was later accused of lying about how it sourced the water from the mainland. Edited by Tony Sabine

- ['More Mideast family offices could come to HK'](#) (2026-03-20 09:19)

Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury Christopher Hui said more family offices from the Middle East could set up shop in Hong Kong amid the ongoing conflict there. In a newspaper interview published on Friday, Hui also said more family offices from the region are expected to attend the Wealth for Good in Hong Kong summit next week compared with previous years. The annual event is a flagship wealth conference that brings together the global heads of ultra-rich family offices and their advisers. Hui told the Hong Kong Economic Journal that the presence of overseas family offices here "does not depend on a single incident". He said preparation work by the government, along with changes in the international situation, made family offices from the Middle East more eager to learn about the Hong Kong market. Hui added that about 20-25 percent of participants of the Wealth for Good in Hong Kong summit in the past might have decided to establish their offices in Hong Kong, adding that the conference this year could help the city explore more opportunities in the Middle East and the Global South. He said the government hopes to convey the message that Hong Kong is "a society with depth". Edited by Edmond Fong

- [13 arrested for money laundering via iAM smart app](#) (2026-03-20 09:01)

Police on Friday said they had arrested 13 people who were suspected of laundering about HK\$113 million between June last year and January this year by tricking people looking for jobs into helping the syndicate get hold of iAM smart accounts which they then used to create fake identities. Speaking at a press briefing, acting superintendent Wong Yuk-yan said an operation was conducted between March 18 and 19, during which officers arrested 13 people from the syndicate including nine men and four women aged between 38 and 75. "The criminal syndicate registered stored value facility accounts with different phone numbers and then published fake advertisements for cleaners in newspapers," she said. "The syndicate asked job seekers to open an iAM Smart account at a nearby self-registration kiosk, claiming to use them for registration

and payroll. It then used these accounts for identity verification to launder and receive stolen money," she added. Police said it recovered around HK\$2 million in illicitly gained funds. Combined with 12 people previously arrested between last October and January this year, 25 people have now been detained in connection with this syndicate involving some 105 fraud cases, Wong noted. Most cases were job scams, she said. Computers, mobile phones and bankcards were also seized in the operation. Police said money laundering is a serious offence, with penalties of up to HK\$5 million in fines and 14 years imprisonment. It also urged the public to secure their own personal accounts and privacy information from scams. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Suspicious proxy votes went unaddressed, inquiry hears](#) (2026-03-20 08:46)

Complaints about suspicious proxy votes at an owners' meeting were left unaddressed, the inquiry into the Wang Fuk Court inferno was told on Friday. On the second day of hearings, the independent committee's senior counsel, Victor Dawes, continued his opening remarks by saying that a special owners' meeting to discuss renovation works was attended by over 200 people, yet 570 votes were cast. Some owners later said they had never authorised anyone to vote on their behalf, but proxy votes bearing their names still appeared. Dawes said some owners had lodged complaints with government departments and agencies, but the Buildings Department and the Urban Renewal Authority both said the matter fell outside their purview. The Home Affairs Department, meanwhile, referred the matter to the Competition Commission and the Wang Fuk Court owners' corporation management committee. However, Dawes pointed out that the management committee itself was subject to complaints. The probe also heard that Wang Fuk Court's fire safety system had been out of service for more than half a year prior to the inferno. Edited by Aaron Tam

- ['Sports and entertainment combine to boost economy'](#) (2026-03-20 07:30)

Representatives from the sports sector are optimistic about Hong Kong's growing sports scene, with many highlighting the potential of combining athletics with entertainment to boost the city's global image and economic vitality. Kenneth Fok, vice-president of the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China, expressed hope for a stronger event economy, especially with new world-class venues like the Kai Tak Sports Park coming online. "Now that we have Kai Tak and all these world-class stadiums in our city. So how do we change?" he said. "Not just to make the competition better, but more importantly how to add in elements of entertainment and also culture and tourism into our existing infrastructure." Fok also revealed plans to form a research group to gather input from across the sports sector, with the goal of feeding those insights into the city's upcoming five-year plan. "This work will start as soon as possible, and I look forward to meeting with our sports counterparts and listening to their views and see how we could contribute positively, not just to sports development, but to the overall well-being of Hong Kong," he said. During a panel discussion, Michael Cheng, president of the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association, echoed the need for a cross-sector approach. He pointed to the city's history of hosting major international tennis events as a

foundation to build upon. "When we did the ATP and WTA events, in Asia only Tokyo and Beijing had them. We were the third city to do it," he said. "We started to see the development of sports entertainment. We hope to be at the front of it so that the integration of culture, sports and entertainment will promote Hong Kong's image. "It projects an image of vitality, drives the economy and also engages young people." Andy Kwok, captain of the Hong Kong Golf Club, reflected on the success of the LIV Golf tournament, which was introduced to the city three years ago. He said the event was designed from the outset to use sports as a driver for tourism and economic growth. Kwok noted that the tournament attracted high-spending spectators, with over 40 percent coming from overseas or other Greater Bay Area cities. That influx, he said, helped boost local consumption and overnight stays. "It had a very positive effect for promoting Hong Kong's reputation as a major events city worldwide," he said. Meanwhile, Eric Fok, chairman of the Football Association of Hong Kong, China, highlighted the growing enthusiasm for local football. He said attendance records were broken last year, with multiple matches selling out. He stressed the importance of cross-industry collaboration to drive spending and make events more appealing. Fok also teased upcoming plans for the Hong Kong Football Festival, revealing that the association hopes to invite several European teams to participate, with more details expected to be announced soon. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Diners 'can't tell pre-made from cook-to-order dishes'](#) (2026-03-20 07:22)

A youth think tank on Friday revealed that more than 90 percent of diners in a survey found it difficult to tell whether dishes served up by restaurants had been freshly cooked or pre-made, with most calling for mandatory labelling to restore trust. The finding came following a survey by a think tank, run by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, to gauge the expectations and understanding of dishes served up to diners. The report is based on a survey conducted between December and February of 800 locals aged between 18 and 64, along with interviews with 13 individuals and seven experts, scholars and industry practitioners. It found that 91.3 percent of respondents struggled to distinguish pre-made dishes – that is, those that have been merely reheated or cooked from packaged food or require just a few steps to get them ready to be served up – from freshly cooked dishes. Around 83.3 percent want eateries to clearly mark out those dishes that they have "fully prepared" while 64 percent still expect all dishes to be cooked to order when they go to a restaurant. The deputy convenor of the society and livelihood group at the think tank, Vivian Lai, said it was becoming difficult for people to distinguish freshly prepared food by relying on just their taste buds and the appearance of the dishes since technological advancements had made the two virtually indistinguishable to some people. The diners' concerns about pre-made dishes centre around their lack of the "wok hei" – or the smoky charred aroma of Chinese food plated fresh off the wok – and their abundance of additives and ensuing bad flavour, texture and freshness. "We found that 83.3 percent of our respondents believe that restaurants should indicate their use of pre-made dishes, while 79.9 percent think such dishes should be priced lower than cooked-to-order ones," Lai said. She also noted that while 42.5 percent would lose confidence if restaurants failed to disclose their use of pre-made dishes, 49 percent would still visit a restaurant as long as their

use of such dishes was made clear to customers. The report also cited food and beverage experts as saying that labour shortages and high costs were the main drivers behind eateries opting for the pre-made option. The think tank has three suggestions: develop an official voluntary certification scheme to indicate use of prepared dishes; formulate practical guidelines under the Trade Description Ordinance to pinpoint non-compliance scenarios; and enhance consumer understanding through public education with government-produced materials and community-based programmes in place. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Talent recruits 'contributing HK\\$34bn to GDP a year'](#) (2026-03-20 06:03)

Secretary for Labour and Welfare Chris Sun on Friday said the government had achieved "remarkable results" over the past three years with a comprehensive talent drive that has seen recruits contributing some HK\$34 billion to the local economy each year. His remarks came as he delivered a keynote speech at the Hong Kong International Talents Conference, a satellite event under the Global Talent Summit Week that is running till March 29. Speaking at the event in Tsim Sha Tsui, Sun noted that more than 270,000 people had arrived in the SAR over the past three years under various talent schemes. As some of them have also brought their families to live in the SAR, the HK\$34 billion estimate of their contributions accounted for some 1.2 percent of the city's gross domestic product, he added. Sun also noted the city's rise from ninth to fourth on the World Talent Ranking 2025, published by the International Institute for Management Development, saying the jump represented "hard-won progress" in Hong Kong's bid to be one of the world's most competitive economies for people with key skills. "Looking ahead to the next few years, Hong Kong will continue in its efforts to build a talent hub. This is also in line with the positioning of Hong Kong as outlined in the national 15th Five-Year Plan. "Therefore, we are definitely going in this direction," Sun told event participants. "However, although the government provides policies and makes things more convenient, how do these turn into concrete results? We'll need enterprises, institutions and talent-related associations to work together on this matter," he added. Sun also noted that the just concluded flagship International Talent Forum and CareerConnectExpo events held on Wednesday and Thursday saw much better turnouts of more than 10,000, higher than an initial estimate of 7,000. Online attendance was also much better than expected, with events logging some 170,000 against an initial estimate of 130,000. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Wang Fuk blaze hearing turns attention to foam boards](#) (2026-03-20 05:11)

A probe into the Wang Fuk Court inferno was told on Friday that the main contractor of the renovation works there appeared to have used fire-resistant foam boards along with ones that were not. On the second day of hearings, the independent committee's senior counsel, Victor Dawes, continued his opening remarks by discussing how foam boards – used to shield windows at the residential estates' eight blocks – had affected the spread of the deadly fire. He said there is evidence showing that the contractor, Prestige Construction and Engineering, first proposed using the foam boards at a meeting in mid-2024. Another consultant, Will Power, pointed out that foam is flammable, but its proposal of using plywood was shot down by

Prestige, which argued foam boards could do a better job at protecting windows. Dawes cited evidence collected by the police as showing that order records have indicated the older foamboards used were not fire resistant. The hearing was also told that the Wang Fuk Court owners' management corporation had received complaints about the use of non-fire resistant materials, and Prestige then said it will purchase new foam boards. Dawes inferred that the contractor had purchased new and more expensive fire-resistant foam boards which were used in places where non-fire resistant ones had not been installed. The barrister also said some residents had raised their concerns about the use of foam boards to the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Housing Bureau's Independent Checking Unit, which carries out site safety audit checks. He said the FSD had inspected the estate in September 2024 and discovered there were many foamboards, but closed the case, saying that it is not the department's role to deal with the issue. However, Dawes noted that fire safety laws indicate the department has to provide advice over fire safety measures and fire hazards when necessary. He added the committee will continue to give more evidence on whether it thinks the department's response was appropriate or not. Before proceedings began on Friday, committee chair Justice David Lok noted that many people have jumped to conclusions after the first day of hearings. He stressed that the act of making public the evidence related to the Wang Fuk fire is to allow parties being probed to respond. The judge said even though he understood people's feelings about the matter, they should remain objective. _____ Last updated: 2026-03-20 HKT 13:43 Edited by Aaron Tam

- ['No high threat of meningitis to HK amid UK outbreak'](#) (2026-03-20 04:53)

An infectious disease expert on Friday said the immediate threat of meningitis is not high in Hong Kong despite the ongoing outbreak in Britain. Lau Yu-lung, chairman of the scientific committee on vaccine preventable diseases at the Centre for Health Protection, told RTHK the disease can be spread through close contact, including kissing, sharing of utensils and sneezing or coughing. He warned meningitis is extremely severe, and the death rate can be quite high if individuals do not get vaccinated against it. The professor noted that no Hong Kong students are involved in the outbreak in Kent, but still, those studying abroad should be cautious. "For those who are returning to Hong Kong and if they have any symptoms that suggest meningitis like high fever, headache, stiff neck, then they should really be alerted to seek help from doctors as soon as possible," he said. "In particular, if they have rashes on the skin and that rash is not blanchable, that means when you press on it and it doesn't go away, it still remains there, then it's suggesting it could be what we call blood poisoning [due to meningitis]." He added that patients will develop rashes at a very late stage, and that they should get help once they feel unwell. Lau said the city recorded 11 cases in total last year, and three so far this year, and that the incidence rate here is much lower than in places such as Europe. "And that's why the committee did not think last time when we met, we needed to have a population-based vaccination programme," he said. "However, the message from the committee is very clear — if you are going to stay in Europe, or in places where you know there will be outbreaks, especially if you are students staying in a dormitory, the advice is to get all the vaccinations before you

leave." Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Tower crane checks 'must cover metal fatigue'](#) (2026-03-20 04:07)

A trade unionist on Friday called for a review of guidelines covering tower crane inspections with a view towards including checks for structural fatigue. The call came after a tower crane collapsed at a public housing buildings site in Kwai Chung on Thursday, killing the cab operator. Chau Sze-kit, chairman of the Hong Kong Construction Industry Employees General Union, said his preliminary assessment showed the issue may be related to overload or metal fatigue, but the actual cause will be determined by the outcome of an investigation by the Labour Department. Chau said metal fatigue was not covered by current standard routine checks. "A comprehensive examination was conducted just this month," he told an RTHK radio programme. "Checks were also conducted at the site before the start of work every day. " However, the so-called inspections are mostly visual checks and standard mechanical tests on the brakes, electrical system and cables. "If metal fatigue was involved, it would not show up in current examinations. "Checks for metal fatigue are only conducted before the crane leaves the factory. "Labour Department guidelines also state that we only need to do a 10 percent [non-destructive test] on welded joints for tower cranes that are over 15 years old." In a statement, the department said it had issued a work suspension order to the contractor concerned, halting all tower crane operations at the site. It also urged employers to take adequate precautionary measures before using a tower crane, conduct regular tests and ensure that safe working loads are not exceeded before lifting operations begin. Speaking to reporters, labour chief Chris Sun on Friday said he was sad about the crane operator's death and expressed condolences to the affected family. He said authorities would seriously follow up on the incident and hold accountable any company, contractor, or person found to have breached the code. "The Labour Department's investigation will focus on several aspects. First, we will assess whether the crane installation and design are problematic. We will check whether the crane was securely installed," he said. "Based on the department's guidelines, routine checks have to be conducted. We will evaluate whether those checks followed our requirements and check whether the safe working load was exceeded while lifting." Edited by Tony Sabine

- ['N Metropolis more attractive if land use streamlined'](#) (2026-03-20 03:02)

The Development Bureau said on Friday that the proposed dedicated legislation for the Northern Metropolis will make sites more attractive for developers, as it hopes to expedite the process required for changing land use in non-conservation zones. It is looking to cut the current nine-month process to two by simplifying application procedures. Permanent Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands) Doris Ho told RTHK that companies value efficiency and the plan will help lure them to set up shop in the mega project. "Our investment promotion colleagues have always reminded us that if the industrial sites cannot be made available in the short-term, firms will not actually be interested in them," she said. "The current procedure takes about a year before we can complete the planning. By then, firms might have gone to other places or may no longer be interested in Hong Kong." As for whether the proposed streamlined

procedures would apply to wetland buffer areas, Ho said that will depend on their statutory land uses. “We’ve also made it clear that it is not that [these areas] cannot be developed. But if you have to develop them, detailed studies have to be carried out, including on the ecosystem,” she said. “For instance, if there are conservation zones in a buffer area, it is not included in the streamlined procedures. So it will depend on the statutory land uses of these areas.” Ho also said innovative construction technology to speed up building times will positively impact the mega project by reducing construction costs and making development more efficient. Edited by Aaron Tam

- ['Govt has taken swift measures in wake of Tai Po fire'](#) (2026-03-20 00:06)

The government on Thursday pledged full support for the work of the independent investigation committee probing the Wang Fuk Court inferno, after its first day of hearings heard that officials appeared to have given advance warning to contractors before inspections. The committee's senior counsel, Victor Dawes, said while the Housing Department had carried out inspections over mesh netting safety concerns prior to the deadly blaze at the Tai Po estate, evidence appeared to show that officials had disclosed their inspection times to contractors in advance. This, he said, gave contractors the chance to cover their tracks, adding that this practice has been a systemic problem. In a statement, a government spokesperson outlined a series of improvement measures that are being implemented. For example, the Fire Services Department has set up a dedicated taskforce and conducted inspections on fire safety installations at 461 buildings undergoing major renovations. Since January, it has also required contractors who want to shut down fire safety equipment to cater for renovation works to notify authorities beforehand and put up notices to alert residents and other parties. Special operations have been undertaken by the Buildings Department and the Housing Bureau's Independent Checking Unit, including site inspections of private buildings and subsidised housing developments. Officers verified if the mesh nettings were certified and ensured they were fire-retardant. Moving forward, the spokesperson said legislative amendments are set to be tabled to the Legislative Council in the first half of the year to ban smoking at construction sites. The Security Bureau, meanwhile, is working to strengthen the fire department's regulatory powers and increase penalties for contractors convicted of foul play, with such changes expected to be tabled to the legislature by the end of the year. And the Development Bureau is working with the Urban Renewal Authority to roll out an improved version of its Smart Tender programme for building renovation contracts, in a bid to stamp out bid-rigging. Edited by Cecil Wong

- [Palace Museum rides high with top national treasures](#) (2026-03-19 12:22)

The Hong Kong Palace Museum will host an exhibition of Chinese horse paintings from Friday until March 17 next year, featuring 76 works from the Palace Museum in Beijing, including 15 grade-one national treasures. The paintings, to be shown in four rotations, showcase nearly 100 works by more than 60 renowned artists from as early as the Yuan dynasty to the 20th century. More than 20 paintings and calligraphic works will feature in each rotation, with most of the works put on display for about three months to protect the light-sensitive paper and silk

materials they were crafted on. "Three horses" – a grade-one national treasure that was painted in the 14th century – will be on display for just one month to preserve the artwork. Daisy Wang, the deputy director in charge of curatorial, collection and programming, said visitors would have to rush if they wanted to see this particular exhibit. "This painting will be returned to the storage of the Forbidden City where it will sleep for three years, so even if you travelled to Beijing to see the Forbidden City, you won't be able to see it because we want to make sure that it gets enough rest so that our descendants can continue to see it," Wang said. The exhibition will allow visitors to, for the first time ever, create an interactive AI-assisted work in the styles of three painters from China, France and Italy. It will also feature multimedia installations, such as an animation video gallery and interactive poetry games. Learning workshops, guided tours and talks related to the exhibition will also be organised. Edited by Aaron Tam

- [HK to contribute to national tech self-sufficiency: FS \(2026-03-19 10:31\)](#)

Financial Secretary Paul Chan on Thursday said Hong Kong can leverage its research and financial strengths to contribute to the country's tech self-sufficiency push, as the SAR works on drafting its own first five-year development strategy. Speaking at a seminar on the country's new 15th five-year blueprint in Beijing, Chan also reiterated government's determination in transforming the Northern Metropolis into a hub for the city's innovation and tech development. In his speech, Chan noted the new national five-year plan has made comprehensive arrangements on how to better develop scientific and technological innovation in the country. He added the SAR could aid the country to achieve tech self-sufficiency at a much faster pace — thanks to its emerging strengths in fields such as artificial intelligence, life science, fintech, as well as new energy and materials. "From artificial intelligence to life sciences, from integrated circuits to commercial aerospace, we've seen new fields and industries emerging at a faster pace," he told some 400 participants in the capital. "Hong Kong has a strong foundation of basic research capabilities, a thriving ecosystem of innovation, and also gathers innovative resources and talents from both home and abroad." Chan pointed to the city's growing number of startups, which rose 11 percent year on year to exceed 5,200 last year, marking a record high, while some 280,000 professionals have arrived in the SAR over the past three years through various talent schemes. More than 100 leading tech enterprises, including several top pharmaceutical, AI, new energy and materials companies, were also drawn to the SAR over the past three years, he added. Before attending the seminar, Chan met with Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury Christopher Hui, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Algernon Yau, as well as Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry Sun Dong, were also present. Chan is set to take part in the China Development Forum 2026 between March 22 and 23, as well as attend the Mainland and Hong Kong Economic and Trade Co-operation Committee on March 23. He's scheduled to return to Hong Kong on March 23. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Kwai Chung crane collapse kills operator \(2026-03-19 09:51\)](#)

A tower crane operator died on Thursday when the structure he was in collapsed at a building site in Kwai Chung. The man was trapped inside the cabin of the crane after it came down near Pik Kwai House, Kwai Chung Estate at about 4.30pm, police said. Photos posted online showed the crane had toppled over onto a hillside. Police said a truck travelling on nearby Tai Wo Hau Road was struck by gravel and debris during the incident but the driver was not injured. The Labour Department said it sent staff to the scene, and is investigating the cause of the tragedy.

_____ Last updated: 2026-03-19 HKT 18:28 Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- ['Int'l DSE important for HK's education hub status'](#) (2026-03-19 09:04)

A lawmaker says the ultimate goal of developing an international version of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) is to have a qualification which is universally recognised and could be adopted in other countries and regions, giving students more choice and pathways to pursuing their studies post secondary school. The government said it is working with the mainland on establishing an international version of DSE, and it plans to launch it on a pilot basis. Election committee lawmaker, Alex Fan, said in future, the global version of the DSE might be as influential as the International Baccalaureate (IB), and the UK's General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), and A-level qualifications. "Promoting the internationalisation of the DSE is a very important step in propelling Hong Kong into an international hub for education, especially for post secondary education." He said support from more countries, including popular destinations for study, would be needed to help garner external recognition for this qualification. "We need internationalisation in different aspects of our education and educational system and DSE... is a vital component of our education system." Fan pointed out that the DSE would be a great option for overseas students interested in studying in Hong Kong or on the mainland. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Police arrest 16 over suspected 'cash for crash' scams](#) (2026-03-19 08:42)

Police on Thursday said they have arrested 16 people suspected of taking part in "cash for crash" scams involving allegedly fraudulent traffic accident insurance claims worth a total of HK\$3.6 million. Thirteen claimants and three legal assistants from the same law firm have been arrested over suspected forged documents, including sick leave certificates and car repair receipts. "Police believe that certain professionals, considered 'rotten apples', have conspired with, assisted or incited claimants to submit forged documents and false information, exaggerating claim amounts to secure huge fraudulent payouts," said superintendent Fung Pui-kei from the force's commercial crime bureau. Police said they have reviewed 430 suspicious claims referred to them by the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers, individual insurance companies and via tip-offs from the public, with about 70 percent of the cases involving just one law firm. The arrests made are in relation to 11 claims, officers said. Last month, the force made four arrests over similar alleged offences. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [HKMA warns of uncertain US rate path](#) (2026-03-19 08:15)

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) on Thursday said the Fed's decision to keep interest rates steady was in line with market expectations. In a statement, the HKMA said a Fed release following the Federal Open Market Committee meeting indicated the US central bank might cut rates by a quarter of a percentage point before the end of the year. It said the future trend of US interest rates was quite uncertain, and — with the Hong Kong dollar linked to the US dollar — that may influence the interest rate environment here. Therefore, it said, the public should carefully manage interest rate risks when making decisions about property purchases, investments, or borrowing. The Federal Open Market Committee of the Federal Reserve (the Fed) earlier announced its decision to keep the target range for the federal funds rate unchanged at 3.5 to 3.75 percent. "The market generally considers that the path of US monetary policy remains quite uncertain, while recent tensions in the Middle East region introduce greater uncertainty to oil prices as well as the outlook for US inflation," the HKMA said. "The HKMA will continue to closely monitor market developments and maintain monetary and financial stability." Meanwhile, leading local banks such as HSBC, Bank of China (Hong Kong) and Standard Chartered announced they will keep their rates unchanged. Edited by Tony Sabine

- ['Deceased fireman went into wrong Wang Fuk building'](#) (2026-03-19 08:05)

An independent committee probing the Tai Po inferno revealed on Thursday that the fireman who died during the blaze had entered the wrong building. On the first day of the probe's hearing, committee senior counsel Victor Dawes said Ho Wai-ho was meant to conduct a rescue operation in Wang Cheong House, but in the general confusion, entered the adjacent Wang Tai House. Minutes after his entry, Ho relayed mayday signals over the radio from the 30th floor, but was unable to tell which building he was in. Dawes told the hearing that in an apparent attempt to escape, the 37-year-old removed his breathing apparatus and gloves and attempted to break windows on the 31st floor. He was later found outside lying on the ground floor in an open space near Wang Tai House, and was later certified dead at hospital. His uniform, Dawes said, had clearly been burnt. Ho was one of 168 people who died during the Tai Po fire last November. Edited by Aaron Tam

- ['Contractors knew mesh netting was substandard'](#) (2026-03-19 06:08)

An independent committee investigating the Wang Fuk Court inferno heard on Thursday that contractors knew that mesh netting used for major renovations at the Tai Po residential estate was not resistant to fire. That came on the first day of the committee's hearing on the blaze that killed 168 people in November, which was also told that essentially all fire-safety devices had completely failed due to human factors. The committee's senior counsel, Victor Dawes, revealed that it had collected more than a million files, including internal communication records never made public. They indicated renovation contractors were aware that mesh netting used to cover the estate's eight blocks was substandard. Other records include surveillance camera footage, photographs, video clips, documents such as complaints lodged by residents about the renovation work and government replies to them. Regulations allow fire hydrants and hoses to be turned off for a fortnight, but Dawes said the committee found records of contractors

repeatedly applying for suspension extensions. The devices, therefore, were out of commission for months. Dawes said there was evidence to suggest that cigarette butts were found on the scaffolding and the platform near a light well where the fire was suspected to have started. The senior counsel cited an inter-departmental expert group's initial investigative report as saying it is believed the source of the fire was the cigarette butts setting cardboard boxes alight. He said remnants of boxes, drink cans and cigarette butts were found in the light well after the blaze. The hearing was shown surveillance camera footage of renovation workers smoking. Dawes said the light well was believed to be where workers stored their things and took rests, and they are suspected to have smoked there, rather than in designated areas. He said multiple complaints from residents about smoking by renovation workers had not been taken seriously. There were many inflammables on scaffolding and windows, Dawes said, while windows in stairwells had been removed, causing smoke and flames to spread quickly into evacuation routes and residents to be trapped. He said the committee had collected sufficient evidence to ascertain the facts related to the inferno and that it would scrutinise the evidence and consider statements made by different parties before drawing conclusions. He said the cause of the fire and its spread were the result of a number of overlapping factors and that the committee would go through the role of each contributory factor. Nearly 40 parties will testify in the first round of hearings, including officials from various government departments, as well as residents and former members of the estate's owners' management corporation. Many Wang Fuk Court homeowners attending the hearing said they want to know what happened. "Who would feel alright when their home had been burnt down?" one of them, Law, said before entering the venue. "I hope I can learn more about what happened, what caused the fire, and which parties have to bear responsibility." Edited by Edmond Fong

- [Govt aims to construct a vibrant ecosystem for talent](#) (2026-03-19 04:31)

Secretary for Labour and Welfare Chris Sun on Thursday said the government aimed to encourage talent to contribute to the city's development in the long-run through building a vibrant ecosystem for them. Delivering his remarks at the Global Talent Summit Week, Sun noted that the SAR had been luring talented professionals to the city through enhancing various admission schemes, saying that talent is the most valued and strategic asset at a time when there are constant changes and uncertainty. "Our objective is to cultivate a vibrant ecosystem where talent is valued, supported, and inspired to contribute over the long term. But equally important is our commitment to nurturing local talent," he said. "Investment in education, vocational training and skills upgrading, ensures that our local workforce can adapt to technological transformation and economic restructuring. By strengthening every stage of the talent pipeline from youth development to mid-career advancement, we reinforce the resilience and vitality of our manpower ecosystem." He said fostering cooperation with the Greater Bay Area is crucial for talent development, and it is not simply an economic objective. By doing so, it can bring share opportunities and reinforces regional competitiveness, Sun added. Organiser Hong Kong Talent Engage's director Felix Chan told reporters on the sidelines of the event that 7,000 people were expected to join a two-day summit that concludes on Thursday, which is part

of the Global Talent Summit Week. But visitor numbers, including locals, and those from the mainland and overseas, had already reached the figure a day ago, he said, with more than 150,000 others joining the summit online, exceeding the record at the inaugural event last year. "So I think in terms of the impact this time, in terms of international participation and also the profile of the speakers, and the fact that we have co-organised with our local, regional and international chambers and co-organisers, we have provided a very good platform for talent, and to showcase why Hong Kong is best launchpad if they want to accelerate their career [and] launch their business here in Asia," he added. There were also two speakers from the Middle East, Chan said, and they remained determined to take part in the event despite the ongoing conflict there. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [One injured after coach, two cars collide in Sai Kung](#) (2026-03-18 10:43)

A coach carrying students and two private cars collided in Sai Kung on Wednesday afternoon leaving one driver injured, police said. The incident occurred at around 4pm on Hiram's Highway, near Hong Kin Road. Officers said the coach was carrying approximately 15 students along with a school bus nanny. One of the cars suffered damage and its male driver was trapped for a short period before being freed by firefighters. Police said he suffered minor hand injuries and was taken to hospital for treatment. No others involved in the collision were hurt. According to the Transport Department, a one-lane-two-way traffic arrangement was implemented on the affected section of Hiram's Highway. Services on KMB route no 92 and CTB route no 792M were disrupted as a result of the crash. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Books on Xi's thoughts on youth, economy debut in HK](#) (2026-03-18 09:55)

Chief Executive John Lee on Wednesday called on people to learn more about the nation's development opportunities, as a series of books featuring President Xi Jinping's thoughts and stories were released in Hong Kong. The chief executive and the head of the liaison office, Zhou Ji, were among those attending the book launch. The event marked the release of the first volume of a book featuring President Xi's remarks and speeches on the economy, and the first and second volumes of a publication on his interactions with university students. Lee noted that while the book on youth includes close conversations between the president and the nation's young people, the book on Xi's economic thoughts further explained his principle of "seeking progress while maintaining stability" while exploring how "new quality productive forces" could drive high-quality growth. The chief executive added that the release of the books, in traditional Chinese characters, offers important learning resources for Hong Kong readers, including youngsters, so they can have a more comprehensive understanding of the nation's overall development. "I encourage everyone to read these works, to more actively grasp the spirit of the country's further comprehensive deepening of reforms as well as the promotion of Chinese-style modernisation," Lee said. "In the future, let's use our actions to contribute to Hong Kong's better integration with... and service to the overall development of the country." Lee added that as this year marks the start of the country's 15th Five-Year Plan, Hong Kong will go all out to draft its own five-year plan to better align with national development. Zhou, for his

part, noted that the new book on youth is "a precious gift" for Hong Kong's teenagers. He expressed the hope that Hong Kong can offer more platforms to support the growth and success of local youths. Edited by Aaron Tam

- [Govt plans pilot booking, fee system for popular sites](#) (2026-03-18 09:33)

Secretary for Environment and Ecology Tse Chin-wan said authorities plan to implement a pilot booking and fee system at popular country sites no later than this year's National Day Golden Week, in hopes of addressing growing concerns over overtourism in the city's country parks and campsites. Speaking at a Legislative Council meeting on Wednesday, Tse said his bureau and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) are currently studying the feasibility of such a system, taking into account site-specific conditions, ecological protection needs and practical operational considerations. The review, he said, includes examining booking arrangements, potential fee structures and whether to implement a real-name registration system. Tse noted that since a booking and fee system would represent a significant departure from the AFCD's current management approach for most country sites, the department plans to introduce it gradually through pilot schemes. "This allows us to gain experience and evaluate the various measures before wider implementation," he said. Legislator Chris Ip expressed concerns that a pilot approach might simply shift the problem elsewhere. "If tourists arrive at certain sites and find them full, would they simply move to other sites that don't require reservations?" Ip asked. "If that happens, it's essentially moving the Sai Kung problem to other parts of Hong Kong, which is not ideal." Ip pointed to the AFCD's Twisk Campsite, which already operates a booking system, as a potential model for territory-wide application. He proposed a straightforward approach where "those with bookings can enter, and those without face penalties", saying this would provide more effective regulation. In response, Tse emphasised the need for a transition period to allow visitors to adjust. "If Hong Kong suddenly implemented this booking system overnight and turned away everyone who arrived without a reservation, it would definitely create a very chaotic situation," he said. "That's why we are starting with pilot schemes first. This way, we can gradually disseminate the information through these pilots. " There are many specific details we need to work out — things we haven't done before. We can observe which methods work better and which allow for smoother implementation before rolling it out on a larger scale." Meanwhile, Yau Wing-kwong, CEO of the Environmental Association, told RTHK that a booking and fee system would provide a fair solution, noting such systems are common worldwide for managing visitor numbers at popular venues. "We are having overtourism problem in some of the districts or some part of the country park with a lot of campaign and we have a problem of rubbish being dumped and other problems like fire and other controls," he said. "I think in a way that we all welcome visitors and we should be friendly to visitors, but also we have to protect our country parks and places where people can hang out or enjoy the environment." Yau noted that such management systems aren't new to Hong Kong. "If you look at Ocean Park, it is under control and managed. Disneyland or even some of the conservation sites, they all have management," he said. "You have to do a booking to go in, and if the number of visitors is over the capacity, then we can stop people going in for a certain

period of time. With the booking system, you can also plan well ahead of how many people you're expecting." Edited by Tony Sabine

- [HK's jobless rate falls slightly](#) (2026-03-18 09:08)

Hong Kong's unemployment rate has fallen slightly to 3.8 percent, according to the latest figures from the Census and Statistics Department. The figure, for the December 2025 to February 2026 period, was down from 3.9 percent during the November-to-January period. The number of people out of work fell by around 3,700 to 134,700. The drop in the unemployment rate was seen across various sectors, with notable falls in retail and accommodation. The underemployment rate remained unchanged at 1.7 percent. Secretary for Labour and Welfare Chris Sun said growth in the Hong Kong economy is likely to continue supporting the overall labour market. "The government will stay vigilant to the development of various external uncertainties, closely monitoring for any implication on corporate hiring sentiment in relevant sectors," he said in a statement. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Govt rejects call to expand public medical fee waiver](#) (2026-03-18 07:46)

Health minister Lo Chung-mau on Wednesday rejected an idea from the DAB to expand automatic fee waivers for public healthcare patients. Since the start of the year, patients aged 75 and above receiving the Old Age Living Allowance do not need to pay for services at public clinics and hospitals. The party wants the full waiver extended to allowance recipients aged 65 and above. But Lo said such a move would immediately allow another 450,000 people to have their fees fully waived, and this goes against the purpose of recent reforms. "Such an expansion will further intensify the pressure that an ageing population has already been placing on the sustainability of the public healthcare system," he told lawmakers at a Legislative Council meeting. "[This runs] counter to the government's intention to address the challenges brought about by an ageing population through the fees and charges reform for public healthcare." The minister said among the 200,000 or so approved waiver cases so far, more than 130,000 were people aged between 65 and 74. DAB councillor Chan Hok-fung, meanwhile, said some private clinics have recently raised fees by HK\$100 on average. He called on officials to assess how the public healthcare fee reforms have changed private sector prices as well as the impact on the medical expenses of families before considering adjustments in future. The minister said in response that the government did not have the relevant statistics and therefore he could not comment on whether the private sector has raised charges or not. Lo went on to say that the private sector is part of a free market that can set its own prices. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- ['Northern Metropolis bill won't be further expanded'](#) (2026-03-18 06:57)

Permanent Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands) Doris Ho on Wednesday said officials have not considered expanding the proposed Northern Metropolis bill to cover more parts of Hong Kong, as she stressed that the legislation would only apply to designated areas. Her remarks came after authorities on Tuesday unveiled plans for legislation to speed up the mega-project's development. A key element of the bill is streamlining land-use approval

procedures and shortening town planning procedures in non-conservation zones, from typically nine months to around two. On a radio programme, Ho stressed that protected green areas would not be affected by the changes. "For those areas, if anyone wishes to change the land use, they would need to use the current nine-month process," she said. "The streamlining of the town planning procedures would not touch the green areas." Ho also stressed that authorities would "strike a balance" between public engagement and the speed of development. "Even for a simple planning application, thorough traffic, noise and environmental technical assessments must be conducted, and it must be submitted to the government department before being referred to the Town Planning Board for review," she said. "There would also be a three-week public consultation before the reviews by the board," she added. Ho also said authorities have so far not considered expanding the law to cover more areas in the SAR, reiterating that the legislation would be "exclusively applicable" to the Northern Metropolis, to remove bottlenecks in the large-scale development scheme. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [CE mourns former CFA judge Anthony Mason](#) (2026-03-18 05:50)

Chief Executive John Lee on Wednesday expressed his sorrow over the death of former non-permanent judge of the Court of Final Appeal Anthony Mason. He served on the city's highest court from 1997 to 2015. Lee said that Mason was instrumental in establishing the reputation of the Court of Final Appeal and furthering its prestige in the SAR. He was also a steadfast supporter of legal education in Hong Kong. Lee extended his deepest condolences to Mason's family. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [District phone alerts should be used with care: govt](#) (2026-03-18 05:43)

Security chief Chris Tang said on Wednesday that it would be disproportionate to issue mobile phone emergency alert messages at a district level whenever a fire breaks out, saying frequent messages would tire the public. He said in general, fires rarely affect an entire district, and sending out such alerts would cause unnecessary panic. The minister made the comments in response to a question from Business and Professionals Alliance lawmaker Ray Wong, who asked whether officials could establish clear criteria for issuing district-specific alerts, which are now possible following a recent upgrade. In a written reply, Tang said fires rarely require the immediate response of all residents in a district. "Under such circumstances, activating a district-specific alert to notify hundreds of thousands of users within its coverage would significantly exceed the population actually affected by the incident," he wrote. The minister said for most fires, it is better to have on-site immediate alerts, such as fire engine sirens and fire alarms. He also pointed to the possibility of what he called alert fatigue for the public, saying the frequent use of the alert system would very likely diminish public vigilance and awareness. However, Tang did say in cases such as extensive hill fires that require major evacuation within a specific area, the Fire Services Department will exercise its professional judgement and issue alerts if needed on a case by case basis. A mobile phone alert was once issued throughout Hong Kong during the Covid pandemic in early 2022, when the government designated Queen Elizabeth Hospital for coronavirus patients. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [School head says possible closure sad but expected](#) (2026-03-18 04:34)

The principal of a small school facing closure said on Wednesday that the news was sad but expected, and he promised to manage the transition with the students' best interests in mind. The government earlier announced that 15 primary schools would not be able to start a primary one class next year as they had not enrolled at least 16 pupils. One of these schools is Fresh Fish Traders' School in Tai Kok Tsui. The school is known for helping children from low income families, and welcoming students of many different cultures. Principal Sze Chi-king said he feels it is just a matter of time before the school has to close amid a declining population, especially in Yau Tsim Mong District. "Our school building was constructed in 1969. It's old-fashioned and we don't even have a playground... With our simple school facilities and falling birth rates, it's difficult to compete," he said. The Education Bureau has said that under-enrolled schools are allowed to merge. Sze said he would consider the different options offered by the government and ensure that students are well looked after during any changes. One parent said she hopes the school can stay open. "This is a school that fits the community well. It serves many working class families and accepts children from different cultures," she said. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Cathay cancels Middle East flights until end of April](#) (2026-03-18 04:23)

Cathay Pacific has extended the suspension of all flight operations to and from the Middle East until the end of next month amid the ongoing conflict in the region. These include services between Hong Kong and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. Such flights were first cancelled on February 28. "In view of the volatile situation in the Middle East, and to provide both our passengers and cargo customers with greater certainty for their planning, Cathay Pacific's Dubai and Riyadh passenger flights, as well as Cathay Cargo's freighter flights to Dubai and Riyadh, have been cancelled up to and including April 30," the flag carrier announced on Wednesday. The airline said affected travellers would be offered the flexibility to rebook, reroute or cancel their flights, adding that it is monitoring the situation closely and remaining agile in its response. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Planned govt outreach not affected by geopolitics: Sun](#) (2026-03-18 03:42)

The government is pressing ahead with planned outreach visits to other parts of the world amid global uncertainties, the labour and welfare chief said on Wednesday, not ruling out the possibility of another trip to the Middle East. Secretary for Labour and Welfare Chris Sun said the ongoing conflict in the Gulf region has bolstered the SAR's appeal to high-calibre professionals. "Our secure environment and very stable development opportunities make us a more attractive place for talent from all around the world, including those from the Middle East, to make use of Hong Kong to develop," Sun said. "We are going to push ahead with our planned scheduled visits across the world... We will look for a suitable occasional opportunity to make another visit to the Middle East if at all possible." The minister also pledged to continue promoting Hong Kong to the rest of the world and improve the city's different admission schemes, as the latest national five-year plan outlines the country's backing for the SAR to build

an international hub for high-calibre professionals. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Primary school mergers allow long-term planning: Choi](#) (2026-03-18 03:14)

Education minister Christine Choi on Wednesday said that keeping under-enrolled primary schools would not be optimal for the education system, and a merger would allow schools to make long-term and sustainable planning. A record 15 primary schools have been barred from running a primary one class next academic year because they failed to enrol at least 16 pupils. The Education Bureau announced earlier that under-enrolled schools are allowed to merge. "The merger period usually requires three years. It allows students of the same grade to finish their studies in the same school and gives schools time to iron out things – such as the curriculum, teaching manpower, student classes, group divisions, etc," she said. "We set up this three-year period to work around the transitional period." The Education Bureau said if two schools merge in the coming academic year, they would be given one year's grace period within three academic years following the merger to run a primary one class regardless of the class size. But they would eventually have to go private or shut down if they still cannot take in 16 pupils beyond that point. Among the 15 under-enrolled schools, four are located in Eastern District – the most among all 10 affected districts. Choi explained why this was the case. "There used to be relatively more schools in Eastern District. Due to an ageing population and well as the lack of new housing estates, we can see that there is a relatively large fluctuation to the number of school-age population or the number of students," she said. Cheung Yung-bong, honorary chairperson of the Hong Kong Aided Primary School Heads Association, said on the same show that the education sector was sad about the situation, but not surprised about the number of under-enrolled schools, as several institutions have been on the verge of shutting down due to a lack of students. He noted that schools would have more incentives to merge with others, as they can get up to HK\$1 million in subsidies to support additional expenses following the merger. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Plan to streamline land-use approval for mega project](#) (2026-03-17 11:12)

The government on Tuesday outlined details of its plan to introduce dedicated legislation relating to the Northern Metropolis as it seeks to streamline land-use approval procedures to speed up the mega project. The Development Bureau, which unveiled details of the proposal, also said it's looking to set up a "white list" to facilitate cross-boundary flow of people in the Hetao Hong Kong Park. In a paper submitted to the Legislative Council, the bureau said the proposal will include a main legal framework of the law, while specifying six areas where the Executive Council can formulate subsidiary regulations whenever necessary. A key element of the plan is on formulating subsidiary laws to streamline town planning procedures in the Northern Metropolis. It currently may take nine months to process applications on changing land uses and relaxing development parameters for non-conservation zones, but the plan can shorten it to two months. The Northern Metropolis is "still under development with ample infrastructure capacity", officials said, adding that the applications would still be "comprehensively considered" by the Town Planning Board. The bureau is also proposing to

enact subsidiary legislation to facilitate the flow of personnel, beginning with Hetao, by adopting a “white list” . Its spokesperson said the tech park will be responsible to maintain the list and immigration authorities will “have a role to play” . Other suggestions include expediting the compensation payment for land resumed, facilitating the use of innovative construction technology, streamlining procedures for construction noise permit applications, and setting up statutory corporations for designated areas in the Northern Metropolis through subsidiary legislation. The spokesperson said while provisions on streamlining procedures would mainly be for the initial development phase of the project, the government is not inclined to include a “sunset clause” for the proposed laws. It might only be “meaningful” to discuss whether to set an end date for the legislation when the project's development has become more mature, the spokesperson added. The administration will consult the public for around two months from next week, before tabling the bill to Legco and aiming to get it passed this year. Edited by Edmond Fong

- [Govt moves to encourage more primary school mergers](#) (2026-03-17 08:51)

The Education Bureau on Tuesday changed regulations to encourage primary schools that do not have enough students to merge. It said for the upcoming academic year, 15 schools – one of which is government-run – will be unable to operate a primary one class because they will not be getting 16 pupils. Last year, the government offered three options for subsidised schools who could not form a primary one class: they could merge with another school, close, or go private. The change aims to increase the survival rate of schools that opt to merge. The bureau said if two schools merge in the upcoming academic year, they will be given one year's grace period within three academic years following the merger to run a primary one class regardless of the class size. But if they are unable to take in 16 pupils beyond that point, they would have to cease operations or go private. "If [a] school does not choose any option, or if the chosen option is not approved, [the bureau] will cease providing any form of subsidies to the school starting from the third school year counting from that year, and the school will cease operation accordingly," it said. In an updated circular to schools and their sponsoring bodies, the bureau also said it implemented a trial three years ago to limit the primary one intake through the so-called "door-knocking" practice. Parents often take their child to "door-knock" in a bid to enter a school that is higher up on their wish list, compared to the one their child is allocated to. The bureau has been reducing such placements – limiting it to two for 25-pupil classes and one for those with 30 – and has now extended these limits until the 2028-29 academic year. Edited by Aaron Tam

- [Panama all at sea as arbitration deadline expires](#) (2026-03-17 08:40)

Panama Ports Company (PPC), a unit of Hong Kong conglomerate CK Hutchison, said the government of the central American country failed to file its response by the March 13 deadline in an international arbitration brought by the company. PPC said the deadline was set by the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce and that Panama sought a partial extension, saying it was not ready to respond because it had not hired

lawyers and needed time to prepare. The CK Hutchison unit made the arbitration move after Panama moved to unwind concession agreements that gave PPC control of the Balboa and Cristobal ports since 1997, following a court ruling in January that authorities said rendered the contracts unconstitutional. It said this month that it was seeking at least US\$2 billion in damages. "Panama stated that it was not prepared and was not able to respond on time because it had not hired lawyers, was unfamiliar with the dispute, and needed time to develop a plan, to obtain a partial extension," PPC said in a statement on Monday. A country that respects foreign investors "does not disregard consultations and international dispute procedures", said the Hutchison unit. Panama had also failed to resolve the broader issues involved, it said, which "suggests that Panama may eventually simply invent and announce more unfounded attacks in arbitration". PPC also accused Panamanian authorities of continuing to hold investor documents it says were improperly confiscated and denying it access to its own files and computers. PPC said materials were taken at the ports and from a private document storage facility, alleging officials arrived without notice and accompanied by armed security forces. "Panama continues to disregard the rule of law," PPC said, accusing the state of tolerating the "occupation, trespassing and confiscation" of PPC facilities and property and of disrupting port operations and suppliers, including Panamanian companies. Panama's maritime authority and the presidential office did not immediately reply to requests for comment. On Friday, PPC said it was continuing to co-ordinate with suppliers after Panama cancelled its contracts for the Balboa and Cristobal ports. That same day, Panama's government said it hoped China's Cosco Shipping would reconsider its decision not to use Balboa after the multinational marine transportation service conglomerate notified clients that it had suspended operations at the port. The central American country has been caught up in broader tensions after US President Donald Trump last year claimed, without evidence, that China effectively runs the canal. CK Hutchison said this month it had also filed an administrative petition urging Panamanian officials to reconsider the executive action that "led to the occupation of facilities and confiscation of property". (Reuters & AFP) Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Ocean Park's red panda Rou Rou passes away at 17](#) (2026-03-17 08:27)

Ocean Park has announced the passing of its resident red panda, Rou Rou, who was euthanised on Tuesday at the age of 17 following a significant decline in her quality of life. In a statement, the park said its animal care and veterinary teams had been providing comprehensive care for Rou Rou since 2021, carefully managing the various age-related conditions that accompany geriatric years. However, in recent weeks, the animal began showing increasing signs of discomfort from degenerative joint issues that no longer responded to palliative treatment. "Following a thorough assessment on her quality of life and welfare, the decision to humanely euthanise Rou Rou to prevent her from suffering unnecessarily was therefore made," the park said. "Rou Rou was surrounded by her devoted caretakers in her final moments and passed away peacefully." The park said Rou Rou was a beloved figure known for her gentle yet playful nature, which made her a favourite animal ambassador among visitors. She arrived at Ocean Park in 2009 from the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, alongside fellow red

pandas Cong Cong and Tai Shan. Cong Cong and Tai Shan, who are also 17 years old and experiencing some geriatric issues, remain healthy and stable for their age, according to the park. Red pandas are listed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species, with an estimated population of fewer than 10,000 left in the wild. Their average lifespan is around eight to 12 years. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Phone overuse, bad diets fuel student concerns](#) (2026-03-17 08:02)

The Department of Health has raised concerns over the physical well-being of students, with its latest annual report revealing persistent challenges in weight management and rising rates for myopia amid excessive use of mobile phones. Its student health service annual report for the 2024-2025 school year showed that 17.5 percent of students were overweight or obese – a slight uptick from 17.1 percent the previous year. Bad dietary and exercise habits remain significant contributors as 89.4 percent of students were not consuming enough fruits and vegetables and a staggering 93.6 percent were falling short of the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Chuang Shuk-kwan, a consultant in community medicine at the department, warned of long-term health risks associated with childhood obesity. "Being overweight during childhood and adolescence adversely affects health and is associated with a greater risk and earlier onset of various non-communicable diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers," she said. She pointed to the government's newly launched action plan on weight management as a key initiative to address the issue through cross-departmental collaboration. Vision health is also a growing concern, with the proportion of primary one students who wear glasses reaching 14.5 percent, a noticeable rise from the pre-pandemic level of around 11 percent. By primary six, that figure surges to 55.1 percent. Health officials link the deterioration in eyesight to excessive use of electronic devices. On a typical school day, 41.8 percent of primary students spend two hours or more on recreational screen time with devices – which is an improvement from the last school year but still well above the pre-pandemic benchmark of about 30 percent. Among secondary students, the rate skyrockets to 81.1 percent. In response, the department is reviewing current evidence on the health impact of screen exposure and plans to issue updated recommendations for children and adolescents this year. On a positive note, the report found that most students reported enjoying their family and school environments. Reports of cyberbullying dropped to 2.1 percent, and the percentage of students who reported having suicidal thoughts or had attempted suicide also declined compared to the previous school year. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Former HKUST professor charged with bribery](#) (2026-03-17 07:25)

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has charged a former professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and a friend of his with accepting and offering bribes to help a student gain admission to a master's programme. Then Chair Professor Liu Hongbin and his friend Priscilla Lam jointly face one count of conspiracy for a

public servant to accept an advantage. Liu, 63, also faces two counts of offering an advantage to a public servant. The two defendants were released on bail and will appear at Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts on Wednesday to enter pleas, the ICAC said. Liu was a programme director of the department of ocean science at HKUST and was responsible for reviewing applications and interviewing applicants for the master's programme. The anti-corruption agency said it believes that between March and May 2025, he accepted a bribe of HK\$40,000 from Lam to assist a student in gaining admission to the programme. It is alleged that Liu also offered red packets containing HK\$5,000 and HK\$1,000 respectively to two staff members who handled admission matters. The two staff members refused to accept the alleged bribes and reported the matter to the university, the ICAC said. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [HK set to take regional internet summit to next level](#) (2026-03-17 06:16)

A ministerial-level meeting will be held during the upcoming World Internet Conference Asia-Pacific Summit in Hong Kong in a first for the annual event, Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry Sun Dong said on Tuesday. The inclusion brings an added dimension to the holding of the event by the SAR on April 13-14, only the second time it has played host. The first time it did so, in 2025, some 1,000 political and business elites as well as academics from over 50 countries and regions attended an event that had almost exclusively been held in Wuzhen, Hangzhou, over the past decade. At a press conference in Beijing, Sun said there will be several other upgrades to this year's event besides the ministerial-level meeting. The meeting, he added, would bring together domestic and international officials to discuss how innovation and technology drive economic development and international co-operation promotes the prosperity of the digital economy. The number of sub-forums on the second day of the summit will also double to six, covering the latest technology and industry trends, such as artificial intelligence agent applications, digital finance and AI security governance, Sun said. Renowned leaders in the field have also been invited to share their contributions in promoting global internet development. Sun stressed that the move to continue staging the summit in Hong Kong also showed the national strategic direction was veering towards building an international science and technology centre in the Greater Bay Area. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Visitor numbers up 18pc in first two months of year](#) (2026-03-17 04:30)

Hong Kong saw nearly 10 million visitor arrivals in the first two months of the year, up 18 percent from a year ago. The Tourism Board announced on Tuesday that the number of mainland travellers rose by 22 percent, to nearly 7.9 million during the period. In February alone, which coincided with the Lunar New Year, mainland arrivals surged by more than 50 percent to over 4.2 million. Visitor arrivals from outside the mainland also rose by eight percent to more than two million. "With notable results from long-haul markets, the number of visitors from Australia, France and Germany grew by 20 to 30 percent year on year," it said in a statement. The board went on to say there were fluctuations in visitor figures for the first two months of the year compared to the same period last year, in part due to different dates for the

Lunar New Year holiday and Ramadan. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Wang Fuk victims can salvage belongings by late April](#) (2026-03-17 04:13)

Residents of the seven blocks engulfed by the Wang Fuk Court inferno in November will be given the green light to return to their homes to collect their personal belongings by late April, according to Chief Executive John Lee. Speaking before the weekly Executive Council meeting on Tuesday, Lee said he understood residents' strong desire to go back and have a look at the place they called home. But the top concern for the administration, he said, was to ensure safety and orderliness. Lee said he had urged the government task force working on the matter to announce details of the arrangements by this month. "We want to ensure that this can be done early. The deputy chief secretary, Warner [Cheuk], is working hard on the plan so as to ensure that it will be done safely and orderly," Lee said. "Because a lot of units, having been burned very seriously, have structural problems, including ceiling, walls, beams. Some have no windows or doors and the floor is full of debris. "So we have to ensure that the number of people that will be allowed to go up and down the staircase, that will be done safely and orderly." He added that the administration would also provide any extra support that families might need when returning to their flats, such as with those who were elderly and those who hoped to be able to retrieve personal belongings in quantity. On long-term accommodation arrangements for residents displaced by the fire, Lee said the dedicated 100-strong engagement team had been visiting them over the past two weeks to lay out their options. One of the options proposed by the government involves a HK\$6.8 billion buyout plan for all flats in the seven blocks. Lee said the government would give the residents ample time to consider their choices. The cases handled so far by outreach officers had been "as expected", he said, noting that only a small number of them were more complicated and required revisits. Lee also said the administration and all relevant government workers would "fully co-operate" with the investigation by the independent committee, which is set to begin its first round of eight evidentiary hearings on Thursday. Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Govt to work with Legco on SAR's five-year plan: CE](#) (2026-03-17 03:39)

The government will work with the Legislative Council in formulating the SAR's own Five-Year Plan which will align with that of the nation, Chief Executive John Lee said on Tuesday. Ahead of the weekly Executive Council meeting, Lee said Hong Kong's plan will focus on improving the economy and people's livelihoods. The CE will lead the work on the plan, which is due to be unveiled at the end of the year. Lee said the timing will be "tight". "In order to help the government complete the work in such a tight timeframe, I propose that under the executive-led system, the government and the Legislative Council will jointly come up with a mechanism to look into the matter and collect opinions, so as to leverage the positive interaction and cooperation between the executive and legislative branches," he said. Lee said the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau and relevant Legco subcommittees will conduct joint research and hold meetings to collect opinions on specific topics for analysis. They will compile the results right away and submit these to the government as soon as possible, Lee

added. Public consultation will start around the fourth quarter of the year, he said. As foreexpediting the Northern Metropolis development – a task for the SAR under the nation's 15thFive-Year Plan – Lee said the government would submit dedicated legislation on Tuesday to ensure speed and quality go hand in hand. The CE said he hopes the legislation will be passed this year. "We hope to reach a consensus with the Legislative Council. The dedicated legislation will allow us to have more flexibility and expedite the progress over certain matters to ensure our competitiveness," he said. "At the same time, each process is vetted by Legco, which will ensure quality. We also believe during the vetting period, by having the public opinion, it will allow the final legislation and policies to be of better quality." Legco president Starry Lee described the co-operative mechanism for the SAR's five-year plan as ground-breaking and innovative. A joint statement made along with the council's top co-ordinators, Ronick Chan and Stanley Ng, said the legislature will do all it can to support the mechanism and complete the plan as soon as possible. "We will demonstrate our sense of responsibility by sparing no effort to actively gather views from all sectors, and conducting thorough research and analysis," the trio said. "[We will] submit reports to the SAR government and offer advice for it to outline an important development blueprint for the SAR, while effectively connecting to the country's 15thFive-Year Plan." Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Govt to ensure stable fuel supply amid ME tensions](#) (2026-03-17 03:38)

Chief Executive John Lee on Tuesday said authorities have proactively reached out to various suppliers to guarantee a stable supply of fuel for Hong Kong in light of escalating tensions in the Middle East. Speaking ahead of the weekly Executive Council meeting, Lee acknowledged that disruptions to the oil market are affecting the entire world. To safeguard the city's supply chain, the chief executive outlined several measures being taken to mitigate risk. "One thing we do to ensure safer supply is making suppliers be aware of the risk to ensure that they will have contingency plans," he said. "First of all, they should work on ensuring alternative supplies if it is possible. The second thing is ensuring that they have enough stockpiles." Lee also highlighted the importance of energy resilience. He noted that authorities are preparing to adjust the fuel mix for electricity production, allowing for a flexible response to changing circumstances by readily adjusting the proportions of natural gas, coal and nuclear power. In addition to supply concerns, the administration is closely monitoring the market to protect consumers. Lee noted that the Competition Commission is on alert to investigate any potential malpractices, which could range from unfair competition to price manipulation. He added that the Consumer Council is also keeping a close eye on the situation, and appealed to suppliers to remain mindful of public affordability and uphold their social responsibilities during this volatile period. Officials have also maintained communications with local stakeholders, he said. "The government has also been in touch with local airlines and also will be meeting fuel suppliers, petrol fuel suppliers, so as to ensure that they will know their social responsibility and also provide more updated and early information about supply, about prices and that is important so as to let people know more about potential changes." Edited by Aaron Tam

- [Chip gearmaker 'Little Giant' begins InnoPark race](#) (2026-03-16 10:34)

A mainland manufacturer of semiconductor equipment setting up shop in Hong Kong's Yuen Long InnoPark began building its plant on Monday, targeting a production start by the middle of next year. Henan Oriental Materials, which makes front-end equipment and key components, is on a national list of innovative enterprises that have been dubbed "Little Giants". The SAR is giving around HK\$200 million in subsidies to the firm, which is investing HK\$800 million in the project. Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry Sun Dong said in a launching ceremony that the government had earmarked HK\$10 billion in 2024 to speed up new industrialisation and attracting strategic enterprises to set up in Hong Kong. He said the plant was one of four approved applications and that the firm's investment pledge was in excess of HK\$2.5 billion. With the country's latest five-year plan clearly stating that new industrialisation has to be a major development area during the period, Sun said, the SAR government has been responding to the call, as shown by its funding allocations. For his part, Henan Oriental Materials founder Wang Yongchao said the company planned to hire, besides technicians, more than 100 top-level talent locally. He said the company had picked Hong Kong because, among many things, it enabled the firm to reach the international market, noting that guests at the ceremony came from southeast and central Asia. Wang added that the SAR, as a global financial and talent hub, was an attractive location given his firm's expansionary efforts. "The development of our hard technology enables capital investments to yield high and sustained returns, creating a very positive link-up. So Hong Kong's financial advantage immensely empowers us," he said. "And then the talent here has an edge. There is also Hong Kong's role as an international hub and its connection with the world." Wang said his company also planned to set up a design office in the Northern Metropolis. He went on to say that as part of his firm's co-operative efforts with local universities, it had sent technicians to study here and they should graduate in around two years. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Talent summit 'offers one stop opportunities in HK'](#) (2026-03-16 07:27)

An upcoming talent summit will provide valuable collaboration opportunities in one stop and help people with skills to seize opportunities in the SAR, Hong Kong Talent Engage director Felix Chan said on Monday. Global Talent Summit Week is set to take place from March 17 to March 29, with Wednesday and Thursday featuring an international talent forum and the CareerConnect Expo, while nine new satellite events with global and local partners will be running for more than a week. Speaking on RTHK's Backchat programme on Monday, Chan said changes in the global race for talent made this summit particularly important for the city. One of these back in September saw Hong Kong's ranking leap to fourth globally from ninth in the World Talent Ranking 2025 published by the International Institute for Management Development, making for its highest-ever placing and putting it first in Asia. Chan said the leap in rankings had given the city momentum to gauge future trends in the global talent markets. With the city being an "important gateway for talent for China", he added, there will also be discussions about the integration of Hong Kong with the mainland, Greater Bay Area and the entire talent ecosystem. "I think the platform this time will provide a very good cross-regional and also cross-sector collaboration opportunities for talent to look for all these insights in one

stop," Chan said. Retention, he added, will be just as important as recruitment, making support for talent and their families in areas such as assistance with employment, housing and education and setting up businesses crucial for long-term settlement in Hong Kong. Chan also pointed out that the summit would also explore upcoming trends in technology and artificial intelligence, providing a platform for talent and enterprises to discuss and learn about the latest developments. He said the development of AI+ in Hong Kong in recent years had been in line with China's national strategy and was also going to impact the business models, organisational structures and business procedures of all industries in the SAR. As Hong Kong actively aligned itself with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, the summit, Chan said, would definitely attract a wide range of talent and industry leaders from around the world than in the past. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Nine hurt as car hits pedestrians on pavement](#) (2026-03-16 06:52)

One person was seriously injured and eight others hurt after a car was driven onto a pavement in Kowloon Bay on Monday afternoon. Police were alerted to the accident on Lam Hing Street near Metro Centre II at around 12.40pm. A car passenger, 75, suffered serious injuries to her head and ribs after being thrown out of the vehicle. Police said she was believed not to have been wearing a seatbelt. Eight pedestrians suffered minor abrasions and bruises. They were conscious when taken to hospital. The 75-year-old driver of the vehicle was arrested on suspicion of causing grievous bodily harm by dangerous driving. He was not injured and passed a breathalyser test. "The driver was trying to make a U-turn," Inspector Tsoi Shiu-kei said. "According to the police's preliminary investigations, the driver mistakenly stepped on the gas pedal instead of the brake, causing the car to lose control and rush on to the pavement, hitting eight pedestrians. "The female passenger in the car was thrown out of the vehicle." A witness said the car was being driven at quite a "high speed" and because it was lunch hour, there were dozens of people on the pavement at the time. Another witness said he heard at least two bangs – of which the second was very loud – and that he also saw wrecked railings and a tree knocked down. _____ Last updated: 2026-03-16 HKT 16:28 Edited by Tony Sabine

- [IT chief urges caution over OpenClaw security risks](#) (2026-03-16 05:18)

The innovation and technology chief on Monday warned of security concerns linked to OpenClaw, saying all government units have been told to refrain from installing the artificial intelligence agent. Sun Dong, the secretary for innovation, technology and industry, also said officials are aware of the potential risks of using the AI agent, including excessive permissions, data leakage and system intrusion. The administration had drawn up a comprehensive set of IT security policies and guidelines for government units, requiring them to conduct strict assessments before installing any applications within internal systems, the minister added. " Given the uncertainties brought by OpenClaw, especially the security risks associated with it, the Digital Policy Office has reminded all bureaus and departments not to install OpenClaw on computers connected to government network systems," Sun said. "We also suggest

non-government organisations and individual users to take sufficient security measures when using OpenClaw." The open-source AI agent software is designed to carry out tasks on users' computer systems on their behalf, such as clearing one's inbox, sending emails, managing calendars and checking in for flights. OpenClaw has surged in popularity on the mainland, and adopting the technology has been dubbed "raising a lobster", in reference to the app's lobster logo. OpenClaw was developed by Peter Steinberger, an Austrian, and uploaded to GitHub, a cloud-based platform that acts as a central hub for developers, last November. Steinberger, who built OpenClaw to help organise his digital life, was hired last month by ChatGPT maker OpenAI. (Additional reporting by Reuters) Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Most pillows rest easier for those with bigger builds](#) (2026-03-16 04:55)

Most pillows on the market are designed to provide better back support for larger body types, according to a study by the Consumer Council. The watchdog said overall durability and comfort were satisfactory for the 13 models it tested, including seven memory foam, three latex and three polyester pillows. However, it found that support levels varied depending on the physical builds of users, with the disparity seen most in tests on people who go to sleep in the supine position on their backs. On a five-point scale for back support, nearly every model tested scored a four or above for users with larger body sizes, with five being the best for lumbar support. But for those with smaller body sizes, only two pillow models managed to score a four. The council also highlighted that quality was patchy among polyester and memory foam options. It noted that one polyester model was found to have a small contact area for the head while two memory foam models showed poor performance in allowing water moisture to pass through, affecting the comfort for their users. Kenneth Chan, vice-chairman of the watchdog's committee on sustainability, public affairs and education, urged users to be selective in their choice and use of pillows. "When using a suitable pillow in the supine position, the head, neck and chest should be aligned horizontally when viewed from the side of the body," he said. "When sleeping on one's side, the face, neck and chest should form a straight line when viewed from the front of the body. "Do not continue to use a pillow that is too high. If a pillow feels too low, place a towel underneath and gradually increase the height until it is suitable." Edited by Tony Sabine

- ['Smooth online booking for non-local drivers'](#) (2026-03-16 04:15)

The Transport Department on Monday said an enhanced online booking system that allows non-local drivers to apply for a test-free driving licence is operating smoothly. Starting on Monday, applicants must make appointments via the new system as the online same-day queuing service was no longer available. The service quota was also increased to 550 per working day. Speaking to RTHK, assistant commissioner for administration and licensing, Amy Lee, said the department had released its booking quota in batches last week and the booking rate for the coming four weeks from Monday to April 10 had reached 80 percent. Some timeslots at the end of March were still available for people to make appointments, she added. Lee also said the department would ensure the system's stability. "During the system optimisation, we have passed stress and safety tests by some independent consultants

commissioned by the Digital Policy Office," she said. "We also have a backup plan for the system. In case the main system has a malfunction, we will switch to a backup system to continue providing the services, so people don't need to worry about it." Lee went on to say that the online booking process was simple and applicants could complete the process within 10 minutes. Security measures were also in place to prevent online bots from snatching up the quota, she said. Edited by Tony Sabine

- ['Some 24-hour gyms stacking fees for short-term users'](#) (2026-03-16 03:52)

The Consumer Council is urging gym-goers to read the fine print before signing up for 24-hour fitness centres after a recent investigation showed that hidden fees can significantly inflate the cost of membership – especially for short-term users. The watchdog reviewed the membership terms and service fees of 11 round-the clock fitness centres in Hong Kong and found that while all of them offered monthly payment options, five charged extra fees on top of the advertised monthly rate, which included enrolment fees and charges for electronic keys or key cards. The council highlighted a particular concern for those gym users who might be unsure about their long-term commitment and opt for a one-month membership. In a comparison of average monthly costs between one-month and 12-month plans, one centre stood out for charging both an enrolment fee and an electronic key fee on top of the basic monthly rate. Since these non-refundable fees were spread over a shorter period, the average monthly cost for a one-month plan was more than double that of the 12-month plan. Three other centres also recorded more than a one-fold difference after calculating the monthly average. In some cases, the watchdog said consumers could find it difficult to sign up for a true one-month plan at all. Although two centres advertised a "one-month membership" on their websites, trial visits showed they actually required a minimum commitment of two months. After accounting for these exceptions – such as centres with mandatory two-month commitments or those lacking a standard one-month option – the average monthly cost for a genuine one-month membership among the remaining centres ranged from HK\$498 to HK\$1,850. "For consumers planning long-term training, a 12-month membership generally offers better value," said Kenneth Chan, the council's vice-chairman of the committee on sustainability, public affairs and education. "Including non-removable costs, the average monthly fees ranged from HK\$349 to HK\$783, which were still lower than the average monthly fees of one-month plans in general." The council urged anyone considering a gym membership to carefully review all potential charges before signing and encouraged them to ask detailed questions about any additional costs to ensure they fully understand the financial commitment. "Consumers should take note of their total annual spending when making comparisons and also pay attention to whether the contract renewed automatically and whether fees would be adjusted after renewal," Chan said. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [HK set to bear the fruits of economic growth: CE](#) (2026-03-16 03:27)

Chief Executive John Lee said he was confident the SAR would grasp the opportunities brought about by Beijing's 15th Five-Year Plan to help both Hong Kong and the nation become

stronger and more prosperous. Delivering his opening address at the Hong Kong Economic Summit on Monday, Lee said the administration was accelerating with the formulation of its own five-year plan from 2026 to 2030, which would offer clear guidelines for socio-economic and livelihood development to better align with the nation's goals. "As a special administrative region of the country, Hong Kong must adopt a broader perspective and contemplate deeply to better understand the strategic goals of the plan, and accurately recognise our mission, and the significant opportunities that lie in integrating with, and serving the nation's broader development," he said. He noted that the local consumption and business environments had improved this year, along with a fall in interest rates. The government would bolster its efforts in improving the well-being of residents for them to share the fruits of economic growth, he added. As a super connector and a super value-adder, the CE said Hong Kong would deepen its cooperation with Greater Bay Area cities and help shape it as world-class bay area. The SAR is also expanding its global trade network, including stepping up exchanges with emerging economies in the Global South, he added. He noted that there were uncertainties in the global economic outlook, due to the complex and volatile geopolitical situation, and disruptions to supply chain and economic order due to tensions. Hong Kong should seize the opportunities amid the shifting landscape, he added, saying that the rise of the Global South, the reshaping of the global trade landscape, the accelerated development of AI and the ongoing digital transformation, and the drive of sustainable development have all injected vitality and brought about opportunities to the global economy. Edited by Tony Sabine

- ['We shouldn't dictate timing on complaints handling'](#) (2026-03-15 08:57)

Secretary for Health Lo Chung-mau on Sunday said it would be unrealistic to impose a time limit on the Medical Council in handling complaints, but that certain procedures could be streamlined. The government aims to submit a bill on the council's reform to the Legislative Council in the first half of this year. Speaking on a TVB programme, Lo said he hopes the reform could resolve the Medical Council's governance and administrative issues in one go. The health minister said the council needs to strike a balance between the complainants and the respondents. But a deadline could be imposed on some of the procedures, Lo added. "For example, if they agree, could we set a time limit for expert witnesses to submit a report? It could be one, two or even three months instead of endless waiting. "Also, there should be a deadline for scheduling a hearing, and panel members could not constantly say they are unavailable." Lo said relevant deadlines could be set by the Medical Council itself, as council members are serving on a voluntary basis and busy with their own work. Meanwhile, he said the fee reforms at public hospitals have lowered the chances of emergency room resources being abused and wasted. He said overall visits to the accident and emergency departments dropped by more than 10 percent two months after the reforms took effect. Edited by Edmond Fong

- [Special rehab programme for 2019 arrestees: Tang](#) (2026-03-15 08:10)

Security minister Chris Tang said the police have in place a special rehabilitation programme for young suspects arrested but not charged over the 2019 protests. "For these young people, police have been running a special project in the past year or two," Tang told an RTHK programme. "Officers have contacted these youngsters under the legal framework and provide them with rehabilitation opportunities by taking part in some positive activities." Tang said he couldn't provide too much details about the programme due to operational reasons. The secretary for security also said he had been in touch with some of those jailed, and that they had shown remorse for their actions. He said most of them have been released from prison, and some have managed to return to school or found a job. Tang added that Hong Kong is one of the safest cities in the world, with an expanding CCTV network helping with crime prevention and detection. He said while there are plans to increase the number of surveillance cameras to more than 60,000 in the coming years, the number of cameras per square kilometre is still relatively low compared with other places. Edited by Edmond Fong

- [Toddler dies after falling from height](#) (2026-03-15 07:54)

Police on Sunday said a toddler died after he fell from height in Tsuen Wan. Sources said his parents were arrested on suspicion of negligence. Officers received a report shortly after 10.30am that the boy, who was about 2 years old, was lying unconscious on the platform of a Hanley Villa block. His parents are said to be inside the flat at the time. The family rushed the boy to nearby Adventist Hospital where he was certified dead. Sources said the victim was playing with his older brother in the living room when the incident occurred. RTHK understood that the flat concerned didn't have window frames installed, nor were the windows locked. Edited by Edmond Fong

- [Govt urges cabbies to install e-payment systems soon](#) (2026-03-15 05:48)

The Transport Department on Sunday urged taxi drivers who have not yet installed electronic payment methods in their cabs to install and familiarise themselves with the payments systems as soon as possible. Taxi drivers will be required to provide passengers at least two types of electronic payment choices from April 1. According to the department, the two electronic payment means must comprise one QR code electronic payment and one non-QR code electronic payment medium, such as Octopus, credit cards or fast payment system. "The new requirement aims to leverage the use of electronic technology to further enhance the overall quality of taxi services," a department spokesperson said. "Different types of e-payment means can provide convenience to passengers, especially tourists, in settling fares, cater to their different needs, and improve the operational efficiency of the taxi trade at the same time." Drivers can choose the electronic payment medium according to their operational needs. They are also required to post stickers on the cab's windows to display the provided electronic payment for identification by passengers. Passengers can also continue to pay in cash if they want. If drivers fail to provide an electronic payment method without a reasonable excuse, they may be fined up to HK\$5,000 and imprisoned for six months. Passengers may also call the government hotline "1823" or "2889 9999" for the department's Transport Complaints Unit if

drivers fail to provide e-payment choices from April. The Transport Department said it has launched measures to step up publicity and public education for major electronic payment platforms and the taxi industry since August last year. They include briefing taxi drivers on the legal requirements, organising more than 20 workshops and 11 taxi stand outreach activities. So far, about 1,900 drivers have participated in the workshops. Edited by Tony Sabine

- ['HK embraces opportunities amid Mideast tensions'](#) (2026-03-15 04:30)

Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury Christopher Hui on Sunday said the turbulent Middle East situation brought Hong Kong both challenges and opportunities. The US-Iran conflict is affecting global energy and capital markets, but the Hong Kong market is operating well, he said. He added the city could serve as a stable and safe asset management centre for global funds during these turbulent times. “On the financial services side, the stability, the safety and also sophistication of financial centre is more robust than ever in terms of how we are being viewed internationally and also domestically,” Hui said after a Commercial Radio programme. “And that’s why, against this backdrop, we are proposing measures to strengthen our role as an asset and wealth management centre in the current regime where many investors would like to diversify their investment.” Meanwhile, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau has announced it would enhance its regulation of money lenders. The measures include introducing a debt servicing ratio cap for unsecured personal loans of low-income earners. “In terms of the overall approach that we take to deal with this money lending regime is that we are applying a rather equivalent requirement, not just the domestic helpers, but everybody with a monthly income below HK\$12,000,” he said. “In this regard, we’ve applied a ratio which is applicable to the proportion of money on a monthly basis that is needed to repay the debt, at the same time, to make sure that all the lenders in this regime will be able to share information, so that there’s no one single individual who would try to borrow from different lenders in such a way of circumventing the requirement.” He also said many households were being used as referees in their domestic helpers’ lending activities. “That’s why from August 1 this year, we require that no more such requirement can be imposed in lending activities in a sense that no referee will be required in such lending activities with a view to protecting our citizens.” Hui said authorities would adopt various measures to ensure the stable development of the city’s money lender regime. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Minor issues, but new signalling system runs well: MTR](#) (2026-03-15 04:23)

The MTR Corporation on Sunday said there were a few teething problems with its new Tsuen Wan Line signalling system, but that trains were running smoothly in general. The system was in operation for the first day after changes were made overnight. An operating and metro segment deputy director with the railway company, Cheris Lee, said the problems were what they had expected and some 200 staff had been deployed to help. “For example, some trains didn’t stop at the exact right spot, and the train captains had to manually drive a little to adjust and get the trains to the train doors. But these incidents are very isolated,” she told reporters hours after the new system came online. Lee stressed this shouldn’t have much effect on passengers,

saying they shouldn't feel the impact of the adjustments. She said for Monday, when the signalling system would be running on the first working day, passengers should take note of the latest train information before they head to school or for work. However, Lee also said the adjustment period could take some time and the firm would closely monitor the situation. Among the contingency plans, she said, would be falling back to the old signalling system. This is the first system change for the MTR's urban lines, and the company plans to complete changes for all of them by 2029. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Taking part in national development an opportunity: FS](#) (2026-03-15 03:53)

Financial Secretary Paul Chan on Sunday said participating in the development of the country is not only Hong Kong's mission and responsibility, but also a huge opportunity for the city. Writing on his weekly blog, Chan said under the leadership of the Chief Executive, preparatory groups set up by various bureaux had now been transformed into formulation teams to prepare for Hong Kong's first five-year plan which would be completed within this year. "Working under a clear common goal, the bureaux collaborate and coordinated with each other to formulate comprehensive action plans," he wrote. "Throughout this process, we must adhere to the combination of a promising government and an efficient market, break away conventional thinking, embrace innovation and reform, and drive progress with a positive and pragmatic attitude." The finance chief also noted the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan points out Hong Kong's advantages can be further leveraged in the next five years. The plan also sets out clear guidelines for supporting Hong Kong to consolidate and enhance its competitiveness, and better integrate into and contribute to the country's development, he wrote. As an SAR of the country, Chan said Hong Kong must continue to learn from the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan. By learning from the plan, he said Hong Kong would be able to unleash greater growth potential by combining its own characteristics, including the institutional advantages of "One Country, Two Systems," the common law system, as well as the city's position as an international platform and financial hub. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [MPF chief eases concerns over stock market swings](#) (2026-03-14 07:24)

The public need not be too worried about how mandatory provident fund schemes are performing amid stock-market fluctuations in response to the ongoing Middle East conflict. That's according to Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority managing director Cheng Yan-chee. Cheng told an RTHK radio programme on Saturday that MPF account holders should adopt investment portfolios based on their age. "The MPF is a long-term retirement savings plan ... There will certainly be fluctuations in the short term," he said. "But there is no need to be overly worried because the savings can only be withdrawn tens of years later in order to protect one's retirement. So we usually tell members that they do not have to be too worried about short-term fluctuations." Younger members, for instance, can be more aggressive in choosing their investment plans, Cheng said. He also stressed that members should be diversified in their investment portfolios to ensure stable returns. Cheng also said average administration fees for MPF accounts were expected to drop to 0.29 percent in the next

financial year, thanks to the launch of eMPF – a centralised platform that allows people to check and manage their accounts. The fees, he pointed out, had been twice as high before the launch of the eMPF platform. The authority has estimated it will take a decade for administration fees to drop to 0.2 percent to 0.25 percent, but Cheng believes the target can be reached in just five years as more people opt for the digital channel and total assets increase.
Edited by Thomas McAlinden

- [Transport chief looks to minimise bumps in air travel](#) (2026-03-14 05:30)

Hong Kong will do its best to ensure stability in the air-travel sector and leverage opportunities amid no signs of an end to hostilities in the Middle East, Secretary for Transport and Logistics Mable Chan said on Saturday. Speaking on a radio programme, she said the SAR had been affected by the outbreak of hostilities due to it being an open economy and having a global aviation network, but insisted the city would be able to find its way out by increasing its services to other markets. "For Hong Kong, we can increase our capacity by adding direct flights to Europe and the United States or by expanding our scope for transit services," Chan said. "Moreover, Terminal 2 at our airport will be in operation from May 27, so we hope that will help alleviate congestion and increase our capacity, as well as provide more facilities for departing passengers." Chan said authorities were closely monitoring changes in the situation brought on by the ongoing hostilities and responding accordingly. Her bureau, she said, has demanded that airlines be transparent when it comes to changes in their fuel surcharges in the wake of increases by all local airlines following a spike in oil prices. As for the impact of higher fuel prices on the land-transport sector, Chan said communications had been exchanged with bus, minibus and taxi operators. Her bureau, she noted, has an established mechanism to deal with potential fee adjustment proposals from individual operators that takes into account overall operating costs and projected passenger growth while ensuring fares remain affordable. Edited by Robert Kemp

- [SMEs scramble for air cargo space due to Gulf conflict](#) (2026-03-14 05:20)

A commercial-sector lawmaker on Saturday said many companies in Hong Kong now had to compete for air cargo space to deliver goods on time amid a spike in fuel surcharges due to the ongoing Middle East conflict. Speaking after a Commercial Radio programme, Jonathan Lamport said this applied especially to firms exporting high-value, short-shelf-life goods that had traditionally relied on sea passage via Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The council comprises Arabian Peninsula countries, except Yemen. He said small and medium enterprises, in particular, had no choice but to switch to air freight if they had already signed an export contract. "So now it's not about how much they increase, it is, is there any space for those goods that they need to ship immediately, for example, pharmaceutical products, food products that can't wait. So those products need to go by air." Lamport went on to say that, for those contracts yet to be signed, firms had to talk to their clients about shouldering additional costs resulting from higher jet fuel charges driven by the spike in oil prices. Customers will have to bear the brunt of the increment, he added. Transport-sector legislator Lothair Lam, who had

also appeared on the programme, said marine insurance had surged by 10 times due to the outbreak of hostilities. He said shippers also had to dig deeper into their pockets for wages, as workers would now have to pass through high-risk regions. As for the surge in diesel and petrol prices, Lam pointed out that local oil companies tended to raise pump prices quickly but reduce them slowly. He said the government should step up monitoring to ensure that oil companies were transparent when it came to higher prices at the petrol pump. The third lawmaker to appear on the programme, Perry Yiu, said the spike in airline fuel surcharges had made high-speed rail a more attractive alternative for people wanting to travel during the upcoming Easter holiday. Edited by Robert Kemp