



HONG KONG SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: March 13, 2026 - March 20, 2026

This report was produced using automated 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.

Executive Summary

During the period of March 13 to March 20, 2026, Hong Kong's security landscape was primarily shaped by the ongoing implementation and reinforcement of national security legislation, alongside significant developments in cybersecurity and a clear strategic alignment with mainland China's national priorities. The city's authorities continued to emphasize the importance of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (Article 23) and the National Security Law (NSL) in maintaining stability, with legal proceedings against activists and warnings to foreign media underscoring their enforcement. Concurrently, the Protection of Critical Infrastructures (Computer Systems) Ordinance, which came into effect on January 1, 2026, began to solidify Hong Kong's cybersecurity framework, highlighted by official warnings against insecure software. Geopolitically, Hong Kong's leadership reiterated its commitment to integrating with China's broader strategic and economic plans, positioning the city as a "superconnector" within a complex global environment. The overall terrorism threat level was assessed as "moderate," indicating a stable internal security environment despite regional and international tensions.

Key Security Developments

- Reinforcement of National Security Legislation (Article 23 and NSL)

Hong Kong's national security framework, comprising the Beijing-imposed National Security Law (NSL) of 2020 and the locally enacted Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (Article 23) which took effect on March 23, 2024, remained a central focus. On March 17, 2026, an opinion piece in the South China Morning Post highlighted a white paper documenting the strength of Hong Kong's security shield, aiming to clarify misconceptions about national security progress. The legislation continues to be used to prosecute individuals for offenses such as sedition, with Amnesty International noting in a March 19, 2025, report that 16 people had been arrested for sedition under Article 23 since its enactment, with five officially charged. This underscores the government's firm stance on perceived threats to national security.

- Ongoing Legal Proceedings and Dissent Suppression

The impact of national security laws on legal proceedings continued to be evident. On March 18, 2026, a former Hong Kong lawmaker denied abetting criminal activity in mainland China during a court hearing. The previous day, March 17, 2026, an anti-China activist told a trial that one-party rule contradicts the constitution. These

cases illustrate the ongoing legal battles and the authorities' consistent application of national security provisions to address dissent and activities deemed subversive.

- Cybersecurity Ordinance Implementation

The Protection of Critical Infrastructures (Computer Systems) Ordinance, passed on March 19, 2025, officially came into force on January 1, 2026. This landmark legislation aims to enhance the security of computer systems for critical infrastructure, minimize service disruptions due to cyberattacks, and improve overall system resilience. It mandates compliance obligations for designated critical infrastructure operators (CIOs), including regular risk assessments and incident reporting, with penalties up to HK\$5 million for initial offenses.

- Warning Against Insecure AI Software

On March 16, 2026, Hong Kong's Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Sun Dong, advised government departments not to install "OpenClaw," a free and open-source AI agent, due to reported incidents of personal data leaks and security concerns. This highlights the government's proactive approach to cybersecurity risks, particularly concerning emerging technologies like AI, and its efforts to protect sensitive government data.

- Alignment with China's National Geopolitical Strategy

Following the conclusion of China's "two sessions," political experts on March 14, 2026, urged Hong Kong to align with the country's geopolitical strategies, moving beyond a "city-centred" approach. Chief Executive John Lee reiterated this on March 13, 2026, stating that Hong Kong would actively align with the 15th Five-Year Plan to deepen reform and advance Chinese modernization. This involves leveraging China's industrial ecosystem and deepening cooperation within the Greater Bay Area.

- "Paradiplomatic Function" for Hong Kong

Veteran political commentator Sonny Lo Shiu-hing noted on March 14, 2026, that Beijing has empowered Hong Kong and Macau with some "paradiplomatic function," expecting Hong Kong to act as a "superconnector" due to its common law background and strong financial, monetary, and aviation hub roles. This indicates a strategic role for Hong Kong in China's international engagement, albeit under Beijing's overarching foreign policy.

- Moderate Terrorism Threat Level

Secretary for Security Chris Tang announced on March 15, 2026, that the terrorism threat in Hong Kong remains "moderate" despite the ongoing war in the Middle East. Tang also stated that Hong Kong has one of the world's lowest crime rates. This assessment suggests a relatively stable internal security environment concerning direct terrorist threats.

- Rejection of External Interference in Judicial Affairs

On March 13, 2026, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Guo Jiakun affirmed the central government's firm support for the Hong Kong SAR government in punishing national security crimes and firmly rejected external forces' interference in Hong Kong's judicial affairs and China's internal affairs. This statement reinforces Beijing's consistent position against international criticism regarding Hong Kong's legal system.

- EU Stance on China's Actions in Hong Kong

An article published on March 13, 2026, referenced earlier statements from the EU regarding China's crackdown on Hong Kong, with EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas stating that the EU had to react to US President Donald Trump together. While the article itself is dated earlier, its re-emergence in searches for this period suggests continued relevance of the EU's concerns. Separately, on March 17, 2026, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated that China firmly opposes illegal unilateral sanctions imposed by the EU against Chinese entities, urging the EU to correct its wrongdoings.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Hong Kong's recent security developments, particularly the continued enforcement of national security legislation and its explicit alignment with mainland China's strategic objectives, have significant geopolitical implications. The city's role is increasingly being redefined within Beijing's "One Country, Two Systems" framework, with a strong emphasis on safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and development interests as the "highest principle". This reorientation means Hong Kong is expected to move beyond a "city-centred" approach and actively contribute to national priorities, such as the internationalization of the yuan and supporting mainland Chinese enterprises' global expansion. This strategic shift positions Hong Kong as a "superconnector" for China, leveraging its unique legal and financial infrastructure to connect with other countries, particularly emerging markets in the Global South.

Relations with major powers remain complex. The United States and the EU continue to express concerns over the erosion of freedoms and the rule of law in Hong Kong due to the national security laws. China, however, firmly rejects what it perceives as external interference in its internal affairs and Hong Kong's judicial processes. The EU's past actions, such as restricting sensitive exports to Hong Kong in response to the NSL, and China's recent opposition to EU unilateral sanctions against Chinese entities, highlight the persistent diplomatic friction. While US-China ties are expected to stabilize in 2026 after a rocky 2025, long-term issues including technology and Taiwan remain key flashpoints, which indirectly influence the perception and treatment of Hong Kong in international relations.

The broader strategic landscape sees Hong Kong as an integral part of China's vision for a "community with a shared future for humanity," emphasizing common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security. The city's stability is presented as crucial for the steady and sustained implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" policy. This narrative aims to counter international criticism by portraying Hong Kong's security measures as essential for its prosperity and stability in a turbulent world. The emphasis on high-standard security for high-quality development underscores Beijing's intent to integrate Hong Kong more deeply into its national development agenda while ensuring political control.

Military and Defense Analysis

Hong Kong's defense is primarily the responsibility of the Central People's Government of China, with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) maintaining a garrison in the Special Administrative Region. During the period of March 13-20, 2026, there were no specific reports of new military activities, exercises, defense acquisitions, or significant shifts in force posture directly related to Hong Kong. The focus remained on internal security and the legal framework governing it, rather than conventional military developments.

However, the broader context of China's defense policy and strategic shifts indirectly impacts Hong Kong. China's 15th Five-Year Plan, which Hong Kong is actively aligning with, emphasizes national development and security. While not explicitly military, this alignment suggests that Hong Kong's infrastructure and strategic positioning are viewed through a national security lens, potentially influencing future defense considerations. The emphasis on leveraging China's industrial ecosystem and deepening cooperation within the Greater Bay Area could, in the long term, contribute to dual-use capabilities that serve both economic and defense purposes, though no specific details were reported in this period.

Defense spending trends and capability developments for Hong Kong are not independently reported, as they fall under China's national defense budget and modernization programs. The absence of specific military news for Hong Kong during this week suggests a continuation of the established posture, where the PLA garrison maintains its presence without overt changes in operations or significant new deployments. The "moderate" terrorism threat level assessment by Hong Kong's security chief further indicates that immediate military responses to internal threats are not currently a primary concern, with law enforcement and national security agencies taking the lead on security matters.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Hong Kong will likely continue to see the robust enforcement of its national security laws, including the NSL and Article 23. This will manifest in ongoing legal proceedings against individuals accused of endangering national security and continued official rhetoric emphasizing the necessity of these laws for stability. The government will also focus on the full operationalization and compliance with the Protection of Critical Infrastructures (Computer Systems) Ordinance, with designated critical infrastructure operators expected to implement new cybersecurity measures and reporting protocols. We can anticipate further official statements and guidance regarding cybersecurity best practices, especially concerning emerging technologies like AI, following the recent warning about "OpenClaw". Hong Kong's leadership will continue to articulate its alignment with China's 15th Five-Year Plan and Greater Bay Area integration initiatives, seeking to solidify its role as a "superconnector" for national development.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: A critical flashpoint remains the potential for increased international scrutiny and diplomatic tensions, particularly from Western nations, regarding the application of national security laws and their impact on civil liberties and business operations. Any high-profile arrests or convictions under these laws could trigger renewed international condemnation and potential retaliatory measures, such as sanctions or trade restrictions, similar to past EU actions. Cybersecurity threats, especially from sophisticated state-sponsored actors or organized criminal groups, pose a continuous risk to Hong Kong's critical infrastructure, despite the new ordinance. The vague language in some national security provisions, particularly concerning "state secrets" and "external interference," could lead to unpredictable enforcement and create uncertainty for foreign businesses and individuals operating in the city.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the frequency and nature of arrests and prosecutions under the NSL and Article 23, particularly those involving foreign nationals or businesses. Any new official interpretations or guidelines for these laws, especially regarding their extraterritorial application, will be crucial. Progress in the designation of Critical Infrastructure Operators (CIOs) and the enforcement of the new cybersecurity ordinance should be closely watched, along with any reported cyber incidents affecting essential services. Statements from Hong Kong and Chinese officials regarding diplomatic relations with the US, EU, and other major powers, especially concerning trade and human rights, will provide insights into geopolitical dynamics. Furthermore, any shifts in China's broader foreign policy or economic strategies that directly impact Hong Kong's role as a "superconnector" should be monitored.

Strategic recommendations: For entities operating in Hong Kong, it is recommended to conduct thorough legal reviews to ensure full compliance with the NSL and Article 23, paying particular attention to definitions of "state secrets" and "external

interference." Companies designated as Critical Infrastructure Operators should prioritize the implementation of robust cybersecurity frameworks and incident response plans in line with the new ordinance. Businesses should also assess their exposure to geopolitical risks, including potential sanctions or trade disputes, and diversify their operations where feasible. Diplomatic engagement should focus on advocating for clarity and predictability in the application of national security laws, while also acknowledging Hong Kong's stated commitment to its "paradiplomatic function" within China's national strategy. Continuous monitoring of legal, political, and cybersecurity developments is essential for navigating Hong Kong's evolving security landscape.

ANNEX: COLLECTED ARTICLES BY SOURCE

Source: HK Free Press

- [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 Beiye 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 [...]"

- [Some Wang Fuk Court residents to participate as involved parties in fire probe hearings](#) (2026-03-13 13:24)

Some Wang Fuk Court residents, including former members of the defunct owners' corporation, will participate as involved parties in the upcoming probe hearings on the deadly

Tai Po fire, HKFP has learned. The independent committee tasked to investigate the inferno had accepted the applications from two groups of residents to participate in the hearings as [...]

- [Ex-education chief said registration not needed for interest classes, independent bookstore owner testifies in court](#) (2026-03-13 12:11)

A Hong Kong independent bookstore owner has cited a former education minister in court to defend charges linked to a Spanish course held last year. Pong Yat-ming appeared at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts on Thursday to stand trial for allegedly managing an unregistered school after he held a Spanish course at his bookstore, Book [...]

- [Taiwan lawmakers allow gov't to sign 4 US weapons deals](#) (2026-03-13 08:34)

Taiwanese lawmakers have given the government a green light to sign US agreements for four weapons deals, the parliamentary speaker said Friday, even before a proposal to fund these and other arms has been approved. The weapons — M109A7 self-propelled howitzers, Javelin anti-armor missiles, TOW 2B missiles and High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) — [...]

- [At least HK\\$15,000 to certify subdivided units under new law, surveyors estimate](#) (2026-03-13 08:19)

Landlords may spend at least HK\$15,000 to have up to four subdivided units certified under the new law stipulating minimum living standards for shoebox flats in Hong Kong, a surveyors' association has said. Kenny Tse, chairperson of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, spoke at a briefing on subdivided housing for landlords and real estate [...]

- [Hong Kong gov't urged to stabilise oil prices as some residents turn to illicit fuel amid Middle East war](#) (2026-03-13 06:13)

The Hong Kong government has been urged to negotiate with oil giants to stabilise fuel prices, as some residents have resorted to buying illicit fuel amid soaring oil costs. Lawmaker Holden Chow, vice chair of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB), said on RTHK on Friday morning that skyrocketing oil [...]

- [Hong Kong court rules subversion trial of Tiananmen vigil activists will go on](#) (2026-03-13 05:07)

A Hong Kong court has ruled that two Tiananmen vigil activists have a case to answer over calls to “end one-party rule” in China in a subversion trial under the Beijing-imposed national security law. Three designated national security judges ruled on Friday that the prosecution established a prima facie case against Lee Cheuk-yan, Chow Hang-tung, [...]

- [US launches trade probes into China, other countries over failures to act on forced labour](#) (2026-03-13 05:04)

The United States launched trade investigations Thursday into 60 economies including China, the EU and Japan, fueling the possibility of further tariffs after the Supreme Court struck down

President Donald Trump’ s global duties. The set of probes, initiated by the US Trade Representative (USTR) office, will look into “failures to take action on forced labor” [...]

- [On Track to Save: Médecins Sans Frontières Hong Kong draws thousands to run for humanity](#) (2026-03-13 01:00)

Close to 4,000 athletes, celebrities and families gathered at the Hong Kong Science Park early Sunday morning, March 1, to join MSF’ s large-scale running and orienteering competition and to support its international medical humanitarian work. In addition to the standard 10km and 3km running races, MSF revived its long-awaited orienteering event, offering a route suitable [...]

Source: RTHK English News

- [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 foam boards 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 foam boards, 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 aboard 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 an overtourism problem in some of the districts or some part of the country park with a lot of litter 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 rates skyrocket 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, 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 these 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 for expediting the Northern Metropolis development – a task for the SAR under the nation's 15th Five-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 15th Five-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 cooperative 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 wider 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 time slots 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 moneylending 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

- [Govt clarifies Wang Fuk rehousing arrangements](#) (2026-03-13 13:53)

The government on Friday dismissed media reports quoting Wang Fuk Court residents as saying they would lose their housing subsidy once they make a long-term rehousing decision. Authorities said it was also untrue that they would have to move out of the transitional housing they are currently living in within 30 days of getting the keys to the new unit they opt for. In a statement, officials said transitional housing operators will be flexible in this regard, and handle cases based on the families' actual needs. It said that as far as the rental subsidy is concerned, Wang Fuk homeowners are entitled to HK\$300,000 dollars over two years, and the money is

given out in four batches. "If the homeowner is to take the cash after selling the rights to the property and not take part in the Special Sales Exercise, the rent subsidy will be paid until the disbursement date of the relevant amount," the Housing Bureau said. For homeowners who choose to buy a flat through the exercise, the bureau said the subsidy will be paid out until they collect the keys for a new unit. It went on to say that its engagement team will explain the arrangements to homeowners and they can also contact the team at anytime if they have questions. Edited by Aaron Tam

- [21 injured in Yuen Long four-car collision](#) (2026-03-13 12:59)

At least 21 people were injured following a four-car collision in Yuen Long on Friday. Police received reports at about 6.30pm, saying two buses, one light truck and a private vehicle crashed on Yuen Long Highway. Nine men and 12 women suffered light injuries. None of them were trapped. The Transport Department said it closed some Tuen Mun-bound lanes on the highway for the recovery operation. It also called on motorists to use other routes because traffic is heavy in the area, as the slip road at Shap Pat Heung Interchange was also closed. In a statement, bus operator Kowloon Motor Bus (KMB) said two of its buses, 276B and 269B, were involved in the accident when passing through Pok Oi Interchange. It said 20 passengers and a driver were injured. KMB added that staff will visit injured passengers, and investigate the cause of the accident. Edited by Aaron Tam

- [Lower listing bar for companies with dual-class voting](#) (2026-03-13 10:31)

Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing (HKEX) proposed on Friday that the bar for companies with weighted voting rights (WVR) seeking to list in the SAR be lowered as part of broader reforms to further raise the city's listing regime competitiveness. In a public consultation paper, it suggests lowering the threshold for companies that have such dual-class voting rights to list to a minimum valuation of HK\$20 billion, half the current requirement of at least HK\$40 billion. It also proposed the market capitalisation threshold for such WVR listings be trimmed to HK\$6 billion from HK\$10 billion while lowering their revenue requirement to HK\$600 million from HK\$1 billion, according to the statement. The maximum ratio of shares with preferred voting rights, meanwhile, would be eased to 1:20 from the current 1:10 – if the applicant company has a market capitalisation of above HK\$40 billion, it said. "Our proposal aims to enhance the exchange's attractiveness as a listing venue for high quality, high growth companies intending to retain their WVR structures," a statement reads. "It also seeks to strike an appropriate balance between market competitiveness and investor protection." Meanwhile, HKEX seeks to expand the scope of businesses that are eligible for listing under the WVR regime, as it redefines on what can be considered as "innovative companies" so as to cover more non-tech issuers but include those with innovative business models. Other key recommendations include allowing all companies to file listing applications confidentially, rather than the current regime of allowing only certain firms, such as biotech and specialist tech companies. To attract more companies that have already listed overseas, the bourse suggested lowering the market capitalisation requirement to HK\$6 billion from HK\$10 billion. "Our proposals are consistent

with the policy direction of the HKSAR Government and market feedback. They seek to optimise the WVR listing regime, enhance the pathway to listing for homecoming Greater China issuers," it said. "The proposals in this paper are designed to foster a more inclusive and dynamic market environment, enhancing the breadth of investment opportunities available to meet the needs of both investors and issuers," it added. The move marks the first major overhaul of the city's WVR regime since its debut in 2018, and the relaxation of these new measures could help smooth the path for large mainland enterprises to debut on the city's stock exchange. The proposed reform came as the city's initial public offering market topped the world last year with 119 companies raising HK\$286 billion in new listings, compared with HK\$87.5 billion a year earlier. HKEX noted that the proposals were made after taking into account the latest market feedback to review its existing frameworks, especially those related to WVR, and as it compared the city's regime with regulatory changes in other markets, including the United States, the UK and Singapore. The consultation ends on May 8. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Patient network launched for comprehensive care](#) (2026-03-13 10:13)

The Primary Healthcare Commission on Friday launched the Primary Healthcare Co-care Network for better personalised patient care. The network was announced in the budget at the end of last month. Unlike past measures, when patients were required to access different platforms for different services, the new platform allows patients in different stages of treatment to access services in one single medical network. Primary Healthcare Commissioner Pang Fei-chau said the new system makes things more efficient and streamlined for patients.

"It will be more efficient to engage same group of doctors and also with same types of subsidisation and co-payment that will help to facilitate a further development in different types of illness from different perspectives like prevention, like diagnosis, screening, management, as well as the referral," he said. Phase 1 of this network will aim to serve 700,000 patients over the coming five years, integrating Hospital Authority family medicine clinics, public-private partnerships, and elderly services from the Department of Health later this year. Currently, it covers screenings for blood sugar, blood pressure, and blood lipids alongside screening for Hepatitis B for over 200,000 participants. The network targets high-risk patients with chronic illnesses, the elderly, patients at family medicine outpatient clinics, and patients under the General Outpatient Clinic Public-Private Partnership Programme. Pang said future plans will see the network expanded to cover other chronic diseases while integrating services such as radiology and seasonal flu vaccination. On the same day, the Commission also launched the Yau Tsim Mong District Health Centre. It offers a vaccination room, a blood taking station, consultation rooms, and a therapy room for exercise, with audio visual smart technology to assist patients' rehabilitation. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Coleman Wong makes last eight in Dominicana Open](#) (2026-03-13 08:26)

Hong Kong, China tennis star Coleman Wong defeated another top-100 player to make it into the quarter-finals of the Republica Dominicana Open in Cap Cana in the Dominican Republic. The 21-year-old SAR sensation bested third-seeded and World No. 64 Damir Džumhur from

Bosnia and Herzegovina 3-6, 6-4, 6-2, serving up eight aces and winning 72 percent of first-serve points. The city's tennis star will next face another top-100 player, Belgium's Alexander Blockx, at 2am Hong Kong time on Saturday. Wong, currently at a career-best World No. 123, entered the tournament's main draw as a lucky loser in the qualifying rounds. He defeated World No. 98 Roman Andres Burruchaga from Argentina in the opening round of 32. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Greater Bay Airlines surcharges double from Wednesday](#) (2026-03-13 08:12)

Greater Bay Airlines announced on Friday that fuel surcharges for non-mainland services would almost double from March 18 due to higher oil prices as a result of the Middle East conflict. This came after similar moves by Cathay Pacific and Hong Kong Airlines. For flights to the Maldives, the surcharge will rise from HK\$284 to HK\$541. Journeys to all other destinations, such as in Japan, Thailand and Malaysia, will see the surcharge for jet fuel rise to HK\$290 from HK\$142. The rate will remain unchanged for flights to and from the mainland. Greater Bay Airlines said fuel surcharges might be adjusted according to its established mechanism in line with changes in oil prices. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Swire to sell part of its stake in Cathay](#) (2026-03-13 06:03)

Swire Pacific on Friday said it would sell 153.1 million shares in Cathay Pacific Airways via a share placement, representing around 2.5 percent of the airline's total issued shares. It said the placing price would be HK\$11.74 per share, which was determined after a series of negotiations between the two parties with reference to Cathay's prevailing stock price and other considerations. The company said net proceeds from the sale would be around HK\$1.79 billion. After subtracting the current book value of the block of shares, at around HK\$1.42 billion, Swire said it expected to record a gain of HK\$365 million from the placement, with the net proceeds expected to be used for general working capital purposes. Swire will remain the largest shareholder of Cathay with a more than 45 percent stake in the airline after the sale. (Reuters) Edited by Edmond Fong

- [MTR pay rises 'slightly below demands of unions'](#) (2026-03-13 05:20)

A railway unionist said on Friday that pay rises announced by the MTR Corporation were slightly below their demands and called for improved benefits. Their response came after the corporation said pay increases would be between 1.6 and 3.84 percent for most non-management staff, depending on their performance. According to representatives of the Federation of Railway Trade Unions, over half of MTR staff will receive a 3.2 percent salary increase. Workers will also receive a one-off performance-based bonus of between 1.4 and 2.07 months' salary, it said. In a statement, the MTRC said the decision was made after a careful consideration of various factors, including its business performance, the market and economic environment, as well as employee contributions. Speaking after meeting the MTR management, federation spokesman Lam Wai-keung said the union groups were disappointed that the corporation had not responded to their call for improved benefits, including an increase in the

overnight shift allowance. He said workers faced immense pressure having to carry out critical railway work within a two-hour window after the end of services every day. "No other profession can match the intensity of the pressure we endure as the two-hour window closes. Increasing our overnight shift allowance is a basic and reasonable demand," Lam said.

"It is common industry practice to pay double for night work. Some union members have handled tender documents. If contractors have to work at night their tender price would be much higher. This also proves that this is a standard industry practice." However, Lam said, the pay increase this time around came closer to meeting union demands than on many occasions in the past. He added the federation would continue to engage in discussions with management to get the corporation to meet its other demands, which include instituting a tenure-based pay system and subsidising the cost of renewing professional licences. Edited by Tony Sabine

- ['Illegal fuel danger looms large for urban residents'](#) (2026-03-13 04:13)

Illegal fuel station operations are being conducted closer to more urban areas, posing a greater threat to public safety, the Fire Services Department said on Friday. That was evinced by the arrest of a man on Wednesday on suspicion of operating an illegal fuel station on a ground-floor unit of a mixed residential and commercial building in To Kwa Wan, with officers seizing 850 litres of petrol. Speaking on RTHK, divisional officer Ng Wing-chit said the new modus operandi of illegal fuel station operators poses a challenge for officers trying to shut them down. "In the past, they were located in remote areas, the countryside, cordoned-off areas or parking lots on derelict land," he said. "But now the trend is that they have become more mobile, fragmented and closer to the urban areas. "More mobile means they are no longer fixed at one station. They might use modified vehicles – that is to say, mobile illegal fuel stations or illegal fuel cars – which can go anywhere. Fragmented means they used to be large-scale. But now they are smaller and scattered around at different locations." Ng noted that the To Kwa Wan case could have put lives in danger in the event of any accident as, apart from residents living in the building, there were also elderly residential homes nearby. Higher oil prices have given motorists an incentive to go to illegal fuel stations as they offer cheaper fuel, he said. "Such illegal fuel stations lack compliant fire-service installations, equipment or management expertise," Ng pointed out. "Once there is a leakage, improper operation or a spark, it can lead to a fire or an explosion. It's very dangerous." The department has received more than 200 complaints about illegal fuel stations in the first two months of the year, Ng said, which represents a 42 percent increase over the average monthly figure for last year. There has also been an 85 percent jump in the number of prosecutions initiated compared to the average monthly figure a year ago. The honorary life president of the Hong Kong, China Automobile Association, Ringo Lee, pointed out on the same show that fuel thefts had not – before Wednesday's revelation that more than HK\$30,000 worth of diesel had been siphoned from four oil tankers parked overnight in Tuen Mun – occurred for a long time. He suspected the oil tankers were easy targets as their huge loads of at least 1,000 litres made discoveries of fuel theft less obvious. Edited by Tony Sabine

- [Social workers deserve gratitude for relief work: Sun](#) (2026-03-13 03:04)

The secretary for labour and welfare has pledged to review in due course a compassionate arrangement that attaches one social worker to each household of fire-ravaged Wang Fuk Court, while acknowledging the officers' increased workload. In an exclusive interview with RTHK, Chris Sun said it was the right call to mobilise all of the government's 2,000 or so social workers following the disaster in November, as the affected residents deserved maximum support possible. His comments followed concerns regarding the workload of some social work officers. Sun described the scale of the operation as unprecedented, but noted such a household-matching policy had been used before in cases affecting a smaller amount of people. "You can say they've provided one-on-one matching for professional services... that included matters that the residents care about, but are unrelated to social welfare," he said. "We will rationally review everything once things settle down. But at this point, we feel that within such a short time span, we made the right, decisive call to adopt the 'one social worker per household' policy." The minister noted the social workers have been dealing with issues they're not familiar with, such as re-housing and helping residents apply for grants and subsidies. Sun said the Social Welfare Department has implemented measures to assist the officers, such as streamlining their travel expense claims and offering flexible holiday arrangements. But, he added, public recognition would go a long way in providing them emotional support. "I think our Social Welfare Department colleagues are worthy of everyone's support, a thumbs-up. They demonstrated a tremendous [will to] shoulder responsibility as they have a great sense of mission," he said. "When Hong Kong faces such enormous difficulties, as they are social workers, you may say that they're duty-bound. But you also have to be considerate about their heavy workload, it's really not easy." Sun said he expects their burden to gradually ease off once a long-term housing plan is finalised for Wang Fuk Court residents. That said, those who have lost their loved ones in the fire will continue to receive social welfare support, the minister added. On a separate note, the minister said officials are looking to kick start a trial scheme this year aimed at boosting support for elderly carers, as well as senior citizens living on their own. The scheme would involve installing fall sensor systems at their homes, with authorities to be alerted when potential danger is detected. No visuals will be recorded to ensure the users' privacy. Edited by Cecil Wong