

1	<p>Minimum Wage Raised to HK\$37.50 New Law to Take Effect on May 1</p> <p>The government will increase minimum wage from HK\$34.50 to \$37.50 with effect from May 1. The statutory minimum wage uses hourly wage as the unit of measure. The basic principle being that workers' average wage calculated on a per hour basis should not fall below the legally mandated minimum wage level during any period of employment. The minimum wage law aims to achieve a balance among various policy objectives including protection of workers against excessively low wages, reducing the loss of low wage jobs and maintaining Hong Kong's economic development and competitiveness.</p>
2	<p>Rumours of Death in '831' Prince Edward Station Attacks</p> <p>An intense confrontation between the police and civilians broke out at Prince Edward station on August 31. At the end of protest marches on the night of the incident, police received reports that two groups of commuters had gotten into a conflict over opposing political views, and stormed Prince Edward station to disperse the crowd and apprehend alleged perpetrators. However, police allegedly used batons to assault protestors and other commuters in the trains, leading to multiple people being injured. Police locked down the scene and closed the station on the same night. Journalists and paramedics were not allowed to get into the station. Prince Edward station remained closed for two days after the incident. Rumours have been circulating online that the number of reported injuries did not tally with the number of people that was sent to hospital, stirring speculation that several protesters were beaten to death at the station. Both the police and the Fire Department have issued clarifications and rejected the allegations. The MTR Corporation has been under significant public pressure to release the full CCTV footage of the August 31st incident in order to corroborate the facts. However, MTR has thus far refused to do so citing passenger privacy. Many criticised the police for excessive use of force and indiscriminately assaulting passengers during the incident. Police was also lambasted for refusing paramedics entry into the station thus delaying emergency treatment for victims. After the incident, many citizens have placed flowers and joss paper outside the Prince Edward station entrance.</p>
3	<p>Anti-government Protests Sweep Across the World Nearly 300 Dead in Iraq</p> <p>In the second half of the year, large-scale anti-government protests have rapidly swept across many parts of the world. In September, protests broke out in Indonesia sparked by new laws that prohibit co-habitation before marriage and penalise insulting the president's honour. Two students died in the protests. In October, pro-independence Catalans clashed with the police while attempting to stage an occupation of the Barcelona-El Prat airport. Among the casualties were protestors who were hit in the eye by rubber bullets shot by police and became blind as a result. In the same month, subway fare hikes touched off violent protests in Chile resulting in 19 deaths. Chilean President Sebastian Pinera declared that the country was at war. In Iraq, protestors are demonstrating against corruption and unemployment among other issues. As of November, nearly 300 people have been killed as a result of the conflicts. Other countries where large-scale protests have taken place this year include Lebanon and Sudan. The Yellow Vests movement that began last year in France also continues.</p>

4	<p>Japan's Emperor Abdicates Throne for First Time in 200 Years</p> <p>Japanese emperor Akihito formally abdicated on April 30 and will be succeeded by his son Crown Prince Naruhito. With Naruhito's ascension, Japan will leave behind the Heisei era and officially usher in the Reiwa era. Naruhito's inauguration ceremony will be held in October. Akihito reigned for 30 years between 1989 to 2019. His abdication is the first by a living Japanese monarch since emperor Kokaku 1817. As part of celebrations to commemorate Naruhito's enthronement, Japan announced a 10-day national holiday.</p>
5	<p>Britain Set for Early Elections to Break Brexit Deadlock</p> <p>Ex-British Prime Minister Theresa May has held multiple rounds of negotiations with the European Union in a bid to reach a Brexit withdrawal agreement that would deliver on the results of the EU membership referendum. The UK was originally scheduled to leave EU on March 29. However, the British parliament has been locked in disagreement over issues including the border with Northern Ireland and EU customs union, with the latest Brexit deal being voted down in January's parliament sitting. Following the vote, the two sides have made multiple amendments to the withdrawal agreement and pushed back the Brexit deadline several times. Theresa May resigned as Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader in June owing to her repeated failure to obtain parliamentary support for the Brexit deal. Ex-Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson took over as Prime Minister in July and pledged to deliver Brexit. The UK reached a new Brexit agreement with EU in October, in which a new solution to resolve the Northern Irish border issue was proposed. However, British parliament once again rejected this renegotiated deal. To break the Brexit deadlock, the EU agreed to further extend the Brexit deadline to January next year while the UK prepares to hold an early election in December.</p>
6	<p>36 Dead in Kyoto Animation Studio Arson Attack Original Drawings Destroyed</p> <p>Japan's Kyoto Animation's Studio 1 building was set on fire by an arsonist with gasoline in July. The arson attack killed 36 people and injured another 33. Sources said the studio was almost completely destroyed with many original drawings and materials of historical significance lost in the fire. Kyoto Animation engaged an IT specialist and successfully recovered digitised original drawings and other information from a server that survived the fire. In order to prevent future arson threats, the Japanese government passed new legislations which will require customers to show their identity cards if they wish to buy gasoline in portable tanks.</p>

7	<p>Police Conduct Called to Question After Secondary 5 Student Shot With Live Round</p> <p>The Anti-Extradition Bill protest has sparked multiple fierce clashes between protestors and police forces. The protestors' demands have now expanded to include investigating police use of force and misconduct. In the evening of August 6, Keith Fong Chung-yin, the president of Baptist University Students' Union was searched by plain clothes police officers at Sham Shui Po and found to be possessing 10 laser pointers (police described the seized items as 'laser guns'). He was detained for carrying offensive weapons but was eventually released unconditionally. In the evening of August 11, during protest clashes outside Tsim Sha Tsui police station, a young woman was suspected to be hit in the right eye by bean bag rounds shot by police resulting in the victim suffering vision impairment. On the same night, while trying to disperse protestors, police fired tear gas into Kwai Fong station, a move that was widely condemned by citizens. In August 31 evening, police were reported to have gone after protestors and brutally assaulted them on the platform and inside trains at Prince Edward MTR station. The use of pepper sprays at close range was allegedly among the violent acts carried out by the police. Many protestors were injured during the incident. Rumours being circulated online claim that some protestors had been beaten to death during the incident. On June 29, Indonesian journalist Veby Mega Indah of Suara Hong Kong was suspected to be hit by a police rubber bullet in the right eye while covering the protests in the Wan Chai area. On October 1, a Secondary 5 student protestor was shot in the chest with a live round by riot police during violent clashes in Tsuen Wan. He was in critical condition and was sent to hospital for emergency treatment. In October 20, during clashes in the Kowloon area, police had fired blue liquid from water cannons at a Tsim Sha Tsui mosque. The incident has drawn criticisms for the police's lack of respect shown towards religious buildings.</p>
8	<p>First Ever Black Hole Image Confirms Predictions of the Theory of Relativity</p> <p>The Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) project officially unveiled the first ever image of a black hole on April 10, marking a significant milestone in astrophysics. The image not only confirms the existence of black holes but also provided evidence for Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity. Astrophysicists who were part of the EHT project said the image further bolsters Einstein's century-old general theory of relativity in the academic world.</p>

9	<p>Frequent Fires Ravage Amazon Rainforest Widespread Habitat Destruction Draws Global Attention</p> <p>The Amazon rainforest, often referred to as 'Earth's Lungs', experienced the highest number of fires since records became available. Brazil's National Institute for Space Research recorded over 75,000 fire outbreaks in the Brazilian Amazon between January to August, representing an increase of more than 80% over the same period last year. Environmental groups claim that the spike in number of fires is related to excessive deforestation and development of agricultural industries. The fires have caused severe destruction of natural habitats, with devastating effects on the natural species living in the Amazon. The Amazon is an important carbon sink that counters the effects of global warming. The worsening fires in the Amazon has attracted global attention, with increasing calls for Brazil to intensify measures to address the situation. Several countries have also pledged funding to help fight the fires.</p>
10	<p>More Than 10,000 Pigs Culled in Wake of African Swine Fever Scourge</p> <p>The African swine fever pandemic has intensified worldwide, spreading to more than 10 Asian regions including Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines and South Korea. Among the countries affected, China's situation is the most serious by far. The disease has spread across China in less than a year following the discovery of the first African swine fever case in Shenyang, Liaoning province in August 2018. More than one million pigs have been culled so far to combat the disease. To stabilise hog prices, various measures such as price and quantity controls have been implemented in the 29 mainland provinces. In Hong Kong, the first case of African swine fever was discovered in Sheung Shui Slaughter House at the start of May. Since then, more than 10,000 live pig stock have been destroyed.</p>
11	<p>Hong Kong Invokes Emergency Rule for Face Mask Ban Clashes Between Police and Civilians Intensifies</p> <p>The Hong Kong government has invoked the Emergency Regulations Ordinance to ban face masks for the first time since the handover to China. The ban would take effect starting from October 5. The ban prohibits anyone from wearing face masks that could conceal their identity at public gatherings. Offenders could face up to one year's imprisonment or a fine of up to HK\$25,000. The move aims to prevent protestors from hiding their identities behind masks to evade law enforcement efforts in the months of protests that have plagued Hong Kong. As clashes continue to rock the city, most on-duty police officers are covering up their faces and hiding their IDs from view, in a bid to avoid being identified by protestors. Some people have voiced concerns over the double standards and worry that tensions between civilians and the police would further escalate.</p>

12	<p>Two Derailing Incidents on East Rail Line in Two Months Casts Spotlight on Rail Safety</p> <p>A maintenance train, which was used for overnight repair and maintenance work, came off the tracks during a test run at the turning point between Tai Po Market station and University station. The incident happened during the early hours of July 25. No one was injured in the incident. The derailing affected East Rail line services between Fo Tan and Tai Po Market stations with next day train services suspended for up to 9 hours. Separately, the East Rail Line suffered another derailing incident on the morning of September 17 around 8:30am. The train was traveling from Mong Kok East station towards Hung Hom station when the 4th to 6th carriages derailed as the train approached Hung Hom station. The incident resulted in eight injuries and 500 passengers onboard were evacuated. MTR Corp would set up an investigative panel to conduct an in-depth probe of the incident.</p>
13	<p>Bill to Ban E-cigarettes Gazetted Sales Prohibited but Use Allowed</p> <p>A Bill to amend the Smoking Ordinance was submitted to the LegCo on February 13 and was officially gazetted on February 15. The Bill aims to ban the import, manufacture, sale, distribution and advertisement of alternative smoking products, including electronic cigarettes and heat-not-burn products. It will still be legal to buy and use these products. Offenders could be subject to a maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment and a fine of HK\$50,000 if convicted. The Bill has passed the first reading and is currently under review.</p>
14	<p>Lennon Walls Spring Up Amid Anti-extradition Protest Removal of Wall Postings Cause of Conflicts</p> <p>Amid the anti-extradition law controversy, many Hong Kong residents have created Lennon Walls in various locations around the city in the hopes of advocating their causes in a peaceful manner and to broadcast the latest information. However, some residents feel that the Lennon Walls are an eyesore among the city landscape. Across city districts, the tearing down of postings on Lennon Walls have sparked clashes. In August, a knife attack occurred at a Lennon Wall in Tseung Kwan O area, in a pedestrian underpass connected to the Hau Tak Estate. A man slashed a female reporter after getting into a verbal altercation over differing political views, leaving the victim unconscious. Other bystanders were also hurt while trying to intervene. In total, 3 people were injured in the attack. The suspect has been arrested. Legislative Council lawmaker Junius Ho had previously launched a 'Clean Up HK' campaign to clean up the walls. However, no major clean up operation has been initiated to prevent triggering potential clashes.</p>

15	<p>US-China Trade War Reignited Both Sides Increase Tariffs</p> <p>The US announced in May it will raise import tariffs from 10% to 25% on US\$200 billion worth of Chinese goods. China responded by announcing its own tariffs on a portion of imported US goods would also go up from 5% to 25%. The tit-for-tat tariff increase marks the end of a temporary truce and the start of another round of trade conflicts, which began last year. Leaders of both countries Donald Trump and Xi Jinping had agreed to restart trade talks in June and halt new tariff rate hikes in the meantime. However, the US was not satisfied with the progress of China's purchase of US agricultural goods. As a result, Trump announced on Twitter that the US would impose import tariffs on all remaining Chinese goods in August. Following the announcement, China put a pause on purchase of US agricultural goods and countered by imposing additional tariffs on US cars and automotive parts.</p>
16	<p>Teacher Found Dead After Jumping off Building at Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Primary School Investigations Point to Multiple Causal Factors</p> <p>Lam Lai-tong, a teacher at Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Leo Tung-hai Lee Primary School in Tin Shui Wai, jumped to her death on March 6. The teacher was believed to have been under work-related stress at the time of suicide. A colleague of Ms Lam said that she was struggling with a heavy workload at the school and was often pressured and reprimanded by the school's principal, including having to write repentance letters. Tung Wah Group of Hospitals confirmed that an independent panel would investigate the teacher's death. The school's management committee released the panel's investigation findings on August 8, including 19 recommendations, which the school accepted. The panel found that the main factors contributing to the teacher's death include the principal's management style, the school's environment, Ms Lam's personal conditions and overall management issues at the school. Arising from the findings, the school's committee reached a majority decision to dismiss the principal.</p>
17	<p>National Anthem Bill Gazetted First Reading of Bill Completed</p> <p>The National Anthem Bill was published in the Gazette by the Hong Kong government on January 11. The Bill will be introduced into the LegCo on January 23. The Bill proposes legislations that prohibit anyone from intentionally insulting the national anthem or distorting the national anthem in any public setting. Offenders may face up to 3 years imprisonment and fines of HKD\$50,000. The LegCo has completed the first and second readings of the Bill and awaiting the next legislative steps. Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Patrick Nip said the legislative intent of the Bill is to promote respect for the national anthem and to introduce deterrent punishments for actions that insult the national anthem.</p>

18	<p>Multiple Countries Hit by Measle Outbreak Many Hong Kong Airport Staff Among Infected</p> <p>A global outbreak of measles has affected many countries and regions since the start of the year. Hong Kong has recorded 73 measles cases with 29 of them related to airport workers. The Centre for Health Protection has implemented various measures aimed at preventing the spread of measles such as administering measles vaccine for 8,501 airport workers and providing measles blood testing services. The Department of Health announced on May 17 that the measles outbreak at the Hong Kong International Airport was officially over.</p>
19	<p>Fire Breaks Out in Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral Causing Iconic Spire to Collapse</p> <p>A fire broke out in France's renowned Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral on the evening of April 15. The blaze raged on for 15 hours, with more than 400 firefighters mobilised to put out the fire. Parisians who were gathered at the scene sang 'Ave Maria' and joined together in prayer for the burning cathedral. Notre-Dame's iconic spire collapsed in the fire. The cathedral's wooden roof was also completely destroyed. The two bell towers were fortunately not damaged. Authorities are investigating the possibility that a short-circuit might have caused the fire. French President Emmanuel Macron declared a national emergency in response to the Notre-Dame fire. Many have also pledged donations towards the cathedral's reconstruction.</p>
20	<p>Out-of-Service Hong Kong MTR Trains Collide First Collision Accident in 40 Years</p> <p>Two MTR subway trains collided on March 18 in the early morning during non-service hours. The collision occurred on the Tsuen Wan line between Central and Admiralty stations. This is the first accident involving collision since MTR's inception. The trains involved in the accident suffered significant damage. Two train drivers were also injured. Train service between Central and Admiralty on the Tsuen Wan line has been suspended for two days. Investigations conducted by MTR and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department showed that the accident could be caused by a software glitch that occurred when MTR contractors were upgrading a new signalling system.</p>
21	<p>China Celebrates 70th Founding Anniversary with Large Scale Military Parade in Beijing</p> <p>This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China with various celebrations taking place across China. To mark the founding anniversary on Oct 1, a grand military parade was held in Beijing. Various modern military assets were put on display during the parade including DF-17 hypersonic ballistic missiles, DF-17 conventional missiles and CH-7 unmanned aerial vehicles. In his speech, Chinese president Xi Jinping said, 'There is no force that can shake the status of this great nation.' He also emphasised commitment to the principles of 'Peaceful Reunification' and 'One Country, Two Systems'. This would ensure the long-term stable growth of Hong Kong and Macau as well as enhance relations and peaceful development with Taiwan.</p>

22	<p>Taiwan Legalises Same-sex Marriage in First for Asia</p> <p>Taiwan passed the controversial same-sex marriage bill into legislation on 17 May following the third reading of the draft bill entitled the 'Act for Implementation of J.Y. Interpretation No. 748'. This makes Taiwan the first region in Asia where same-sex marriage has been legalised. The law allows same-sex partners over the age of 18 to register their marriages starting from May 24. Same-sex marriages will be legally recognised and accorded almost the same legal rights and protections as heterosexual married couples under the new law. The passage of the law is a watershed moment in the LGBT community's fight for marriage equality. The same-sex marriage bill garnered widespread attention in the lead up to the legislative vote with tens of thousands of Taiwanese residents gathered outside the Legislative Yuan to await the voting results.</p>
23	<p>Andy Hui and Jacqueline Wong Cheating Scandal Stuns Hong Kong</p> <p>Footage of married Hong Kong singer Andy Hui and TVB actress Jacqueline Wong being intimate with each other in a taxi were circulated by media on April 16, drawing stinging criticism from many Hong Kongers. In the wake of the incident, Andy Hui publicly expressed deep regret for his actions. Jacqueline Wong also issued an apology through social media. The Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD) said that a taxi was defined as a semi-private place. If the parties involved suspect that their privacy has been breached, they can file a complaint with the PCPD.</p>
24	<p>Hong Kong Extradition Bill Draws International Attention US House Unanimously Passed Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act</p> <p>The Hong Kong government's proposed Bill to amend the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance has drawn widespread global attention. The European Union Office to Hong Kong and Macau and diplomatic representatives from EU nations have sent a diplomatic note to Carrie Lam, expressing their concerns and issues regarding the Extradition Bill. The diplomats' action represents a formal protest to the Hong Kong government against the perceived risk that extradition to mainland China could subject people to unfair trials. On September 29, civic groups rallied supporters in more than 60 cities around the world to march against totalitarianism, with rallies taking place in Japan, UK, Australia, Germany, France and Canada among others. In addition, the US House of Representatives unanimously passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019 on the morning of October 16, Hong Kong time. The Bill is now slated to be voted on in the Senate before the US President signs it into law.</p>

<p>25</p>	<p>Anti-extradition Bill Protestors Lays Out 5 Demands Netizens Call for Strikes and Uncooperative Movement</p> <p>Anti-extradition protestors have set out 5 key demands including complete withdrawal of the extradition bill from the legislative process; establishment of an independent commission of inquiry into the extradition bill and use of force by police conduct during the protests; release and exoneration of arrested protestors; retraction of the "riot" characterisation; and implementation of universal suffrage for Legislative Council and Chief Executive elections. During this period, protestors have staged multiple sit-ins and demonstrations. This includes the 'uncooperative movement' in which protestors have disrupted MTR services six times through actions such as obstructing train doors and activating the emergency train stop button to prevent trains from departing stations. On July 26, protestors staged a sit-in at Hong Kong International Airport arrival hall. Additional sit-in protests at the airport have been planned on September 1 and 2. The Civil Human Rights Front organised a rally at Victoria Park and urged protestors to be 'like water'. The organisers announced that 1.7 million people had participated in the rally. Police, on the other hand, estimated that attendance reached 128,000 at its peak. On August 5, various sectors and unions launched city-wide strikes, calling for boycotts across work, school and city and to join rallies held in seven districts.</p>
<p>26</p>	<p>Taiwan Murder Case Stirs Debate as Hong Kong Government Seeks to Amend Extradition Laws</p> <p>On 17 February 2018, Hong Kong student Chan Tong-kai admitted to murdering his girlfriend Poon Hiu-wing and hiding her body in a suitcase, which he dumped in the bushes while the two were in Taiwan on holiday. Chan also admitted to taking the victim's ATM card and withdrawing money from her account. The Hong Kong police arrested Chan in March 2018 and charged him with money laundering. As the murder took place in Taiwan, the case brought to focus the lack of extradition agreements between Hong Kong and Taiwan. This prompted the Hong Kong government to announce in February 13 this year that it would be amending the fugitive law. On June 9, the Civil Human Rights Front launched the second anti-extradition bill protest march. Organisers said that nearly 1.03 million people took part in the march while police estimated 240,000 people at the peak of the march. The government said the Extradition Bill would proceed to its second reading on June 12 as planned. This triggered large scale protests in Admiralty culminating in a confrontation between protestors and police forces. On June 15, the government announced that it would suspend the Bill but the move did not mollify enraged protestors. On June 16, the Pro-democracy side organised another protest march, this time claiming more than 2 million people took part, which is a historical high. Meanwhile, police estimates pegged the number of protestors at around 338,000 people. On July 9, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam described the Extradition Bill as 'dead'. Eventually, on September 4, Lam announced the formal withdrawal of the Bill.</p>



27	<p>Huawei Placed on US Trade Blacklist Threatening 5G Leadership Position</p> <p>The US Commerce Department Bureau of Industry and Security has placed Huawei and its affiliates on the US Entity List in May, citing national security risks. The move means that US companies would have to obtain government licenses in order to sell products to Huawei. Many US companies has been forced to terminate existing collaborations with Huawei. Google has started to restrict Huawei's use of Android-related operating systems. Several countries have either cancelled or are in the process of reviewing agreements to work with Huawei on 5G infrastructure projects and the use of Huawei telecommunication equipment. Huawei's global market share in 5G equipment has slipped to the number two position, after being eclipsed by Samsung in the first quarter.</p>
28	<p>White-clad Mob in Yuen Long Goes on Rampage in July 21 Attacks</p> <p>On the evening of July 21, a mob of men dressed in white and armed with metal rods, sticks and other weapons stormed the Yuen Long MTR station and indiscriminately attacked subway commuters. During the attacks, many residents had tried to call the police for help without success. Officers only arrived at the scene nearly 40 minutes after the attack was launched. The incident left many residents questioning whether the police are selective in enforcing the law. Online rumours claim that legislator Junius Ho was seen shaking hands with white-clad attackers on the night of the incident. At least 45 people were injured in the attacks with 1 in critical condition and 5 people severely injured. As of August, police have arrested 28 people on unlawful assembly charges. Two of the suspects had been charged with rioting one month after the incident.</p>
29	<p>Caring and Sharing Scheme Gives HK\$4,000 Cash Handout Amid Complaints of Chaotic Management</p> <p>The city government announced the roll out of the Caring and Sharing Scheme last year which aims to disburse cash handouts of up to HK\$4,000 to eligible Hong Kong residents. Applications for the handouts closed in April this year. Many residents felt that system of disbursement was chaotic. Examples include insufficient application points at disbursement points, hotlines that were not manned and paperwork there were too complicated among other complaints. As of October, the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency has received around 3.47 million applications. Of those received, around 3 million applications have been approved amounting to disbursements of approximately HK\$10.6 billion.</p>



30	Expansion of Mortgage Insurance Programme Announced in Policy Address Carrie Lam Forced to Suspend Policy Speech
	<p>Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam was forced to cut short her 2019 Policy Address in the Legislative Council after less than half an hour on October 16 following protests by lawmakers. After the assembly was suspended, Lam delivered her Policy Address in a pre-recorded speech instead. The Policy Address laid out plans to relax the ceiling of mortgage financing schemes for first-home buyers. For those who are allowed to borrow up to 90 per cent of the value of the flat, the lending cap is raised to HK\$8 million. The Address also resurfaced the Lantau Tomorrow Vision as a medium to long term measure to increase land supply. The remaining initiatives announced in the Policy Address include making the annual student grant of HK\$2,500 a permanent feature, launching two rounds of grants of the one-off living subsidy for low-income households in the next financial year and increasing the subsidy rate under the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme among others.</p>