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Switzerland

Hong Kong Excels at Geneva's Invention Exhibition

The Hong Kong delegation stole the show at the 49th International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva, bagging a record number of awards. With over 700 representatives from diverse sectors, including universities and research centers, Hong Kong secured six Special Awards, 28 Gold Medals with Congratulations of Jury, and 114 Gold Medals. Notable projects, spanning biomedicine and AI, highlighted the city's innovation prowess, with HKUST's Alzheimer's disease breakthrough earning top honors. The Nano and Advanced Materials Institute showcased groundbreaking technologies, signaling Hong Kong's emergence as a global innovation hub. Sun Dong, the secretary for Innovation, Technology, and Industry, lauded the delegation's success, affirming Hong Kong's potential as a leading force in innovation and technology. [TAF](#), Apr 22

Swiss Watch Exports Plummet Amid China Mainland and Hong Kong Demand Slump

The exports of Swiss watches have recorded their most substantial drop since 2020, with a significant decrease in demand for high-end timepieces in key markets such as China and Hong Kong. The Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry revealed a 16% decrease in exports by value in March, amounting to 2 billion CHF (17.2 billion HKD). Swatch Group, the manufacturer of Omega and Longines brands, saw its shares hit a fresh 52-week low on Thursday, dropping by about 1% in Zurich trading. Shares of Compagnie Financière Richemont SA, the owner of Vacheron Constantin and Cartier, also fell by approximately 1%. "The negative trend is even worse than we expected and the decline in China is really worrying and probably indicates that inventories in the region were once again too high," said Jean-Philippe Bertschy, an analyst at Vontobel in Switzerland. [Benziga](#), Apr 18

Swiss Sportswear Maker On To Make Hong Kong Store Debut

Swiss sneaker giant On Holding, backed by Roger Federer, is set to open its inaugural store in Hong Kong, aiming to bolster revenues in Greater China. The 3,000-square-foot store, located at H Queen's in Central, Hong Kong, is expected to incur a monthly rent of HKD 600,000 (USD 76,700). Despite Hong Kong's slow recovery in tourist arrivals and retail sales post-Covid, On Holding sees potential in the market. [RIA](#), Apr 4

Foreign Policy / International Relations

Beijing Rebukes US Over Human Rights Report on Hong Kong

Beijing has criticized the United States for its latest human rights report on Hong Kong, accusing Washington of spreading falsehoods and interfering in local and national affairs. The report by the US State Department accused Beijing of undermining Hong Kong's political freedoms and autonomy in violation of international agreements. In response, China's Foreign Ministry office in Hong Kong urged the US to stop lying and meddling, emphasizing China's commitment to safeguarding human rights. The Hong Kong government also dismissed the report's claims as unfounded and biased, asserting that human rights in the city are protected under the Chinese Constitution and the Basic Law. [SCMP](#), Apr 23

Mainland

Extended Visas for Mainland Chinese Researchers to Fuel Science and Tech Hubs in Hong Kong

New visa policies announced by the National Immigration Administration aim to facilitate longer stays for outstanding researchers from Beijing and Shanghai in Hong Kong and Macau. Effective from May 6, researchers can apply for multi-entry visas lasting up to five years, encouraging more frequent visits. This move is expected to simplify the visa process and boost collaboration between China's major innovation clusters, driving the evolution of Beijing, Shanghai, and the Greater Bay Area into influential science and technology hubs. The extended visas are seen as a catalyst for propelling cross-border collaboration and enhancing Hong Kong's position as a global center for innovation and technology. [SCMP](#), Apr 30

Hong Kong's Finance Chief Praises China's Securities Regulator For Easing Trading Regulations

China's Securities Regulatory Commission unveiled five measures to enhance connectivity between the Mainland and Hong Kong capital markets, welcomed by Hong Kong's finance chief Paul Chan. He sees it as bolstering Hong Kong's status as an international financial center, attracting more global capital. Chan noted plans for increased communication to facilitate leading mainland companies listing in Hong Kong, emphasizing Beijing's support. The measures aim to allow more mainland investors to trade Hong Kong stocks and vice versa, while Hong Kong and overseas investors can trade eligible A-shares. Chan, during a recent visit to Hangzhou and Suzhou, observed significant interest from companies in listing in Hong Kong, seeing potential for closer cooperation. He highlighted Hong Kong's appeal for businesses due to institutional advantages, such as IP protection, and its role as a platform for international expansion, particularly in the Greater Bay Area. [SCMP](#), Apr 21

Domestic Policy / Politics / Law

Hong Kong's Anti-Terrorism Hotline: Over 28,000 Reports Since Launch

Since its launch in June 2022, Hong Kong's anti-terrorism hotline has received over 28,000 messages, including reports of suspected possession of weapons and explosives harboring. Police attribute this high volume to increased public vigilance against terrorism, aided by heightened promotional and educational efforts encouraging residents to report suspicious activities. Notable reports include suspicions of prohibited weapon possession and harboring illegal explosives. Netizens have also reported online content related to terrorism, while others have raised concerns about dangerous items stored in residential buildings and suspicious roadside objects. Some individuals who made reports received a "Counter-Terrorism Reward," while non-terrorism-related cases were referred to other police reward programs or the Good Citizen Award. [HKFP](#), Apr 24

Trial Begins for Alleged Bomb Plot During 2019 Protest in Hong Kong

In the trial of the city's first case under anti-terrorism laws, seven suspects are accused of planning to set off bombs and use firearms during a protest in 2019. The prosecution revealed that a phone call could have triggered a bomb with a 400-meter destructive radius. Three defendants have pleaded guilty and will testify, while the others have pleaded not guilty. The case involves bombs containing nails and the potential for severe loss of life and property damage. The prosecution presented evidence from Telegram chats and stated that the bombs could detonate with a single phone call. The trial continues. [The Standard](#), Apr 25

Hong Kong Customs To Receive Training To Detect Items Threatening To National Security

In response to recent national security legislation, Hong Kong's customs chief, Louise Ho, announced plans to enhance measures preventing items deemed to jeopardize national security from entering the city. Training for frontline staff will be intensified to better identify such articles. While there are no explicit restrictions on publications, locals and visitors are advised to understand customs requirements to avoid breaching laws. This move follows the enactment of new security legislation under Article 23 of Hong Kong's Basic Law, targeting various offenses. Concerns have been raised by international groups regarding potential erosion of freedoms, although authorities assert the legislation's necessity. Recent cases, including the arrest of an individual for importing children's books deemed seditious, underscore the enforcement of national security laws. [HKFP](#), Apr 9

Hong Kong Official Rejects Rent Regulation for Subdivided Flats

Hong Kong's subdivided flats are notorious for their poor living conditions, with over 221,700 applicants currently on the waiting list for public housing, enduring an average wait of 5.8 years. Despite anticipated increases in public flat supply, Undersecretary for Housing Victor Tai Sheung-shing rejected calls for government regulation of initial rent levels in these "coffin homes" during a recent Legislative Council meeting. Tai argued that setting rent levels for individual units was impractical due to factors like location and size affecting prices. Instead, the government focuses on protecting residents' living environments and facilitating resettlement into better housing. Concerns were raised about the Landlord and Tenant Ordinance, which doesn't regulate initial rents for subdivided flats. Pressure mounts for government intervention to protect vulnerable residents, including proposals for stricter penalties for law violations and extended cash allowances for needy families. Amid Beijing's pressure to address the housing crisis by 2049, there's a proposal to eliminate substandard apartments while defining new standards, although this leaves discretion to the Hong Kong government, potentially creating ambiguity and exploitation. Locals in subdivided flats lament inadequate government assistance, with persistent housing issues remaining unresolved for decades, exacerbating frustrations over the extended wait times for public housing. [SCMP](#), Apr 8

Economy

Hong Kong Minimum Wage To Increase By 4.5% To HK\$41.80 Per Hour This Year

Hong Kong plans to increase its minimum wage by 4.5% to HK\$41.80 (US\$5.34) per hour this year. Additionally, a new formula for future adjustments will prevent pay cuts and ensure that the minimum wage is reviewed annually rather than every two years. The formula will consider factors such as the consumer price index, current GDP growth, and average GDP growth over the past decade. This move aims to maintain the minimum wage at its current level or higher. Last year, the minimum wage was raised to HK\$40 per hour, representing a 6.7% increase from the previous rate of HK\$37.50. [SCMP](#), Apr 29

Hong Kong Exchange's First-Quarter Earnings Decline By 13%

On April 24, 2024, Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Ltd. (HKEX) reported a smaller-than-expected decline in first-quarter profits, despite subdued trading volumes and reduced listing activities. HKEX recorded a profit of HK\$2.97 billion, a 13% decrease from the previous year but surpassing analyst expectations. Revenue also dropped by 6% to HK\$5.2 billion, mainly due to reduced trading and listing fees amid economic slowdown. However, there were signs of recovery towards the end of the quarter, with increased investor confidence in March and April. Newly appointed CEO Bonnie Chan expressed cautious optimism amidst ongoing geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties, indicating potential for market improvement despite challenges. [DS](#), Apr 24

Anti-Migrant Sentiment Driving Domestic Workers Away from Hong Kong

Migrant domestic worker activists in Hong Kong have expressed concerns about anti-migrant sentiment in the city, which they believe is pushing foreign domestic workers to seek employment opportunities elsewhere. Leaders of migrant worker unions highlight that Hong Kong is facing competition from other countries offering better working conditions. They urge for an end to accusations against workers who change employers, emphasizing that such policies not only deter migrants from coming to Hong Kong but also tarnish the city's reputation. Additionally, concerns are raised over proposed measures aimed at deterring workers from changing employers' mid-contract, with activists questioning why workers are penalized for seeking better working conditions. [RTHK](#), Apr 25

Slow Adoption Of Eco-Friendly Alternatives in Hong Kong Restaurants Despite Plastic Ban

Despite the recent ban on single-use plastics in Hong Kong, many restaurants are slow to switch to eco-friendly alternatives. A visit to eight eateries in Kowloon City revealed that only two had begun using paper containers for takeaway meals, and none had switched to eco-friendly cutlery. The transition, which coincided with Earth Day, has seen chain eateries moving quicker than smaller establishments. Concerns about the quality and price of eco-friendly options, as well as the availability of suitable replacements, contribute to the delay in adoption. Despite efforts by some restaurant chains to implement changes and charge for utensil sets, challenges remain in finding practical and affordable alternatives. [HKFP](#), Apr 23

Hong Kong's Economy Grew Between 2.5% and 3.5% In First Quarter

Hong Kong's economy grew by 2.5% to 3.5% in the first quarter, meeting government forecasts. Finance Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po highlighted ongoing pressures on property and stock markets due to geopolitical tensions. He stressed the importance of investing in green development and the digital economy for future growth. Collaboration

with Shenzhen was emphasized to develop Hong Kong as an innovation hub. Ma Jun, of the Hong Kong Green Finance Association, urged more government policies to promote investment in green technologies, crucial for achieving carbon neutrality. [SCMP](#), Apr 23

Hong Kong Innovation Chief Vows to Attract Talent and Capital Amid Industry Challenges

Hong Kong's Secretary for Innovation, Technology, and Industry, Sun Dong, acknowledges the city's shortage of talent and investment in technological development. He pledges to intensify efforts to draw overseas professionals and private capital to prevent companies from relocating to more financially lucrative destinations. Despite the manpower shortage, Sun remains optimistic, citing initiatives like the Top Talent Pass Scheme, which aims to attract professionals to the city. He emphasizes the need for more foreign investment to drive the technology sector forward, highlighting the government's investment in start-ups and the importance of private investment. Sun warns that without addressing this shortfall, companies may leave Hong Kong, posing a significant loss to the city. Additionally, Sun discusses challenges faced in building Hong Kong into a smart city, stressing the importance of effective management and cooperation between the public and private sectors in digital development. [SCMP](#), Apr 21

HKEX Chairwoman Stresses Importance Of Raising Exchange's Global Profile

Laura Cha, the outgoing chairman of Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing (HKEX), emphasizes the importance of expanding the exchange's global presence and diversifying beyond China. Despite Hong Kong's recent political turbulence, she remains confident in its appeal to investors. Cha's tenure, marked by efforts to internationalize the exchange, concludes on April 24. She believes that Hong Kong must continue its internationalization efforts, building on the foundation she has established. Cha stresses the need to raise HKEX's profile to attract a broader investor base, highlighting initiatives to enhance its competitiveness and collaborations with entities in the Middle East. She acknowledges the intrinsic link between Hong Kong's capital markets and mainland China's economy, expressing optimism for future growth. Cha's resignation marks the end of a distinguished career focused on developing financial markets and fostering links between Hong Kong and mainland China. Despite recent challenges, she remains confident in Hong Kong's investment opportunities and the exchange's ability to move forward. [SCMP](#), Apr 15

Assessing Cathay Pacific's Challenges and Prospects: Calls for Government Intervention

Cathay Pacific Airways CEO Ronald Lam Siu-por faced tough questioning from Hong Kong lawmakers regarding the airline's management issues and service disruptions. The carrier canceled hundreds of flights due to internal planning failures and pilot shortages, pushing back its capacity restoration target. Critics question Cathay's capability to maintain Hong Kong's aviation hub status, suggesting government intervention, possibly through taking a stake in the airline. Concerns arise as Hong Kong International Airport prepares to open a third runway, boosting capacity significantly. While Cathay reported its first annual profit in four years, it grapples with a pilot shortage, hindering its recovery efforts. Business magnates and lawmakers debate the necessity of a second flag carrier to promote competition and enhance service quality. The suggestion of government involvement in Cathay sparks debate. Advocates believe it would ensure accountability and influence over route planning and performance. Yet, skeptics caution against government interference in commercial operations. [SCMP](#), Apr 11

Pay In Hong Kong's Retail And Travel Industry Is Lagging Behind All Other Sectors After COVID

As Hong Kong works towards recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the retail and travel industries are experiencing slower wage growth compared to other sectors, posing challenges to the city's economic revival and tourism prospects. Industry representatives urge authorities to develop strategies to support retailers and stem a potential brain drain caused by stagnant wages. A study reveals that retail and travel workers have seen minimal pay increases since the pandemic, with concerns raised about declining service quality and its impact on Hong Kong's reputation as a tourist destination. Despite an overall return to pre-pandemic pay levels for most industries, the retail sector still lags behind. Experts warn of a vicious cycle where poor wages lead to staff losses, impacting service quality and overall tourist experience. Suggestions include revising business strategies, offering more flexible products, and reducing rent to support struggling retailers. [SCMP](#), Apr 9

Hong Kong Is Struggling To Win Overseas Tourists Amid Fewer Flights And Travel Warnings

The authorities are striving to lure tourists to a Hong Kong that some say has changed since 2019. But amid fewer flights and travel warnings, Hong Kong is facing challenges in attracting back long-haul tourists. While mainland Chinese visitors have largely returned, international tourists, particularly from the UK and US, have been slower to come back. Factors such as reduced flight availability and high airfares have contributed to the decline in long-haul tourism. Additionally, travel advisories issued by Western governments and concerns about safety following political developments such as the enactment of the national security law have further dampened tourism prospects. Despite efforts by the government to promote the city's attractions, until there is more demand for flights to Hong Kong, airlines are unlikely to fully reinstate routes. [HKFP](#), Apr 7

Hong Kong New Home Sales Hit 11-Year High After Property Curbs Removed

Hong Kong's new home transactions hit an 11-year high in March, an encouraging sign for the beaten-down property market after the government lifted cooling measures. There were close to 4,200 sales in the period, more than 14 times the figure from the prior month, according to real estate agent Midland Realty. This comes after Hong Kong authorities in late February removed measures to cool home purchases, such as tax levies, to revive the sector. Developers are counting on the pickup in sales to reduce excess inventories that are keeping a lid on prices. "We think that the strong sentiment for firsthand transactions should extend into April," said Sammy Po, chief executive of Midland Realty's residential division for Hong Kong. "Even if non-Hong Kong buyers are asking for lower prices, they are showing a much higher level of interest to purchase a property." [Bloomberg](#), Apr 3

Hong Kong's Complicity in Amazon Deforestation Exposed: Calls for Sustainable Trade Practices

An investigation reveals Hong Kong's involvement in illegal deforestation of the Amazon rainforest through the importation of beef products from Brazilian slaughterhouses. The report highlights the role of Hong Kong businesses

in facilitating the trade, raising concerns about the lack of sustainability and transparency in the supply chain. Suspected smuggling activity peaked in 2022, when police seized 403 tonnes of frozen meat from smugglers worth an estimated HK\$61 million, arresting 46 people in the process. According to local media reports at the time, Brazilian offal was among the types of meat intercepted. Experts suggest that restricting trade to slaughterhouses with transparent supply chains could significantly impact the sustainability of the Brazilian meat sector. However, challenges remain in enforcing such measures and ensuring accountability across the supply chain. [HKFP](#), Apr 3

Cultural / Education / Science / Social

Halting Legal Action on Mainland Chinese Discrimination

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in Hong Kong has paused plans for a legal amendment to tackle discrimination against mainland Chinese in Hong Kong, citing improved relations since the pandemic. The new EOC chair, Linda Lam, stated that while the issue remains important, there's no immediate need for legislative action. Former chair Ricky Chu noted the relaxed atmosphere and expressed satisfaction with the current situation. [HKFP](#), Apr 12

Hong Kong Education System Cannot Escape Blame For Student Misery

Dr. Tik Chi Yuen and Marie Pang emphasize the urgency of action to break the tragic cycle of student suicides in Hong Kong. The Education Bureau's response to escalating student suicides in Hong Kong falls short, merely scratching the surface of a deep-rooted crisis. The relentless academic pressure and suffocating workload are pushing students to despair, evident in the doubling of suspected suicides over five years. Superficial measures like a temporary emergency mechanism and vague exhortations for teachers to "show more care" fail to address the underlying issues. Hong Kong must follow the lead of Mainland China and Singapore, rethinking homework policies to alleviate the burden on students. Proposals include limiting homework to 30 minutes per day for lower primary students and 60 minutes for upper primary. Additionally, the government must establish a student suicide prevention committee to delve into mental health issues and guide comprehensive reforms in the education system. [SCMP](#), Apr 12

Macau

Macau Forum Boosts China-Portuguese Cooperation

The 6th Ministerial Conference in Macao emphasized China's commitment to closer ties with Portuguese-speaking countries for shared growth. Efforts include supporting exhibitions, improving agriculture, offering scholarships, and enhancing healthcare. A Strategic Plan for Economic and Trade Cooperation (2024-2027) was signed. Participants praised Macao's role in facilitating exchanges. Francisco Tadeu Barbosa de Alencar from Brazil highlighted the benefits of deepened economic ties. [CD](#), Apr 30

Special Focus: National Security / Article 23

The Jimmy Lai Trial

The high-stakes national security trial of Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai Chee-ying is underway, with Lai facing three conspiracy charges related to sedition and collusion with foreign forces. The trial, which commenced on December 18 last year after three postponements, has garnered significant domestic and international attention. Lai's charges stem from allegations of inciting public hatred and calling for international sanctions against authorities following the 2019 anti-government protests. The trial is expected to last approximately 80 days. Notable developments include revelations of Lai's alleged involvement in lobbying for international sanctions against mainland China and Hong Kong officials, as well as his purported efforts to promote resistance against authorities and seek foreign interventions. Prosecutors have presented evidence suggesting Lai's orchestration of an anti-China campaign and his alleged collaboration with foreign powers to incite hostile actions against Beijing and Hong Kong authorities. The trial has seen intense scrutiny, with the court addressing defense objections and ruling on the admissibility of evidence, including the sedition charge against Lai. [SCMP](#), Apr 30

Portuguese National Sentenced to 5 Years for Security Law Violation

Joseph John, a Portuguese national, received a five-year prison sentence in Hong Kong for inciting secession under the national security law. He was convicted for distorting history and advocating for Hong Kong's independence on social media. Despite some mitigation factors, including his cooperation with authorities, the judge deemed his misfortune a result of his own actions. The incident highlights the broader context of Beijing's imposition of national security legislation in Hong Kong in 2020, following pro-democracy protests. [HKFP](#), Apr 11

Reporters Without Borders Advocate Detained and Deported from Hong Kong

Aleksandra Bielakowska, an advocate for Reporters Without Borders, was detained and deported from Hong Kong after facing six hours of questioning and searches at the airport. She intended to meet journalists and attend hearings related to Jimmy Lai Chee-ying's national security trial. The organization demanded clarity and safety assurances for its representatives. Cedric Alviani, the Asia-Pacific bureau director, left Hong Kong due to safety concerns following Bielakowska's deportation. While the Immigration Department refrained from commenting, Bielakowska's detention was classified as "pending removal/deportation." The incident alarmed the Foreign Correspondents' Club Hong Kong, echoing previous cases like the denial of entry to Japanese journalist Yoshiaki Ogawa in July 2023. [SCMP](#), Apr 11

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