

Calendar of Events 2015

January

- 4 The Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, expresses confidence that the Host Country Agreement and related Memorandum of Administrative Arrangements on the Conduct of Dispute Settlement Proceedings by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will enhance Hong Kong's status as an international arbitration centre in the Asia-Pacific region. Both documents, signed in Beijing today, enable Hong Kong to carry out dispute resolution proceedings administered by the PCA, which was established in 1899 and is located in The Hague in the Netherlands.
- 6 The Task Force on Constitutional Development submits its *Report on the Recent Community and Political Situation in Hong Kong* to the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council. The report reflects events and views related to constitutional development from 31 August to 15 December 2014.
- 7 The government launches a two-month public consultation on the method for selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage.
- 12 The Secretary for Justice speaks at the Ceremonial Opening of the Legal Year 2015, elaborating on the rule of law in Hong Kong and the government's policy to promote Hong Kong as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region.
- 14 In his third Policy Address, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, Mr C Y Leung, unveils new policy initiatives to boost the economy and improve the livelihood of Hong Kong people.
- 22 Cheung Sha Wan Temporary Wholesale Poultry Market resumes operation, after the government closed the market on 31 December 2014 upon positive tests of H7 avian influenza in imported chickens.
- 28 The Heritage Foundation's 2015 *Index of Economic Freedom Report* ranks Hong Kong as the world's freest economy for the 21st consecutive year.

February

- 25 The Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Geoffrey Ma Tao-li, says the rule of law presupposes the existence of laws that respect the dignity, rights (including economic rights) and liberties of the individual and corporations, and the existence of an independent judiciary to enforce these rights and liberties, and to which there is effective access.
- In presenting the 2015-16 Budget, the Financial Secretary, Mr John C Tsang, says he seeks to reinforce the foundation for long-term economic development, to continue to care for the disadvantaged and to promote sustainable development, so that

people from different sectors as well as future generations can share the benefits of economic growth.

- 27 Statutory provisions under the Employment (Amendment) Ordinance 2014 entitling qualified male employees to three days' paternity leave come into effect.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority chief executive, Mr Norman Chan, announces new measures to cool the property market, including lowering the maximum loan-to-value ratio for self-use residential properties valued below \$7 million to 60 per cent.

March

- 2 A Working Holiday Scheme between Hong Kong and Austria takes effect, allowing 100 young people from each side per year to stay for up to six months in the other and to take up short-term employment and study courses.
- 4 HSBC says it will issue a \$150 banknote to mark the 150th anniversary of the bank's founding in Hong Kong, and that all net proceeds from the sale of the notes will go to local charity groups. The bank later sells two million of the banknotes and announces a total donation of \$477 million to charities.
- 12 The Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Limited says properties provided as security for a reverse mortgage loan no longer need to be the borrower's principal residence, and that life insurance contracts and more than one property can be used as security.
- 29 The government extends its Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities to green minibuses by phases in addition to the MTR, ferries and franchised buses, allowing eligible commuters to travel for \$2 per trip any time using Octopus cards.
- 31 The Chief Executive says the government is seeking to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to seize the opportunities it will bring. He says that Hong Kong, an important international financial centre of our country, is capable of playing a key role in the bank's work.

April

- 1 The government announces the Chief Executive in Council's decision not to renew Asia Television Limited's free-television licence and to extend its existing licence to 1 April 2016, marking the first time a Hong Kong broadcasting licence has not been renewed. On the same day, the Chief Executive in Council decides to grant HK Television Entertainment Company Limited a 12-year free-television licence.
- To reduce the use of plastic bags, from this day all retailers must charge customers at least 50 cents for every plastic shopping bag provided, with exemptions for certain food items.
- 4 Two large-scale events, a Basic Law seminar at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and an exhibition at the Hong Kong Museum of History, are launched to mark the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the Basic Law of the HKSAR.

- 8 The Chief Executive officially opens the HKSAR Government's Economic and Trade Office in Wuhan. The office covers five provinces in the Mainland's central region: Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi and Shanxi.
- 13 The Central People's Government will, with immediate effect, replace multiple-entry Individual Visit Endorsements for permanent residents of Shenzhen travelling to Hong Kong with one-trip-per-week Individual Visit Endorsements, following concerns raised about parallel-goods trading and Hong Kong's capacity to cope with an increasing number of visiting Mainland residents.
- 21 Hong Kong's snooker player Ng On-yeo wins the World Ladies Billiards and Snooker Championship in Leeds, England.
- 22 The government releases its proposal for selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage. Among the main elements is a two-stage nominating process that would accept five to 10 initial nominees, from which a 1,200-member Nominating Committee that is modelled after the existing Election Committee would choose two or three candidates. All five million electors may then cast their votes on the shortlisted candidates in a one-person-one-vote, first-past-the-post system.

May

- 1 The statutory minimum wage is raised from \$30 to \$32.50 per hour.
- 4 A pilot admission scheme is launched to attract the second generation of Chinese Hong Kong permanent residents who have emigrated overseas to return to Hong Kong.
- 12 The government announces the Chief Executive in Council's decision to renew Television Broadcasts Limited's free-television licence for 12 years with effect from 1 December 2015.
- 28 The Chief Executive and the Governor of Guangdong Province, Mr Zhu Xiaodan, attend a ceremony to mark the 50th anniversary of the Dongjiang supplying water to Hong Kong.
- Hong Kong is ranked the world's second most competitive economy, up from fourth in 2014 and behind only the United States, according to the International Institute for Management Development's *World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015*.

June

- 1 The retirement age for new recruits appointed to the civil service from this day is raised to 65 for civilian grades, and to 60 for disciplined services grades.
- 2 The government notifies the Legislative Council that it will move a motion at a 17 June legislative meeting on an amendment to the method for selecting the Chief Executive. The motion is the same as that set out in the government's proposal published on 22 April.
- 5 The three-day Hong Kong Ladies Open Golf Championship begins, the first world-class ladies professional open tournament staged in Hong Kong.
- 9 The government issues a Red Outbound Travel Alert for South Korea, a day after raising its response level in the Preparedness Plan for Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (Mers) from 'alert' to 'serious'.

- 18 The government's motion on an amendment to the method for the selection of the Chief Executive in 2017, which required endorsement by a two-thirds majority in the 70-member LegCo, is voted down by 28 members.
- 19 The Chief Executive says the government will concentrate on economic and livelihood issues after LegCo voted down the constitutional reform proposal.
The Immigration Department receives the 2015 Skytrax Award for 'Best Airport Immigration Service', based on 13 million survey questionnaires from air passengers, covering 550 airports worldwide.
- 24 'The Rise of the Celestial Empire: Consolidation and Cultural Exchange during the Han Dynasty', an exhibition featuring more than 160 Han dynasty relics and the most comprehensive of its kind yet held in the city, opens at the Museum of History.
- 25 The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's *World Investment Report 2015* shows that in 2014, Hong Kong's foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows ranked second, after Mainland China, and its FDI outflows were second only to the US.
- 30 The mean temperature for June is 29.7 degrees Celsius, 1.8 degrees above normal, making it the hottest June in Hong Kong since records began in 1884. The mean minimum temperature of 27.7 degrees and mean maximum temperature of 32.3 degrees are also the highest for June.

July

- 1 The Air Pollution Control (Ocean Going Vessels) (Fuel at Berth) Regulation comes into effect, requiring ocean-going vessels to use clean fuel while berthed in Hong Kong to reduce emissions and improve air quality.
The Mutual Recognition of Funds scheme is launched, allowing Hong Kong and Mainland funds to be offered directly to the public in each other's market after obtaining approval or authorisation under streamlined procedures.
- 6 Hongkong Post launches an Integrated Postal Services System to automate all counter operations and integrate front-line transactions with back-end processes.
- 10 The government says water samples collected from Kai Ching Estate in Kowloon City contain lead levels exceeding the World Health Organisation standard of not more than 10 micrograms of lead per litre of drinking water.
- 21 The government announces the appointment of Mr Lau Kong-wah as the new Secretary for Home Affairs and of Mr Clement Cheung Wan-ching as the new Secretary for the Civil Service.
- 24 The Hong Kong Housing Authority's Chairman, Professor Anthony Cheung Bing-leung, says water tests will be carried out for all public rental estates completed in and after 2005.
- 28 Ocean Park holds a celebration for one of its four giant pandas, Jia Jia, who turns 37 years old in August. She is now the holder of two Guinness World Records: the oldest panda in captivity and the oldest panda living in captivity.

August

- 1 The government removes its Red Outbound Travel Alert for South Korea and lowers its response level for Mers from 'serious' to 'alert' as South Korea has found no new case since 3 July.
The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mrs Carrie Lam, launches a two-month 'Keep Clean 2015 @ Hong Kong: Our Home' campaign, with the aim of improving Hong Kong's environmental and home hygiene.
- 4 Hong Kong's athletes arrive home from the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Los Angeles – the world's largest sporting event for the intellectually disabled – having won 59 gold, 40 silver and 23 bronze medals.
- 5 The government announces the subscription and allocation results of the fifth inflation-linked retail bond, or iBond, under the retail part of the Government Bond Programme with a final issue amount of \$10 billion and a tenor of three years. It received a total of 597,895 valid applications for a total of \$35.7 billion in principal amount of bonds.
- 7 The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, and the visiting Philippine Secretary of Labour and Employment, Ms Rosalinda Dimapilis Baldoz, agree to set up a high-level reciprocal visit programme for both governments to update each other on their efforts in protecting foreign domestic helpers.
- 8 Hong Kong experiences its hottest day since records began in 1884, with a maximum temperature of 36.3 degrees recorded at the Observatory.
- 13 Mr Justice Andrew Chan Hing-wai, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court, is appointed as Chairman and Commissioner, and Mr Alan Lai Nin is appointed as Commissioner, of a Commission of Inquiry set up to inquire into excess lead found in drinking water.
The government expresses serious concern about the MTR Corporation's substantial adjustment to the cost estimate of the Shatin to Central Link advance works, up \$1.274 billion from \$7.35 billion.
- 24 The Secretary for Labour and Welfare and the visiting Minister of Manpower of Indonesia, Mr Hanif Dhakiri, agree to strengthen monitoring of employment agencies to prevent foreign domestic helpers from being charged any fees that are not permitted under the laws on both sides.

September

- 1 At the start of the 2015-16 academic year, 940 students receive help under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors to pursue full-time, locally accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes in selected disciplines, such as architecture and engineering; creative industries; health care; logistics; testing and certification; and tourism and hospitality, with a view to meeting manpower demands. The second batch of 1,030 students will be admitted in 2016-17.
The revitalisation of salt pans on Yim Tin Tsai Island wins an Award of Distinction in the 2015 Unesco Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation, while the transformation of Mei Ho House, an early public housing block in Shek Kip Mei, into a youth hostel and heritage museum wins an Honourable Mention.

- 3 Hong Kong people get a one-off holiday to mark the 70th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese people's war of resistance against Japanese aggression.
- 7 The Court of Final Appeal begins operations in its new premises at 8 Jackson Road, Central. Opened in 1912, the building was used as the Supreme Court until 1984, and from 1985 to 2011 it housed the Legislative Council.
- 11 Hong Kong Disneyland celebrates its 10th anniversary.
- 14 The Fraser Institute's 2015 *Economic Freedom of the World* annual report ranks Hong Kong as the world's most economically free jurisdiction, followed by Singapore, New Zealand and Switzerland. The report compares the level of economic freedom in 157 countries and territories based on factors including size of government, taxation, rule of law, regulation and property rights.
- 16 At a meeting with the Vice-President of Indonesia, Mr Jusuf Kalla, in Jakarta, the Chief Executive thanks the Indonesian Government for agreeing to the establishment of a Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Jakarta.
- 20 The Chief Executive welcomes the formation of a joint venture between Warner Bros Entertainment Inc and China Media Capital, with headquarters in Hong Kong, to develop, produce and distribute films to the global market.
- 24 The Housing Authority reports excess lead in the water samples of 11 public rental developments out of 83 (involving 46 estates) at the end of water tests for projects completed in and after 2005. The number of domestic blocks in the 11 affected developments ranges from two to six.
- 25 The Census and Statistics Department projects Hong Kong's population could reach a peak of 8.22 million in 2043 from 7.24 million in 2014, then decline to 7.81 million by 2064.
- 29 The Hong Kong Shipping Register passes the 100 million gross tonnage mark, with 2,449 ships listed. It was set up in December 1990 with a gross tonnage of six million and is now the world's fourth largest ship register.
- 30 The government releases the full report of the Commission of Inquiry into the collision of vessels near Lamma Island on 1 October 2012.

October

- 5 The Independent Commission Against Corruption charges former Chief Executive Mr Donald Tsang Yam-kuen with two counts of misconduct in public office, for his alleged failure to disclose his interests in leasing a Shenzhen residential property and in proposing a person who handled interior design work at the property for nomination under the government's honours and awards system. He is the city's highest-ranking official to face such charges.

Eligible Hong Kong elderly persons can start using Elderly Health Care Vouchers for designated outpatient services at the University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital in Shenzhen under a pilot scheme.
- 9 Hong Kong will host the FIA Formula E Championship – Hong Kong ePrix in a first for the city, organisers say. The 2km harbourfront motor racing event is scheduled to take place in October 2016 as the first stop of the 2016-17 season.

- 10-11 Some 3,600 cyclists take part in the first Hong Kong Cyclothon, a two-day cycling event that includes the 35km Challenge Ride, with a route taking in the Tsing Ma Bridge and other landmarks.
- 18 The Chief Executive meets the President of the Republic of Croatia, Mrs Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, at Government House.
- 23 A barge scrapes past Kap Shui Mun bridge, causing a two-hour emergency closure of the Kap Shui Mun and Tsing Ma bridges. Both road traffic and MTR services on the Airport Express and Tung Chung Line are suspended.
The Signal Tower in Tsim Sha Tsui, the Race Course Fire Memorial in So Kon Po and the façade of the Old Mental Hospital in Sai Ying Pun are declared as monuments under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance.
- 26 Hong Kong film director John Woo is awarded the Samurai Award at the Tokyo International Film Festival for his continuous achievements in creating ground-breaking films.

November

- 2 The Monetary Authority reports the Exchange Fund made a loss of \$63.8 billion in the third quarter of 2015, the largest quarterly loss yet by value.
- 9 The Chief Executive welcomes a new initiative by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to set up an 'innovation node' in Hong Kong, bringing together students, academics and entrepreneurs from Boston and Hong Kong.
- 11 An original Magna Carta goes on public display at Sotheby's Hong Kong Gallery as part of worldwide celebrations of its 800th anniversary. Magna Carta established for the first time the principle that everybody, including the sovereign, was subject to the law. The Secretary for Justice says it is 'an embodiment of a number of core values such as equality before the law and access to justice which the community of the Hong Kong SAR shares'.
- 18 The Housing Authority reports all water samples taken from all public rental estates completed before 2005, involving 144 estates, meet the WHO standard.
- 19 The Chief Executive announces the decision to set up a Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in South Korea at a meeting with its President Park Geun-hye.
'Event Horizon' features 31 life-size identical figures – 27 on rooftops and four at ground level – by world-renowned British artist Sir Antony Gormley.
- 20 The Innovation and Technology Bureau is formally established to formulate policies; strengthen co-ordination among the government, industry, academia and research sectors; and expedite the development of related industries in Hong Kong.
Wu Siu-hong wins the 51st Bowling World Cup in Las Vegas, the first competitor from Hong Kong to win this competition.
- 22 A total of 1,467,229 registered electors cast their votes in the 2015 District Council Ordinary Election, representing a turnout rate of 47.01 per cent, higher than the 41.49 per cent recorded in 2011.
- 24 The Secretary for Labour and Welfare announces applications for the Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme will be received in three phases from May 2016 onwards.

- 27 An Agreement on Trade in Services is signed under the framework of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement to basically achieve liberalisation of trade in services between Hong Kong and the Mainland.
- 30 The government says it has agreed with the MTR Corporation to adjust completion of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link from the end of 2017 to the third quarter of 2018, including a six-month contingency period, and to revise the cost estimate from \$65 billion to \$84.42 billion, which is \$0.88 billion less than the corporation's proposal in June.
- Hong Kong experiences its warmest November since records began in 1884, with a mean temperature of 24 degrees, 2.2 degrees above the November normal of 21.8 degrees.

December

- 1 The government launches Appreciate Hong Kong, a five-month public participation campaign with themes reflecting the meanings of 'appreciate': appreciation, gratitude, understanding and adding value.
- 3 'Reminiscences of Hong Kong by the Brush', an exhibition celebrating the 100th birthday of sinologist Professor Jao Tsung-I, opens at the Hong Kong Central Library.
- 5 The Chief Executive officiates at the inauguration ceremony of the Academy of Sciences of Hong Kong at Government House.
- 8 Champion of social justice and veteran politician Dr Elsie Tu dies at the age of 102.
- 9 Hong Kong inaugurates the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade - Hong Kong Mediation Centre Joint Mediation Centre to provide a platform for resolving commercial disputes between Chinese and foreign companies as cross-boundary trade and other areas of co-operation are expected to rise amid various national-level development plans, including the Belt and Road Initiative and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.
- 14 The Competition Ordinance takes full effect to prohibit anti-competitive behaviour.
- 15 An International Monetary Fund staff mission to Hong Kong hails the government's prudent fiscal management and robust financial regulatory regime.
- 18 The government publishes its Long Term Housing Strategy Annual Progress Report 2015. The updated total housing supply target for the 10 years from 2016-17 to 2025-26 is 460,000 flats, with the public-private split of 60:40 maintained. Accordingly, the public housing supply target is 280,000 flats, comprising 200,000 public rental housing flats and 80,000 subsidised sale flats, while the private housing supply target is 180,000 flats.
- 22 The Commission on Poverty, chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, launches a six-month public consultation entitled 'Retirement Protection, Forging Ahead' to gauge public views on how to improve the retirement protection system.
- 27 The first five government-subsidised single-deck electric buses start service as part of a two-year trial to improve roadside air quality. The government will subsidise a total of 36 electric buses.
- 28 The Chief Executive appoints the first chairman and seven non-executive directors of an independent Insurance Authority (IIA), pursuant to the enactment of the Insurance Companies (Amendment) Ordinance 2015, which provides for the formation of the IIA and a statutory licensing regime for insurance intermediaries to replace the existing self-regulatory system.
- 31 Hong Kong ends 2015 as its warmest year, with an annual mean temperature of 24.2 degrees, since records began in 1884.