

Calendar of Events 2020

January

- 1 At least 400 people are arrested after a protest march turns violent.
- 2 The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan Siu-chee, convenes an inter-departmental meeting to examine prevention and control measures in response to a cluster of pneumonia cases detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province.
- 4 The government launches the Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance and introduces a system of three response levels ('Alert', 'Serious' and 'Emergency') to deal with a novel infectious disease affecting Hong Kong. It immediately activates the Serious Response Level in response to the cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan.
- 8 'Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent' is included as a statutorily notifiable infectious disease in Schedule 1 of the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance requiring medical practitioners to report to the Centre for Health Protection any suspected case.
- 13 At the ceremonial opening of the legal year, the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Geoffrey Ma Tao-li, says judges look only to the letter of the law and to the spirit of the law, and nothing else, in the discharge of their responsibilities: 'Political, economic or social considerations, as opposed to legal considerations, simply do not enter into the equation.'
- 14 The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, announces \$10 billion in 10 new initiatives to help those affected by the economic downturn, particularly the underprivileged.
- 17 The free trade agreement and investment agreement between Hong Kong and Australia come into force.
- 21-24 The Chief Executive attends the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland. She meets the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong; the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Mr Xavier Bettel; and the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mr Mark Rutte.
- 23 The first two Hong Kong cases of the novel coronavirus infection are confirmed, both individuals who had travelled from Wuhan.
The Department of Health activates the first quarantine centre at Lady MacLehose Holiday Village.
- 25 The Chief Executive raises the response level from 'Serious' to 'Emergency' in relation to the novel coronavirus infection and announces a range of measures, including suspending all flights and high-speed train services to and from Wuhan.

The government announces that all schools will extend their Chinese New Year holidays until 16 February. Classes are subsequently suspended until gradual resumption from 27 May.

- 27 The government imposes new entry restrictions to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. Hubei residents and those who have visited the province in the preceding 14 days (except for Hong Kong residents) are not permitted to enter Hong Kong until further notice.

February

- 4 The first local case (unknown source) of novel coronavirus is reported.
- The Hospital Authority reports the first death in Hong Kong of a patient confirmed to have the novel coronavirus.
- The government closes all passenger boundary control points with the Mainland, except those at Hong Kong International Airport, Shenzhen Bay and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.
- 8 The Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation comes into effect, imposing a 14-day compulsory quarantine on people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland.
- 11 The World Health Organisation officially names the disease caused by the novel coronavirus as 'COVID-19'.
- 12 The Hospital Authority reports the discharge of the first patient recovered from COVID-19.
- 14 The Chief Executive announces the setting up of the Anti-epidemic Fund to help local residents and businesses tide over the COVID-19 situation. On 21 February, the Legislative Council Finance Committee approves the government's application for \$30 billion to establish the fund.
- Phase 1 of the MTR's Tuen Ma Line opens, connecting Wu Kai Sha and Kai Tak. Work began on the Tuen Ma Line in 2012 and when completed it will be the longest railway line in Hong Kong, running 56 kilometres with 27 stations, encompassing the former Ma On Shan Line and the West Rail Line.
- 19 The government arranges three chartered flights between 19 and 23 February to bring home 193 Hong Kong residents on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship docked in Yokohama, Japan, because of a cluster of confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- The Department of Health activates the newly completed Chun Yeung Estate in Fo Tan as a quarantine centre. The estate ceases to be used as quarantine centre in end-September and is returned to the Housing Department in mid-October for intake of residents.

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- 24 In response to the COVID-19 situation, the government issues its first Red Outbound Travel Alert, for Korea. It subsequently extends the Red alert to all overseas countries/territories on 17 March, and advises the public to avoid any non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.
- 26 Delivering the 2020-21 Budget, the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan Mo-po, announces a range of measures to assist the community and the economy, including a \$10,000 cash payment for all Hong Kong permanent residents aged 18 or above.
- 28 Cyclist Sarah Lee Wai-size wins a bronze medal in the women's sprint event at the 2020 UCI Track Cycling World Championships in Germany, securing two places for Hong Kong in both the women's sprint and keirin events at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

March

- 4 The government arranges eight chartered flights between 4 and 26 March to bring home 1,027 Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province because of the pandemic.
- 6 The investment promotion and protection agreement between Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates comes into force.
- 19 The Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation comes into effect, extending compulsory quarantine to all persons arriving in Hong Kong from places outside China, regardless of whether or not they are Hong Kong residents.
- 24 The Chief Executive announces the appointment of Mr Andrew Cheung Kui-nung, Permanent Judge of the Court of Final Appeal, as the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal with effect from 11 January 2021, when the Chief Justice, Mr Geoffrey Ma Tao-li, retires.
- 25 A ban on all non-Hong Kong residents arriving by air from overseas countries or regions comes into effect. All transit services at Hong Kong International Airport are suspended. All travellers coming from Macao and Taiwan are subject to a 14-day compulsory quarantine.
- 28 The Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation takes effect. To combat the spread of COVID-19, various social distancing measures are introduced, including requiring tables at restaurants to be separated by at least 1.5 metres or partitioning and allowing only four people to be seated at each table.
- 29 The Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation takes effect, banning gatherings of more than four people in a public place.

April

- 1 Mobile network operators launch commercial 5G services in Hong Kong.
- 8 The government announces a \$137.5 billion package of relief measures to support individuals and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the introduction of an Employment Support Scheme worth over \$80 billion. The funding is in addition to the \$120 billion package announced in the Budget and the \$30 billion for the first round of the Anti-epidemic Fund, and is approved by the Legislative Council Finance Committee on 18 April.
- New measures are introduced, requiring all travellers arriving at Hong Kong International Airport to be tested for COVID-19 at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre at Asia-World Expo.
- 22 All travellers arriving at Hong Kong International Airport are to be tested for COVID-19 and await results at a designated location.
- 25 Asia's first heart transplant using the new Organ Care System is successfully performed at Queen Mary Hospital. The new preservation technology can keep the heart warm, beating and supplied with blood during transplant surgery, and expand the pool of heart organs for donation.

May

- 5 The government announces it will distribute free reusable face masks to all Hong Kong citizens.
- 8 In the light of the reduced number of COVID-19 confirmed cases in the preceding weeks, the government relaxes some social distancing measures in accordance with a 'suppress and lift' strategy, including increasing the permitted number of persons in group gatherings in public places from four to eight. The government reviews the epidemic situation as and when necessary, usually at an interval of seven to 14 days. Social distancing measures are subsequently tightened and relaxed throughout the year in response to the situation.
- 12 The free trade agreement between Hong Kong and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) comes into force for the Philippines.
- 15 The Independent Police Complaints Council submits its *Thematic Study Report on the Public Order Events arising from the Fugitive Offenders Bill since June 2019 and the Police Actions in Response* to the Chief Executive, who says the government accepts its 52 recommendations.
- 25 The first tranche of the Employment Support Scheme, providing subsidies to eligible employers and self-employed persons, opens for application. By the close of the application period on 14 June, 169,000 applications from employers and 260,000 from self-employed persons have been received.

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- 28 The National People's Congress passes a decision to establish and improve the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for Hong Kong to safeguard national security.
- 30 The government launches an online exhibition to mark the 30th anniversary of the promulgation of the Basic Law.

June

- 1 Hong Kong International Airport gradually resumes transfer/transit services.
- 2 The Civil Service Bureau announces a pay freeze for all civil servants in 2020-21, effective from 1 April 2020.
- 9 The Financial Secretary says the government will invest around \$27 billion in Cathay Pacific Airways to protect Hong Kong's role as a leading international aviation hub in the region and the city's long-term economic development.
- 12 The National Anthem Ordinance comes into effect, making it an offence to publicly and intentionally insult the national anthem in any way.
- 30 The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region takes effect in Hong Kong. The law specifies the crimes of secession, subversion, terrorist activities and collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security.

The 2020 Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens tournament is cancelled. The COVID-19 pandemic causes the cancellation of the Hong Kong Sevens for the first time since its debut in 1976.

July

- 1 Police establish the National Security Department to enforce the national security law.

Police arrest around 370 people for offences including unlawful assembly, disorderly conduct in a public place, furious driving and possession of offensive weapon in connection with protests on Hong Kong Island. Ten are arrested for suspected breaching of the national security law.
- 3 The Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the HKSAR is established in accordance with the national security law.

In the first prosecution since the national security law came into effect, a man carrying a flag bearing the slogan 'Liberate Hong Kong Revolution of Our Times' as he drove a motorcycle into police at a protest on 1 July is charged with incitement to secession and terrorist activities.
- 4 The free trade agreement and investment agreement between Hong Kong and ASEAN come into force for Indonesia.

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- 7 Implementation Rules for Article 43 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region made by the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the HKSAR take effect to provide relevant implementation rules for law enforcement agencies.
- 8 The Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR is inaugurated.
- 15 Regulations to impose boarding requirements on inbound travellers and to make wearing a face mask on public transport mandatory take effect. The requirement to wear a mask is extended to all indoor public places on 23 July, and later extended on 29 July to all public places, whether indoor or outdoor.
- 18 The Department of Health activates Phase I of the purpose-built Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre. Phases II – IV are activated subsequently throughout the year to provide a total of 3,500 units.
- 25 To further reduce the number of imported cases, the government imposes new conditions requiring travellers who have visited specified high risk places within 14 days before arrival in Hong Kong to produce documents showing they have tested negative for COVID-19 and to serve a 14-day compulsory quarantine in hotels. Relevant conditions and the list of specified places are reviewed and updated from time to time.
- 28 In accordance with the instructions of the Central People's Government (CPG), the government issues notices to Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom to suspend the agreements on surrender of fugitive offenders and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters with these countries, in response to the countries' earlier unilateral suspension/intention of suspension of surrender of fugitive offenders agreements with Hong Kong using the national security law as an excuse.
- 29 Crew change arrangements for passenger vessels and goods vessels without a cargo operation in Hong Kong are suspended until the local COVID-19 epidemic is contained. All crew members coming to Hong Kong for cargo operations should remain onboard during their vessel's stay in Hong Kong waters and should not go ashore.
- 31 The government announces the postponement of the Legislative Council election scheduled for 6 September for a year in order to protect public health and safety.
- With a monthly mean temperature of 30.2 degrees, July is the hottest month in Hong Kong since records began in 1884.

August

- 1 The Hospital Authority's COVID-19 community treatment facility at AsiaWorld-Expo starts operation, providing 500 beds.

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- 3 In accordance with the instructions of the CPG, the government issues a notice to New Zealand to suspend the agreements on surrender of fugitive offenders and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters with New Zealand, in response to the country's earlier unilateral suspension of its surrender of fugitive offenders agreement with Hong Kong using the national security law as an excuse.
- 8 The government describes as 'shameless', 'despicable' and 'barbaric' the decision of the US Government to impose 'sanctions' on the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam; the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng Yeuk-wah; the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee Ka-chiu; the Commissioner of Police, Mr Chris Tang Ping-keung; and seven other individuals on the pretext of the enactment of the national security law.
- 11 The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress decides that Hong Kong's sixth-term Legislative Council will continue to discharge its duties for at least a year until the commencement of the seventh-term Legislative Council, and that the seventh-term Legislative Council will have a term of four years after it is formed.
- 12 In accordance with the instructions of the CPG, the government issues notices to Germany and France to suspend the agreement on surrender of fugitive offenders with Germany and to shelve the agreement on surrender of fugitive offenders with France, in response to the two countries' unilateral suspension/indication not to ratify the agreements with Hong Kong using the national security law as an excuse.
- 18 The Temporary Specimen Collection Centre is relocated from AsiaWorld-Expo to the midfield concourse in the airport's restricted area for more streamlined operation and increased capacity.
- 19 Storm Signal No 9 is issued as Typhoon Higos nears Hong Kong, the first time the No 9 signal has been raised since Super Typhoon Mangkhut in September 2018.
- 20 In accordance with the instructions of the CPG, the government issues a notice to the US to suspend the agreements on surrender of fugitive offenders and on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters with the US, in response to the US' earlier unilateral notice of suspension of the bilateral agreement for the surrender of fugitive offenders and of termination of the bilateral agreements covering transfer of sentenced persons and reciprocal tax exemptions on income derived from the international operation of ships, using the national security law as an excuse.
- 21 The government lifts the entry restrictions on Hubei residents and non-Hong Kong residents who have visited Hubei Province.
- 26 Cargo clearance facilities at the Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point open for use by cross-boundary goods vehicles. It is the seventh land-based control point between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

- 31 The government announces that all schools will resume face-to-face classes by two phases starting 23 September for the new school year after the summer holidays.

The second tranche of the Employment Support Scheme opens for application. At the end of the two-week application period, a total of 162,000 applications from employers and 26,000 from self-employed persons have been received.

September

- 1 To reduce air pollution, regulations take effect to progressively phase out 40,000 existing Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles by the end of 2027.

The community-wide testing programme for COVID-19 is launched, with 141 community testing centres operating in 18 districts. Some 126,000 people have their specimens taken for testing on the first day, and by the end of the 14-day programme, around 1,783,000 specimens have been collected, of which over 40 are tested positive for the virus.

- 8 Hong Kong filmmaker Ann Hui is awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 77th Venice International Film Festival.

- 9 Hong Kong's population is projected to peak at 8.11 million in mid-2041, then decline to 7.35 million by mid-2069.

- 10 The Fraser Institute of Canada ranks Hong Kong as the world's freest economy in the *Economic Freedom of the World 2020 Annual Report*, a title Hong Kong has held since the inception of the report in 1996.

- 15 Delivering a video message at the 45th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council held in Geneva, Switzerland, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, in his capacity as the deputy head of the China delegation, stresses that the national security law is designed to bolster the successful 'one country, two systems' principle which continues to drive Hong Kong's progress.

- 16 The government formally objects to, and requests the withdrawal of, the new requirement announced by the US Customs and Border Protection on 11 August that goods produced in Hong Kong that are imported to the US may no longer be marked to indicate 'Hong Kong' as their origin, but must be marked to indicate 'China'.

- 18 With the support of the Central Government, the HKSAR Government and Shenzhen Municipal Government sign a collaboration agreement to expand the community treatment facility at AsiaWorld-Expo with 952 beds and to construct a temporary hospital adjacent to AsiaWorld-Expo to provide 816 beds in negative pressure wards and associated medical facilities.

- 29 A new 11-km cycle track from Yuen Long to Sheung Shui opens for public use, completing the 60-km cycle track between Tuen Mun and Ma On Shan.

The Central Military Dock is handed over to the Hong Kong Garrison, marking the completion of the responsibilities according to the arrangements for the use of military sites in Hong Kong.

October

- 1 As the national day flag-raising ceremony is held in Wan Chai, police arrest some protesters in Causeway Bay for various offences including unauthorised assembly, possession of offensive weapon and disorderly conduct in a public place.

- 5 The appointment of Lord Patrick Hodge, Deputy President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, as a non-permanent judge of the Court of Final Appeal is announced.

- 10 With support from the Central Government, the Hospital Authority's community treatment facility at AsiaWorld-Expo is expanded to provide around 1,900 beds in six halls.

- 12 The Chief Executive postpones the delivery of her annual Policy Address, originally scheduled for 14 October, to a later date in order to seek the Central Government's support for proposals to aid Hong Kong's recovery.

The Civil Service Bureau announces that all civil servants joining the government on or after 1 July 2020 will be required to take an oath or sign a declaration that they will uphold the Basic Law, bear allegiance to the HKSAR, be dedicated to their duties, and be responsible to the HKSAR Government.

- 20 The free trade agreement and investment agreement between Hong Kong and ASEAN come into force for Brunei Darussalam.

- 21 Cathay Pacific announces a major restructuring, leading to the lay-off of 5,300 Hong Kong-based employees and closure of its regional airline Cathay Dragon. It is Hong Kong's biggest mass lay-offs in three decades.

The government expresses strong opposition to Germany's reported decision to grant refugee status to a Hong Kong suspect who absconded while on bail for a rioting charge.

- 23 In accordance with the instructions of the CPG, the government issues a notice to Finland to suspend the agreement on surrender of fugitive offenders with Finland, in response to the country's earlier unilateral suspension of the agreement using the national security law as an excuse.

- 30 The government requests consultations with the US on the new requirement on origin marking for Hong Kong products announced by the US Customs and Border Protection on 11 August in accordance with the World Trade Organisation Dispute Settlement Mechanism.

November

- 2 The Hong Kong Legal Hub, comprising the heritage buildings of the former Central Government Offices and former French Mission Building as well as part of Two Exchange Square in the heart of Central, opens to accommodate offices of local, regional and international law-related organisations. It also marks the launch of 'Vision 2030 for Rule of Law', a 10-year initiative to promote the rule of law.

- 3-7 The Chief Executive visits Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen to discuss with Central authorities and leaders of Guangdong and Shenzhen policy initiatives that will support Hong Kong's development.

- 5 The police's National Security Department sets up a hotline for people to report national security-related matters through various platforms, including WeChat, SMS and email.

In accordance with the instructions of the CPG, the government issues notices to Finland, France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands to suspend the agreements on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters with these five countries and also the agreements on surrender of fugitive offenders with Ireland and the Netherlands, in response to these countries' earlier unilateral suspension of/indication not to ratify the surrender of fugitive offenders agreements with Hong Kong using the national security law as an excuse.

- 11 Following a decision the same day by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the government announces the immediate disqualification of four members of the sixth-term Legislative Council: Mr Kenneth Leung, Mr Kwok Ka-ki, Mr Dennis Kwok Wing-hang and Mr Alvin Yeung. Subsequent to the disqualification, 15 other members resign from the council.

- 13 Measures come into effect requiring all incoming travellers, except those from Mainland China, Taiwan and Macao, to undergo 14 days' quarantine in a hotel.

- 14 The Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation is gazetted to provide the legal framework for mandatory COVID-19 testing.

- 15 The government sets up the first four longer-term community testing centres across the territory. By end-December, a total of 19 community testing centres have been set up, with a total daily capacity of more than 20,000 tests.

Eight people die and 10 others are seriously injured in a blaze at an unlicensed restaurant in Yau Ma Tei, the worst fire tragedy in Hong Kong in nearly a decade.

- 17 The Basic Law 30th Anniversary Legal Summit is held online.
- 19 The government ‘firmly opposes’ and ‘strongly condemns’ a joint statement by the foreign ministers of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US which has made deliberate misrepresentation regarding the decision by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPCSC) on the qualification of four members of the Legislative Council. The NPCSC decision is constitutional, lawful and necessary, and sets out clearly the consequences of LegCo members violating the legal prerequisites of upholding the Basic Law and swearing allegiance to the HKSAR.
- 20 The Chief Executive attends the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation 2020 Economic Leaders’ Meeting via video conferencing.
- 25 In delivering the 2020 Policy Address, the Chief Executive says that its objective is to restore Hong Kong’s constitutional order, consolidate and enhance Hong Kong’s strengths and diversify its economic development, and build on past efforts to continue to improve people’s well-being, with a view to resolving Hong Kong’s immediate and long-term social problems.
- 29 In light of the worsening situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government announces that all schools will suspend face-to-face classes from 2 December until the Christmas holidays.

December

- 1 Television broadcasting in Hong Kong becomes fully digital, with analogue broadcasts no longer available in the city.
- 10 Tightened restrictions take effect in response to the COVID-19 situation, banning catering premises from selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on their premises between 6pm and 5am the next day. Bars remain closed, and no more than two people may be seated together at one table within any catering premises.
- 11 Statutory maternity leave is increased from 10 weeks to 14 weeks.
- 12 The government announces it has reached agreement with three suppliers to each provide 7.5 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine: Sinovac Biotech, Fosun Pharma/BioNTech and AstraZeneca/University of Oxford. The vaccines are expected to arrive in batches from January 2021 at the earliest.
- 16 Witnessed by the Chief Executive, 12 under-secretaries and 14 political assistants swear to uphold the Basic Law and bear allegiance to the HKSAR at an oath-taking ceremony at the Central Government Offices.
- 18 Witnessed by the Chief Executive, permanent secretaries, heads of department and senior directorate civil servants take an oath that they will uphold the Basic Law, bear allegiance to the HKSAR, be dedicated to their duties and be responsible to the HKSAR Government at an oath-taking ceremony at the Central Government Offices.

- 21 The Court of Final Appeal rules that the Emergency Regulations Ordinance, and the Prohibition on Face Covering Regulation made under it in October 2019 by the Chief Executive in Council to prohibit face covering at public processions and gatherings, are constitutional and that the restrictions imposed are proportionate.
- 22 The government bans flights from the UK in response to a new more transmissible variant of COVID-19 found there. This measure is extended to South Africa on 25 December.
- The government commences the Designated Quarantine Hotel Scheme, mandating all incoming travellers who have stayed in places outside China to undergo compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels.
- The Chief Secretary for Administration leads a team of expert advisors and senior officials to meet with experts and senior officials of the National Health Commission and other ministries in Shenzhen to exchange views on ways and means of fighting the pandemic.
- 25 The compulsory quarantine period is extended to 21 days for all incoming travellers who have stayed in places other than Mainland China, Taiwan and Macao on the day of arrival at Hong Kong or in the preceding 21 days.
- 27 The 5-km Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Tunnel, Hong Kong's longest and deepest subsea road tunnel, opens to traffic, shortening the travel distance between Tuen Mun South and the airport by around 22km and the journey time by around 20 minutes.
- 29 Responding to public concerns, the Water Supplies Department halts demolition of a century-old underground reservoir in Sham Shui Po, which was originally constructed with stone pillars and brick arches. The Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong Wai-lun, says the site should be preserved and rehabilitated.
- 30 Police receive at Shenzhen Bay Port two suspects intercepted on board a boat in Mainland waters by Guangdong Coast Guard for unlawfully crossing the boundary on 23 August.
- 31 Unemployment rate climbs to 6.6 per cent during October to December, the highest in 16 years.
- With an annual mean temperature of 24.4 degrees, and 11 out of the 12 months warmer than usual, 2020 is Hong Kong's second hottest since records began in 1884.