

Calendar of Events of Significance for the Hong Kong Economy in 2019

- 1 Jan The Agreement on Trade in Goods under the framework of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) was implemented.
- The Government implemented the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme. The Scheme is non-means tested, and commuters with monthly public transport expenses exceeding \$400 are eligible for the public transport fare subsidy.
- The new Scheme of Control Agreement (SCA) signed between the Government and The Hongkong Electric Company Limited and HK Electric Investments Limited commenced.
- 13-15 Jan The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), the Research Bureau of the People’s Bank of China (PBoC) and the Hong Kong Green Finance Association co-organised the “Green Finance in Action” Hong Kong study tour for more than 120 representatives of potential green bond issuers from the Mainland, with an aim to facilitate their issuing green bonds in Hong Kong.
- 14-15 Jan The Government and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) co-organised the 12th Asian Financial Forum, with the theme “Creating a Sustainable and Inclusive Future”, discussing global economic trends, developments in financial innovations and investment opportunities, which attracted over 3 300 participants, including government leaders, regulators, financial and business leaders and investors from all over the world.
- 15 Jan The Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Commission de Surveillance du Secteur Financier of Luxembourg on mutual recognition of funds.
- The Chief Executive (CE) visited Guangzhou to meet with Secretary of the CPC Guangdong Provincial Committee, Mr Li Xi, and the Governor of Guangdong Province, Mr Ma Xingrui, to discuss collaboration between Hong Kong and Guangdong in relation to the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).
- 21-25 Jan CE visited Switzerland to meet with local government officials and members of the business sector in Zurich to update them on the latest developments of Hong Kong; to attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos; to meet with leaders of various economies, the WEF and the business sector in Davos; and to address the third Belt and Road Davos Forum co-organised by Tsinghua University and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and the Hong Kong Night co-organised by the HKSAR Government and the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited.
- 25 Jan The International Monetary Fund (IMF) published a Staff Report on the 2018 Article IV consultation with the HKSAR. The IMF commended Hong Kong for maintaining robust financial regulation and supervision and reaffirmed its long-standing support for the Linked Exchange Rate System (LERS). The IMF assessed that many years of prudent macroeconomic policies had endowed Hong Kong with ample buffers for smoothening the transition and ensuring continued stability. It also applauded Hong Kong for its continued efforts to maintain

competitiveness and expand its role as a leading financial centre.

The Heritage Foundation rated Hong Kong as the world's freest economy for the 25th consecutive year.

- 1 Feb The Companies (Amendment) (No. 2) Ordinance 2018 commenced operation. The amendments included expanding the scope for simplified reporting as well as streamlining and clarifying provisions to facilitate compliance.
- 13 Feb The PBoC issued in Hong Kong a total of RMB20 billion RMB Bills with tenors of three months and one year.
- The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Hong Kong and Georgia came into force. This had been the first FTA between Hong Kong and a country in the Caucasus.
- 14 Feb The Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) priced an offering of US\$500 million 3.45% bonds due 2029 under the AAHK's Medium Term Note Programme. The proceeds from the Bonds would be used to fund capital expenditure of the AAHK including the Three-Runway System Project and for general corporate purposes. The Bonds were over-subscribed by more than 7 times, with over US\$3.6 billion in orders from professional and institutional investors in Hong Kong, Asia and Europe.
- 18 Feb The Central Government promulgated the Outline Development Plan for the GBA, which sets out the directions guiding the development of the GBA. The opportunities for Hong Kong brought about by the development of the GBA involve two aspects. First, it can help identify new areas of growth for Hong Kong and foster the diversified development of its economy and industries. Second, it can expand the space for living and development of Hong Kong residents.
- 20 Feb The Chief Executive Officer of the Insurance Authority (IA) was elected by the International Association of Insurance Supervisors' (IAIS) Asian members to serve on its Executive Committee, which is responsible for providing strategic directions to and managing the affairs of the IAIS. A total of seven seats of the Executive Committee were allocated to Asia, with other members being China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore.
- The Government announced its full acceptance of the recommendations of the Task Force on Land Supply on land supply strategy and eight land supply options worthy of priority studies and implementation.
- 25 Feb The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) and the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council (SASAC) jointly held the "Belt and Road: Hong Kong – IN" Sharing Session on Risk Management. Around 220 participants comprising representatives from state-owned enterprises, Hong Kong enterprises, chambers as well as professional services sector had in-depth exchanges and discussions on the topic, and exploring how our financing and professional services could play a role on risk management under the Belt and Road Initiative.
- 27 Feb The Financial Secretary (FS) delivered the 2019-20 Budget. The Budget was prepared along the direction of "supporting enterprises, safeguarding jobs, stabilising the economy, strengthening livelihoods". A package of one-off relief measures worth \$42.9 billion as well as other spending initiatives were announced in the Budget.

The 2018 Economic Background and 2019 Prospects was published along with the 2019-20 Budget. Hong Kong's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2019 was forecast to be 2-3%. The headline and underlying inflation rates were both forecast to be 2.5%.

- 27-28 Feb CE visited Bangkok, Thailand to officiate at the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Bangkok, the third Economic and Trade Office established by the HKSAR Government in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region; to meet with senior government officials of Thailand; and to attend a business seminar as well as the opening ceremony of cultural collaboration activities between Hong Kong and Thailand.
- 28 Feb The Government announced the 2019-20 Land Sale Programme (LSP). There were 15 residential sites (capable of providing about 8 850 flats) and 8 commercial/hotel sites in the LSP for 2019-20.
- 1-7 Mar CE visited Beijing to attend the second plenary meeting of the Leading Group for the Development of the GBA (Leading Group). After the meeting, CE announced that the Central Government would introduce eight policy measures that could facilitate Hong Kong residents to develop, work and reside in the Mainland cities of the GBA, as well as strengthen the convenient flow of people and goods within the GBA. She also attended the signing ceremony for the donation by Ng Teng Fong Charitable Foundation to the Palace Museum, and the opening ceremony of the second session of the 13th National People's Congress; to call on various central ministries and other organisations.
- 4 Mar The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) endorsed converting two public rental housing (PRH) developments in Chai Wan and Tsing Yi to Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH) projects, involving a total of about 3 700 flats.
- 12 Mar Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) was recognised by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) as a Partner Airport of IATA's Center of Excellence for Perishable Logistics, the first airport community in the world to receive the certification. The certification recognised HKIA's capability in the transportation and handling of perishable cargo in a stringent temperature-controlled process at globally assured standards.
- 22-23 Mar CE visited Conghua, Guangzhou to attend the Exhibition Raceday at the Hong Kong Jockey Club Conghua Racecourse.
- 24-25 Mar CE visited Beijing to attend the 20th China Development Forum.
- 26 Mar The HKMA Infrastructure Financing Facilitation Office (IFFO) and the IA co-organised a seminar on the strategic roles of insurance and guarantee in project risk management. The seminar demonstrated Hong Kong's advantages as a comprehensive infrastructure financing and risk management centre.

Hong Kong and Australia signed a FTA and an Investment Agreement. The agreements would provide Hong Kong traders and investors with legal certainty and more favourable access to the Australian market, whilst creating more business opportunities and enhancing trade and investment flows between the two places.

- 27-29 Mar CE visited Hainan to attend the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2019 and met with other senior officials attending the Conference.
- 1 Apr Smart Government Innovation Lab was set up to provide a collaboration platform for government departments to leverage on the information technology solutions from the industry to formulate innovative measures for enhancing public services.
- The Inland Revenue and Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes (MPF) Legislation (Tax Deductions for Annuity Premiums and MPF Voluntary Contributions) (Amendment) Ordinance 2019 (the Ordinance) came into operation. The Ordinance has given effect to the relevant tax deductions announced in the 2018-19 Budget Speech to encourage the working population to take out deferred annuity or make MPF voluntary contributions.
- 2 Apr The Chief Secretary (CS) for Administration and the Mayor of the Shenzhen Municipal Government co-chaired the 13th Hong Kong/Shenzhen Co-operation Meeting. In the meeting, both sides reviewed the achievements made since the last meeting and set out the directions for co-operation in the coming year. Both sides would steadfastly take forward initiatives that are pertaining to Hong Kong and Shenzhen co-operation as set out in the Outline Development Plan for the GBA and see through their effective implementation.
- 3 Apr The HKIA hosted the 2019 Airports Council International (ACI) Asia-Pacific/ World Annual General Assembly Conference & Exhibition, attended by more than 800 airport and aviation industry leaders, experts and professionals as well as over 60 exhibitors from around the world. CE hosted a welcome dinner for the ACI Joint World Governing Board and Regional Board at the Government House.
- 4 Apr The Hong Kong ICT Awards 2019 Awards Presentation Ceremony was held to give recognition and encouragement to outstanding information and communications technology products and solutions developed by local innovators.
- 7-9 Apr CE visited Tokyo, Japan to attend the Symposium on the GBA jointly organised by the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao; to meet with senior government officials of Japan, leaders of the business sector as well as organisations and institutions in relation to innovation and technology (I&T); and to visit I&T, elderly care and medical facilities.
- 7-13 Apr FS visited Seattle and San Francisco, the United States (US), to strengthen ties between Hong Kong and the US in innovation and technology.
- 10-14 Apr In the 47th International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva, the Hong Kong delegation won the top Grand Prix once again, as well as 57 Gold Medals, 51 Silver Medals, nine Bronze Medals and eight special awards, demonstrating Hong Kong's strong capability and achievements in research and development.
- 12 Apr The HKMA signed a MoU with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, to co-organise IFC's Sixth Annual Climate Business Forum, which would be held in Hong Kong in early 2020.
- 15-16 Apr The Internet Economy Summit 2019 with the theme "Digital Economy • Redefines our Future" was held to discuss how business create value and catalyse new economic growth through digital transformation.

- 24 Apr The Government launched the “Mainland-Hong Kong Joint Funding Scheme” under the Innovation and Technology Fund to further enhance research and development (R&D) collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland by supporting applied R&D projects jointly conducted by both sides.
- Stage 1 of the Science Park Expansion Programme was completed.
- 24-29 Apr CE visited Beijing to attend the second Belt and Road Forum for International Co-operation, to call on the All-China Women's Federation, and to attend the 2019 Beijing International Horticultural Exhibition.
- 25 Apr The Communications Authority administratively assigned a total of 1 200 MHz of spectrum in the 26 GHz and 28 GHz bands to three mobile network operators as per their application for the provision of the fifth generation (5G) mobile services.
- 1 May The Statutory Minimum Wage rate was increased by 8.7% from \$34.5 to \$37.5 per hour.
- 2 May The Government released the advance estimates on GDP for the first quarter of 2019. According to the advance estimates, Hong Kong’s real GDP growth eased to 0.5% in the first quarter of 2019 on a year-on-year basis, weighed down by the weaker performance of the global economy and various external headwinds.
- 3 May Funding application for the first phase works and the compensation for land resumption of the Kwu Tung North/Fanling North New Development Area (KTN/FLN NDA) was approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council. The KTN/FLN NDA, upon full development, would provide a total of about 71 800 housing units. The first phase development would provide about 21 000 housing units, of which 18 000 are public housing units. Population intake of the first batches of private and public housing is expected in 2023-24 and 2026-27 respectively.
- 7 May The HKMA unveiled three sets of measures to support and promote Hong Kong’s green finance development, including promoting green and sustainable banking, supporting responsible investment, and establishing a Centre for Green Finance (CGF) under the IFFO.
- 8 May The European Commission published its 21st annual report on Hong Kong, which continued to affirm the co-operation between the European Union (EU) and Hong Kong in areas including trade, investment, and dialogue on issues of mutual interest, while recognising as well Hong Kong’s strategic importance as a trading and investment partner for the EU.
- 9 May The HKMA granted eight virtual banking licences during March to May, bringing the number of licensed banks in Hong Kong to 160. The launch of virtual banks in Hong Kong, which is a key component of the HKMA’s Smart Banking Initiatives, aimed to facilitate financial innovation, enhanced customer experience and financial inclusion.
- 10 May The food waste pre-treatment facility at Tai Po Sewage Treatment Works adopting the “food waste/sewage sludge anaerobic co-digestion” technology started to receive and treat food waste. This is the first plant in Hong Kong adopting the new anaerobic co-digestion technology to convert food waste into biogas for energy

production.

- 12 May The HKMA and the Bank of Thailand entered into a MoU to foster collaboration between the two regulatory authorities in promoting financial innovation.
- 15 May The PBoC issued in Hong Kong a total of RMB20 billion RMB Bills with tenors of three months and one year.
- The SFC and the Dutch Authority for the Financial Markets entered into a MoU on mutual recognition of funds.
- 16 May The coverage of the Single E-Lock Scheme was extended to all nine Mainland municipalities of the GBA, thereby implementing the policy initiative promulgated by the Central Government on 1 March 2019 to take forward the development of the GBA. The Scheme is jointly operated by the customs authorities of Hong Kong and the Mainland to enhance cross-boundary cargo flow and expedite cargo clearance by providing facilitation for inter-modal cargoes to and from the Mainland and transshipped in Hong Kong by registered logistics operators.
- 16-19 May CE visited Guangzhou to attend the 21st Plenary of the Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation Joint Conference. At the meeting, both sides reached consensus on a range of areas of co-operation, and signed the 2019 Work Plan of the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation. She also attended the opening ceremony of the first GBA media summit, and visited Foshan, Zhaoqing and Jiangmen to meet with respective leaders.
- 17 May The Government released the revised GDP figures for the first quarter of 2019. The Hong Kong economy expanded modestly by 0.6% over a year earlier. Exports were adversely affected by the weaker performance of the global economy and various external headwinds. Domestic demand also lacked momentum, reflecting cautious local economic sentiment amid a challenging external environment.
- In the May review of economic forecasts, the forecast real GDP growth for Hong Kong was maintained at 2-3% for 2019 as a whole. The forecast rates of underlying and headline consumer price inflation for 2019 as a whole were both maintained at 2.5%.
- 22 May The Government announced the successful offering of its inaugural green bond (Green Bond) under the Government Green Bond Programme. The Green Bond, with an issuance size of US\$1 billion and a tenor of 5 years, set an important new benchmark for potential issuers in Hong Kong and the region.
- 29 May Hong Kong continued to rank second globally in the International Institute for Management Development's World Competitiveness Yearbook 2019.
- 30 May The HA launched Sale of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) Flats 2019 (HOS 2019) and White Form Secondary Market Scheme 2019. For HOS 2019, about 4 900 subsidised sale flats (SSFs) in Kwun Tak Court in Ho Man Tin, Hoi Tak Court in Cheung Sha Wan, Sheung Man Court in Kwai Chung, Yung Ming Court in Tseung Kwan O, Kam Fai Court in Ma On Shan and Yuk Wo Court in Sha Tin were put up for pre-sale.

- 5-9 Jun FS visited St. Petersburg, Russia, to attend the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum and participated in a discussion session.
- 9-18 Jun The CEDB and the Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China jointly organised for the first time a business and professional mission comprising over 60 delegates from Hong Kong and Mainland enterprises and professional services sector for ‘going global’ en bloc to visit Spain, Serbia, and United Arab Emirates, with a view to exploring the Belt and Road opportunities therein.
- 11 Jun The FTA between Hong Kong and ASEAN entered into force for Hong Kong, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- 16 Jun Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates signed an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA). The agreement would enhance the confidence of investors, expand investment flows and further strengthen the economic and trade ties between the two places.
- 17 Jun The Ministry of Finance (MoF) announced the issuance of RMB sovereign bonds totalling RMB5 billion, with tenors of two and five years, in Hong Kong.
- The Investment Agreement between Hong Kong and ASEAN entered into force for Hong Kong, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- HKIA received its fourth “Best Global Airport” accolade at the Asian Freight, Logistics & Supply Chain Awards held by Asia Cargo News.
- 20 Jun The MoF issued in Hong Kong of a total of RMB4.5 billion RMB Sovereign Bonds of the Central People’s Government with tenors of two and five years.
- 21 Jun The HA endorsed the implementation of a trial for a new initiative whereby under-occupation households whose family members are all aged 70 or above are given an option to enjoy full rent exemption upon their transfer to PRH units of suitable sizes.
- 25 Jun The Food and Health Bureau launched the \$500 million Chinese Medicine Development Fund to enhance the overall standard of the industry, including nurturing talent for the Chinese medicine industry and the Chinese medicine hospital, promoting Chinese medicine-related studies and scientific research, and providing assistance to local Chinese medicine traders for improving the quality and standards of production and registration of proprietary Chinese medicines in accordance with statutory requirements. It is also intended to enhance public knowledge and understanding of Chinese medicine.
- 26 Jun The Hong Kong Academy of Finance (AoF), set up with full collaboration among the HKMA, the SFC, the IA and the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority (MPFA), was formally established and the first Fellowship Conferment of the Academy was held. The mission of the AoF is to serve as a centre of excellence for developing financial leadership, and a repository of knowledge in monetary and financial research, including applied research.
- The PBoC issued in Hong Kong a total of RMB30 billion RMB Bills with tenors of one and six months.

Hong Kong and Cambodia signed an agreement for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.

- 27-29 Jun FS visited Osaka, Japan, to attend the Group of Twenty Leaders' Summit as part of the delegation of the People's Republic of China.
- 28 Jun The Banking (Liquidity) (Amendment) Rules 2019 were gazetted to bring the regulatory regime in Hong Kong up to date and in line with international standards.
- 3 Jul The MoF, the China Securities Regulatory Commission and the SFC entered into a MoU on access to audit working papers for Hong Kong-listed Mainland companies.
- HKIA took home the ninth “Top Asian Airport Efficiency Excellence” honour from Air Transport Research Society.
- 5 Jul The HKMA and Autorité de Contrôle Prudentiel et de Résolution signed a MoU to enhance collaboration between the two authorities in supporting fintech innovation.
- 9 Jul Invest Hong Kong and the Qatar Financial Centre Authority of the Qatar Financial Centre of the State of Qatar signed a MoU pledging mutual co-operation on investment promotion.
- 9-10 Jul The HKMA and the SASAC co-organised the second ‘Connecting Belt & Road, Capturing Opportunities Together’ High-level Roundtable to discuss how Central State-owned Enterprises can leverage on Hong Kong’s advantages to facilitate their overseas investment and business expansion.
- 11-15 Jul FS visited Luxembourg to attend the Annual Meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.
- 14 Jul The Investment Agreement between Hong Kong and Chile entered into force. The agreement gives additional assurance to investors, facilitates investment flows between Hong Kong and Chile, and complements the existing FTA between Hong Kong and Chile in strengthening the economic and trade ties between the two places.
- 16 Jul The dedicated e-sports venue in Cyberport was officially opened for the industry to organise e-sports competitions, events and training.
- 18-20 Jul FS visited Beijing to sign the Fifth Protocol to the Arrangement between the Mainland and the HKSAR for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income which provides tax relief to qualified Hong Kong and Mainland teachers and researchers working on the other side, and helps promote training, exchanges of talents and co-operation between the two places.
- 19 Jul The IA and the HKMA entered into a new MoU to strengthen co-operation and ensure regulatory consistency. The MoU sets out, among other things, the arrangements on supervision, complaint handling and enforcement in relation to insurance-related activities carried on by authorized institutions supervised by the HKMA.

The second Belt and Road Joint Conference was convened by the Government with relevant Mainland authorities in Beijing to look at and follow up co-operation efforts in taking forward the Belt and Road Initiative.

- 22 Jul The Development Bureau (DEVB) established the Centre of Excellence for Major Project Leaders to equip public officers with more innovative minds and contemporary leadership skills for better delivery of public works projects, and engaged the UK Oxford Saïd Business School to deliver the Major Projects Leadership Programme for the coming three years to further enhance the project performance of the public works projects.
- The China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission announced the extension of the preferential treatment to Hong Kong under the “China Risk Oriented Solvency System”, allowing lower capital requirements for Mainland insurers who cede businesses to qualified Hong Kong professional reinsurers.
- 25 Jul The Government announced the subscription and allocation results of the fourth tranche of Silver Bond issued under the Government Bond Programme. The Silver Bond targets Hong Kong residents aged 65 or above. About 56 600 valid applications were received for a total of \$7.9 billion in principal amount of bonds. The final issue amount was \$3 billion with a tenor of three years.
- 29 Jul The HA decided to join the Hong Kong Housing Society’s enhanced Letting Scheme for Subsidised Sale Developments with Premium Unpaid on a trial basis, so as to allow eligible owners of HA’s SSFs to let their flats with premium unpaid to eligible PRH applicants as well.
- 30 Jul DEVB signed a MoU with the Ministry of Finance of the Government of Singapore to enhance collaboration in exchanging expertise and experience between Hong Kong and Singapore in infrastructure project management and delivery.
- 31 Jul The Government released the advance estimates on GDP for the second quarter of 2019. According to the advance estimates, overall economic performance was subdued in the second quarter of 2019, with GDP growing modestly by 0.6% in real terms over a year earlier. External demand weakened further and domestic demand stayed sluggish.
- 1 Aug The Non-Hong Kong Companies (Disclosure of Company Name, Place of Incorporation and Members’ Limited Liability) Regulation came into operation, aligning the disclosure obligations of non-Hong Kong companies with those of Hong Kong companies.
- 2 Aug FS visited Shenzhen to attend and address the 2019 Qianhai Co-operation Forum.
- 9 Aug The PBoC indicated for the first time establishing a normal mechanism of issuing central bank bills in Hong Kong in its China Monetary Policy Report Quarter Two, 2019.
- 12 Aug CE visited Macao to attend the opening ceremony of the International Conference on Cultural Mission for the Development and Construction of the GBA.

- 14 Aug The PBoC issued in Hong Kong a total of RMB30 billion RMB Bills with tenors of three months and one year.
- 15 Aug To counter the challenging external and local economic environment, FS announced the first package of measures costing a total of about \$19.1 billion to support enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), safeguard jobs and relieve people's financial burden.
- In the August review of economic forecasts, the forecast real GDP growth for 2019 as a whole was revised to 0-1%.
- 16 Aug The Government released the revised GDP figures for the second quarter of 2019. The Hong Kong economy expanded only modestly by 0.5% over a year earlier. External demand contracted amid softening global economic growth. Domestic demand stayed sluggish. The labour market was largely stable, while inflation went up somewhat.
- In the August review of economic forecasts, the forecast rates of underlying and headline consumer price inflation for 2019 as a whole were revised to 2.7% and 2.6% respectively.
- 26 Aug The HKMA completed a review of its framework for the provision of Hong Kong dollar liquidity to banks and launched an updated Liquidity Facilities Framework, which introduced a new Resolution Facility and made a number of refinements to various established arrangements.
- 4 Sep The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering published the Mutual Evaluation Report on Hong Kong. The Report commended Hong Kong for its strong legal foundation and institutional framework for combating money laundering and terrorist financing. Hong Kong became the first jurisdiction in the Asia-Pacific region to have achieved an overall compliant and effective result in the fourth round of FATF mutual evaluation.
- FS announced the second package of measures with enhancements to two Government loan guarantee schemes and fund disbursement arrangements for various funding schemes targeting SMEs, with a view to relieving SMEs' cash flow problem. A new relief measure under the 80% Guarantee Product of the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme (SFGS) was introduced by HKMC Insurance Limited (HKMCI), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Limited (HKMC). SME borrowers may apply for principal moratorium to get immediate support for facing weakening cash flow amid the current economic uncertainties.
- 5-6 Sep CE visited Nanning, Guangxi to attend the 2019 Pan-Pearl River Delta Regional Co-operation Chief Executive Joint Conference, and discussed with other government leaders of the PPRD provinces/regions various matters, including the development of the GBA, the New Western Land-Sea Corridor and the Belt and Road Initiative.
- 11-12 Sep The Government and the HKTDC co-organised the fourth Belt and Road Summit, with participation of around 5 000 officials, entrepreneurs and professionals from 69 countries / regions. Over 700 one-on-one business-matching meetings for more

than 240 projects were also held. The first Belt and Road Week was staged alongside the Summit.

12 Sep Hong Kong was once again ranked as the freest economy in the world by the Fraser Institute, retaining the top rank since 1996.

13 Sep The Rating (Amendment) Bill 2019 was published in the Gazette. The Bill aims to implement the proposal to introduce Special Rates on vacant first-hand private residential units, with a view to encouraging more timely supply of these units.

23 Sep The IA assumed the responsibility for direct regulation of some 110 000 insurance intermediaries in Hong Kong. Under the new regulatory regime, the IA is responsible for all aspects of the regulation of insurance intermediaries in Hong Kong, including granting licences, setting regulatory requirements, conducting inspections and investigations, and imposing disciplinary sanctions.

25 Sep The MoF issued in Hong Kong a total of RMB4.5 billion RMB Sovereign Bonds of the Central People's Government with tenors of two and five years.

Hong Kong and Estonia signed an agreement for the elimination of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and the prevention of tax evasion and avoidance.

The Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency announced the launch of its Green Finance Certification Scheme – Green Fund to provide third-party conformity assessments on green funds.

26 Sep The PBoC issued in Hong Kong RMB10 billion RMB Bills with tenor of six months.

CE visited Nansha, Guangzhou to attend the “Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Major Projects Construction of Guangzhou Nansha Demonstration Zone for Comprehensive Co-operation between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao”, celebrating the commencement of two projects, i.e. The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou) and the Pearl Science Park of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

FS led a HKSAR Government delegation to visit Macao, and co-chaired the 11th Hong Kong Macao Co-operation High Level Meeting with the Secretary for Economy and Finance of the Macao Special Administrative Region.

Notices for the resumption of land for the implementation of the first phase works of KTN/FLN NDA were posted and the relevant land clearance and construction works commenced in phases, and the enhanced compensation and re-housing arrangements for government development clearance exercises have also been implemented.

30 Sep-1 Oct CE visited Beijing, leading a delegation to participate in activities in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

1 Oct The new auditor regulatory regime came into operation under the Financial Reporting Council (Amendment) Ordinance 2019, enabling the Financial Reporting Council to become a full-fledged independent regulatory body in relation to public interest entities auditors.

- 4 Oct New guidelines for securities margin financing activities, which set out the expected risk management standards and help brokers identify financial risks, took effect.
- 9 Oct Hong Kong was ranked the third globally in WEF's 2019 Global Competitiveness Report, up four places from the preceding year.
- 10-11 Oct The CGF under the IFFO and the IFC co-organised a seminar titled "Greening Financial Institutions" to discuss how financial institutions were increasingly factoring in climate-related risks in various aspects of their governance, policies, and businesses and to discuss various principles and tools for corporates to transition their business and financing strategies.
- 12-15 Oct FS visited Santiago, Chile, to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Finance Ministers' Meeting.
- 13 Oct The FTA and Investment Agreement between Hong Kong and ASEAN entered into force for Malaysia.
- 14 Oct The HKMA announced that the countercyclical capital buffer (CCyB) for Hong Kong would decrease from 2.5% to 2.0% with immediate effect. The CCyB is an integral part of the Basel III regulatory capital framework designed to increase resilience of the banking sector in periods of excess credit growth.
- 14 Oct - 6 Nov The Office of the Communications Authority successfully auctioned a total of 380 MHz of spectrum in the 3.3 GHz, 3.5 GHz and 4.9 GHz bands for the provision of 5G services, with spectrum acquired by four mobile network operators, at total spectrum utilisation fees of over HK\$1.9 billion.
- 16 Oct CE delivered "The Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address", focusing on four aspects of work, namely housing, land supply, improving people's livelihood and economic development.
- The Banking Sector SME Lending Coordination Mechanism established by the HKMA held the first meeting, with representatives from the Hong Kong Association of Banks, nine major banks and the HKMC. At the meeting, the banks agreed to adopt a number of measures to support SMEs.
- The HKMCI announced enhancements made to the Mortgage Insurance Programme for completed residential properties, in order to provide assistance to homebuyers with immediate housing needs. These enhancements included: the maximum property value eligible for mortgage loans up to 80% loan-to-value (LTV) ratio is HK\$10 million; the maximum property value is HK\$8 million for mortgage loans up to 90% LTV ratio applicable to first-time homebuyers.
- The number of business operations in Hong Kong with parent companies overseas and in the Mainland hit a record high of 9 040 in 2019, according to a joint survey conducted by Invest Hong Kong and the Census and Statistics Department.
- 16-21 Oct FS visited New York, US to promote Hong Kong's financial services to banking and business sectors in the US. Afterwards, he headed to Washington, D.C., US, to attend the Plenary Session of the Annual Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank Group as a member of the delegation of the People's Republic of China.

- 18 Oct The Environmental Protection Department launched the \$500 million Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme to provide financial support to non-profit-making organisations for collaboration with villagers in organising diverse and innovative conservation activities or projects for the conservation and revitalisation of the remote countryside.
- 21-22 Oct CE visited Tokyo, Japan to attend the enthronement ceremony of Emperor Naruhito.
- 22 Oct FS announced the third package of measures, costing about \$2 billion in total, to support enterprises and safeguard jobs, particularly the hard-hit sectors.
- 24 Oct Hong Kong's global ranking in the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 Report moved up one place to the third, re-affirming Hong Kong's position as one of the world's easiest places to do business.
- 25 Oct-1 Nov FS led a fintech delegation to visit London, the United Kingdom (UK) to promote financial innovation ties between Hong Kong and London. FS also met with government officials and Members of Parliament, as well as members of the business sector, to brief them on the latest developments of Hong Kong. FS also addressed the Hong Kong Dinner in London, organised by the HKTDC, as well as a luncheon hosted by the Hong Kong Association.
- 28 Oct Companies with weighted voting rights structure as listed in Hong Kong under the new listing regime of the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited were included as eligible securities under the Southbound Trading of Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect and Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect upon fulfilment of certain prescribed criteria.
- 31 Oct The Government released the advance estimates on GDP for the third quarter of 2019. According to the advance estimates, GDP contracted by 2.9% in real terms in the third quarter of 2019 from a year earlier, marking the first year-on-year contraction for an individual quarter since the Great Recession of 2009. Domestic demand worsened significantly.
- In accordance with the Open Application Programming Interface (API) framework published by the HKMA, 20 retail banks launched Phases I and II Open APIs as scheduled. In January, over 500 Phase I Open APIs were launched, covering information of deposits, loans, insurance, investments, and other banking products and services. In October, more than 300 Phase II Open APIs were launched, covering deposits, loans, insurance, and investments to support applications for banking products and services.
- 31 Oct-5 Nov CE visited Shanghai and Nanjing, Jiangsu to meet with Mainland officials and attend various events, including the opening of "Festival Hong Kong 2019 – A Cultural Extravaganza@Shanghai", the 2nd "Jiangsu-Hong Kong summit on Interconnected Development", and the 2nd "China International Import Expo".
- 1 Nov The first ever Bank for International Settlements (BIS) Innovation Hub Centre in the globe commenced operation in Hong Kong, an initiative as announced by the BIS in June to foster international collaboration on innovative financial technology within the central banking community.

- 5-7 Nov CE visited Beijing to meet the Vice Premier of the State Council, Mr Han Zheng, and to attend the meeting of the Leading Group in Beijing. CE announced sixteen policy measures agreed by the Leading Group after the meeting. The measures can be broadly grouped under three categories, namely (i) measures benefiting members of the public; (ii) measures facilitating the development of professional services in the Mainland cities of the GBA; and (iii) measures supporting the development of Hong Kong into an international innovation and technology hub.
- Following the plenary meeting of the Leading Group, an announcement was made on exploring the establishment of a cross-boundary wealth management connect scheme. The HKMA would engage the Mainland authorities and the industry to formulate the implementation details.
- 6 Nov Hong Kong Fintech Week 2019, an annual Fintech flagship event, attracted over 12 000 attendees across the globe and 250 world class speakers from 28 economies. On the opening day of the main conference, the HKMA announced a series of initiatives aimed to foster the fintech ecosystem in Hong Kong.
- The SFC announced a new voluntary regulatory framework for licensing virtual asset trading platforms under its existing powers.
- 7 Nov The PBoC issued in Hong Kong a total of RMB30 billion RMB Bills with tenors of three months and one year.
- 15 Nov The Government released the revised GDP figures for the third quarter of 2019. The Hong Kong economy contracted by 2.9% over a year earlier, marking its first year-on-year decline since the Great Recession of 2009. Total exports of goods registered an enlarged year-on-year decline, while exports of services deteriorated sharply. Domestic demand worsened significantly. The labour market showed some easing, while consumer price inflation went up amid surging pork prices.
- In the November review of economic forecasts, the forecast real GDP growth for 2019 as a whole was revised to -1.3%. This would be the first annual decline since 2009. The forecast rates of underlying and headline consumer price inflation for 2019 as a whole were revised to 3.0% and 2.9% respectively.
- 17-23 Nov The Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board organised the fourth edition of the Hong Kong Maritime Week. The Week comprised 37 activities staged by over 40 local and international organisations, attracting around 5 500 representatives from overseas and local maritime and port stakeholders, students and members of the general public. Among the various events, a launching ceremony was held on 21 November to celebrate the establishment of International Chamber of Shipping's China Liaison Office in Hong Kong, which is the organisation's first-ever overseas office outside its London headquarters since its inception in 1921.
- 19 Nov The CEDB, the SASAC and the Hong Kong Chinese Enterprises Association jointly held the "Belt and Road: Hong Kong-IN" Sharing Session on Financial Services and Business Growth. About 200 representatives from stated-owned enterprises, Hong Kong enterprises, chambers as well as professional services sector carried out exchanges on how the city's unique advantages and successful experiences can support enterprises in respect of Belt and Road financing and opening up Belt and Road markets.

- 19-20 Nov The Government and the HKTDC jointly hosted the Ninth Asian Logistics and Maritime Conference, attracting about 2 000 business leaders and industry practitioners from over 20 countries and regions.
- 21 Nov The Mainland and Hong Kong Economic and Trade Co-operation Committee, jointly convened by FS and the Vice Minister of Commerce, held its second meeting. Various issues including the future directions in amending and implementing the CEPA, advancing Hong Kong's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, jointly promoting the development of the GBA, supporting Hong Kong in regional economic co-operation and strengthening bilateral trade and economic exchanges were discussed at the meeting.
- Hong Kong and the Mainland signed an agreement to amend the Agreement on Trade in Services under CEPA to further liberalise trade in services between the two places.
- 22 Nov The HKMA hosted the first AML/CFT RegTech Forum, which gathered various stakeholders in Hong Kong's AML/CFT regime and was attended by around 400 representatives. Participants shared insights in grasping opportunities for the use of innovative technology to enhance the efficiency of both banks and the wider AML/CFT ecosystem.
- 25 Nov Hong Kong and Macao signed an arrangement for the elimination of double taxation with respect to taxes on income and the prevention of tax evasion and avoidance.
- 27 Nov The MoF issued in Hong Kong a total of RMB5 billion RMB Sovereign Bonds of the Central People's Government with tenors of two and five years.
- The MoF announced the issuance of US dollar sovereign bonds totalling US\$6 billion, with tenors of three to twenty years, in Hong Kong.
- 28 Nov The 13th annual Structured Dialogue meeting between the HKSAR Government and the EU was held in Hong Kong. The two sides discussed a wide range of subjects and identified areas for further co-operation. The meeting comprehensively reviewed all aspects of co-operation, and gave further impetus to fostering closer relationship.
- 28-29 Nov CE visited Bangkok, Thailand to meet with senior officials of Thailand and sign a MoU with the Government of Thailand on strengthening of economic relations, covering co-operation in areas including trade and investment, enterprise partnerships, creative industries, financial services, technology start-ups and enterprises, and human resource development. In particular, the two sides agreed to commence exploratory talks on negotiating a Hong Kong, China-Thailand FTA with a view to establishing the work plan for negotiations by 2021, and to review and upgrade the IPPA signed in 2005.
- 29 Nov The extension of Terminal 1 at Hong Kong International Airport commenced operation.
- 2-6 Dec The first Belt and Road Joint Conference Policy Exchange and Capacity Building Programme was conducted in Hong Kong. 15 representatives of 11 Mainland ministries / agencies participated at the Programme.

- 4 Dec The IMF released a Concluding Statement on its assessment of Hong Kong's economic and financial positions, following the 2019 Article IV Consultation with the HKSAR. The IMF commended the resilience of Hong Kong's financial system and LERS despite a slowing economy. It assessed that Hong Kong had strong buffers to address cyclical and structural challenges, including sizeable foreign exchange reserves, a large net international investment position, banks' strong capital and liquidity buffers at levels well above international standards, and large fiscal reserves. The Mission also reaffirmed the IMF's support for the LERS.
- FS announced the fourth package of measures, costing a total of over \$4 billion, to further support enterprises and employment.
- 9 Dec The MPFA issued the Request for Proposal for the eMPF Platform. The eMPF Platform is a user-centric common electronic platform to facilitate the standardization, streamlining and automation of MPF scheme administration processes, with a view to maximizing operational efficiency to create room for fee reduction and a predominantly paperless MPF experience.
- 10 Dec The IA held its annual flagship event, the Asian Insurance Forum 2019. Under the theme of "Connectivity and Innovation – The Key to Competitiveness and Inclusiveness", international and local financial regulators, industry leaders and academics engaged in high-level discussions on topics including the Belt and Road Initiative, the GBA development and Insurtech innovations. The event attracted more than 500 participants.
- 13 Dec The Commission on Poverty announced the updated poverty line and poverty situation in Hong Kong in 2018. In 2018, the population had aged faster and offset the positive impact brought about by favourable economic and employment conditions, as well as the Government's enhanced efforts in poverty alleviation. After recurrent cash policy intervention, the poverty rate in 2018 was 14.9%, up slightly by 0.2 percentage point from 2017, and the size of the poor population was 1 024 300 persons. If non-cash in-kind intervention (notably public housing benefits) was also included, the poverty rate would be 10.6% and the poor population stood at 730 000 persons.
- 14-17 Dec CE visited Beijing to brief state leaders on the latest economic, social and political situation of Hong Kong.
- 16 Dec The HKMCI announced that the 90% Guarantee Product under the SFGS started receiving applications. The 90% Guarantee Product aims to provide additional support to smaller-sized enterprises, businesses with relatively less operating experience, as well as professionals seeking to set up their own practices, to obtain financing.
- 18 Dec The Government announced the Long Term Housing Strategy Annual Progress Report 2019. Based on the latest projection, the total housing supply target for the 10-year period from 2020-21 to 2029-30 was 430 000 units, with the public/ private split of new housing supply maintaining at 70:30. Accordingly, the public housing supply target was 301 000 units, while the private housing supply target was 129 000 units.

- 19 Dec The Government launched a new patent system which essentially involves the introduction of an original grant patent (OGP) system to provide a direct route for seeking standard patent protection in Hong Kong, as an alternative to the "re-registration" route. The OGP system seeks to enhance the local patent protection regime and facilitate the development of innovation and technology in Hong Kong.
- 19-20 Dec CE visited Macao to attend the 20th Anniversary Celebration of Macao's Return to the Motherland and the Inauguration Ceremony of the Fifth-term Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region.
- 20 Dec The PBoC issued in Hong Kong RMB10 billion RMB Bills with tenor of six months
- 27 Dec The HA launched the Sale of GSH Flats 2019 for the pre-sale of about 3 700 flats in Chai Wan and Tsing Yi.
- 30 Dec The IMF published a Staff Report on the 2019 Article IV consultation with the HKSAR. The IMF commended the resilience of Hong Kong's financial system and the LERS despite a slowing economy. It assessed that Hong Kong had strong buffers to address cyclical and structural challenges, and its solid regulatory framework and prudential supervision would help safeguard financial stability. The IMF also reaffirmed its support for the LERS as an anchor of economic and financial stability for Hong Kong.