

## Uneasy calm in Hong Kong ahead of polls

Around 4.1 million people are enrolled to vote in the territory for 452 district council seats

REUTERS  
HONG KONG

An uneasy calm settled over Hong Kong on Saturday as the city prepared to go to the polls for local elections seen as a referendum on months of anti-government protests, after weeks of especially violent clashes between police and demonstrators.

On the grounds of the besieged Polytechnic University on the Kowloon peninsula, a dwindling number of protesters desperately sought a way out and others vowed not to surrender, days after some of the worst violence since anti-government demonstrations escalated in June.

### 'No end in sight'

One student protester who escaped the police cordon around the university said on Saturday that he had not expected the elections to go ahead. "I don't feel optimistic about the outcome at all," he said, predicting that the discontent will only escalate. "I cannot see the end in sight."

The city is under tight security as a record 1,104 people gear up to run for 452 district council seats in



**Campaning amidst tension:** Candidates and members of a Hong Kong party canvassing for votes outside a mall on Saturday. •AP

Sunday's elections. A record 4.1 million Hong Kong people, from a population of 7.4 million, have enrolled to vote, spurred in part by registration campaigns during months of protests.

For the first time, riot police will guard all polling stations in the city and almost all officers in the 31,000-strong force will be on duty, the *South China Morning*

*Post* reported on Friday, citing a senior police source. The source told the newspaper that the officers would seek to minimise their presence to avoid worrying voters.

Asked about the report, the police department would say only that it had been liaising with other departments to provide assistance, arrange "appropriate police force", and ensure

that the election was carried out smoothly and in an orderly manner.

### PLA soldiers hold drills

At a Chinese People's Liberation Army barracks that borders Polytechnic University, meanwhile, dozens of soldiers in riot gear were seen practising drills, according to a Reuters witness. The soldiers carried shields and wore helmets with face

guards, and were glimpsed from a high building marching in formation on an inner parade ground not visible from the road.

PLA soldiers have not publicly engaged in anti-riot efforts on the streets of Hong Kong but such drills suggest a high degree of preparedness amid the current protests.

Both Chinese and Hong Kong leaders have repeatedly said that Hong Kong police can handle the situation but Beijing has more than doubled the number of troops in the city since late August, with up to 12,000 on bases scattered across the territory.

The protests snowballed from June after years of resentment over what many residents see as Chinese meddling in freedoms promised to Hong Kong when the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Beijing has said it is committed to the "one country, two systems" formula by which Hong Kong is governed. It denies meddling in the affairs of Hong Kong, an Asian financial hub, and accuses foreign governments of stirring up trouble.

## U.S. judge awards \$180 million to reporter held captive by Iran

Rezaian spent 544 days in captivity over espionage charges

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI

A U.S. federal judge has awarded a *Washington Post* journalist and his family nearly \$180 million in their lawsuit against Iran over his 544 days in captivity and torture while being held on internationally criticised espionage charges.

The order in the case filed by Jason Rezaian comes nearly a week after Iranian officials shut down its Internet and launched a security crackdown on protesters angered by government-set gasoline prices sharply rising. As Internet access has slowly trickled back on, the U.S. government sanctioned Iran's Telecommunications Minister in response to the internet shutdown.

U.S. District Judge Richard J. Leon in Washington entered the judgment late on Friday in Mr. Rezaian's case, describing how authorities in Iran denied the journalist sleep, medical care and abused him during his imprisonment. "Iran seized Jason, threatened to kill Jason, and did so with the goal of compelling the United



Jason Rezaian at the UN headquarters. •AP

States to free Iranian prisoners as a condition of Jason's release," Judge Leon said in his ruling. The judge later added: "Holding a man hostage and torturing him to gain leverage in negotiations with the United States is outrageous, deserving of punishment and surely in need of deterrence." Iran never responded to the lawsuit despite it being handed over to the government by the Swiss Embassy in Tehran, which oversees U.S. interests in the country.

### Arrested in 2014

Mr. Rezaian's case began with his 2014 gunpoint arrest alongside his wife Yeganeh Salehi.

Despite being an accredited journalist for *The Post*

with permission to live and work in Iran, Mr. Rezaian was taken to Tehran's Evin prison and later convicted in a closed trial before a Revolutionary Court on still-unexplained espionage charges. It remains unclear how and if the money will be paid. It could come from the U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund, which has distributed funds to those held and affected by Iran's 1979 student takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and subsequent hostage crisis. Mr. Rezaian named Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, this year designated as a terrorist organisation by the Trump administration, as a defendant in the case. The order comes a week after the November 15 gasoline price hike, which sparked demonstrations that rapidly turned violent, seeing gas stations, banks and stores burned to the ground.

Amnesty International said it believes the unrest and the crackdown killed at least 106 people. Iran disputes that figure without offering its own.

## Chinese spy defected to Australia with trove of intelligence: report

He confessed to conducting espionage operations in Taiwan and Hong Kong

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SYDNEY

A Chinese spy has defected to Australia with a trove of intelligence on China's political interference operations in Hong Kong, Taiwan and elsewhere, according to a media report on Saturday.

The Nine network news-

papers said the defector, named as Wang "William" Liqiang, had given Australia's counter-espionage agency the identities of China's senior military intelligence officers in Hong Kong and provided details of how they funded and conducted operations in Hong Kong, Taiwan

and Australia. Mr. Wang said he was personally involved in infiltration and disruption operations in all three territories, according to the report, published in Nine's *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* newspapers.

Mr. Wang "revealed in granular detail" how Beijing covertly controls listed companies to fund intelligence operations, including the surveillance and profiling of

dissidents and the co-opting of media organisations, the report stated. Mr. Wang is currently living in Sydney with his wife and infant son on a tourist visa and has requested political asylum, it said. Mr. Wang said in an interview to be aired Sunday night on Nine's TV news programme 60 Minutes that he would be executed if he returned to China.

According to the news organisation, Mr. Wang gave a sworn statement to the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in October saying: "I have personally been involved and participated in a series of espionage activities".

This allegedly included infiltrating Taiwan under an assumed identity and with a South Korean passport to run local operatives in efforts to meddle in 2018 municipal elections and presidential polls due next year.

He said the operation used local media executives to influence the election campaigns and defeat candidates seen as hostile to Beijing.

It was his fear of being discovered by Taiwan's counter-espionage authorities working to influence next year's elections that led Mr. Wang to seek asylum in Australia, he reportedly said.

## Giuliani was in contact with Pompeo over Ukraine

New documents reveal paper trail

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

Documents released late on Friday show U.S. President Donald Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani was in contact with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the months before the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine was abruptly recalled.

The State Department released the documents to the group American Oversight in response to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit. They show that Mr. Pompeo talked with Mr. Giuliani on March 26 and March 29.

Austin Evers, executive director of American Oversight, said the documents reveal "a clear paper trail from Rudy Giuliani to the Oval Office to Secretary Pompeo to facilitate Mr. Giuliani's smear campaign against a U.S. Ambassador."

Last week, former Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch told House impeachment investigators she felt "kneecapped" by a "smear campaign" Mr. Giuliani led against her. She was withdrawn from her post in Ukraine in May.

The documents released on Friday also include a report, written on Trump hotel stationery, that appears to summarise a January 23, 2019, interview with Ukraine's former Prosecutor



Rudy Giuliani. •REUTERS

General, Victor Shokin. The summary says Mr. Giuliani and two business associates, Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, were present.

Mr. Parnas and Mr. Fruman were arrested last month on a four-count indictment. The men had key roles in Mr. Giuliani's efforts to launch a Ukrainian corruption investigation against Democratic presidential contender Joe Biden and his son Hunter. In the document, Mr. Shokin claims he was removed from his position under pressure from Mr. Biden.

A second memo appears to be a summary of an interview with Yuri Lutsenko, also a former Prosecutor General of Ukraine, conducted in the presence of Mr. Giuliani, Mr. Parnas and Mr. Fruman. Mr. Lutsenko is quoted raising questions about compensation that Hunter Biden received from the Ukrainian oil company Burisma.

## Greta to guest-edit BBC radio news programme

It will go on air in December

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Teenage Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg will guest-edit BBC radio's main daily current affairs programme in December, the broadcaster announced Saturday. The 16-year-old climate change campaigner will be one of five prominent personalities invited to take over the "Today" programme between Christmas and New Year, the British Broadcasting Corporation said.

Ms. Thunberg will speak to the world's leading climate change figures and hear from frontline activists, said the BBC.

The other four guest editors will be Supreme Court



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. •AFP

president Brenda Hale, transvestite potter Grayson Perry, poet performer George the Poet and Charles Moore, the former editor of *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper. Previous guest editors have included Stephen Hawking, Prince Harry, and Angelina Jolie.

## Top U.S. diplomat questions viability of CPEC

The project doesn't give benefits to young Pakistani people, says Alice Wells

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

Strongly criticising China's international development projects and lending practices under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Alice Wells, the U.S.'s top diplomat for South and Central Asia, has questioned the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), on its commercial viability.

Ms. Wells also made a pitch for the U.S. model of private-sector led development. "One of the greatest beneficiaries of that U.S.-led system of international rules and norms has undoubtedly been the Chinese people," said Ms. Wells, speaking at the Wilson Center, a Washington DC-based think tank, on Thursday afternoon.

China, as per Ms. Wells, had benefited when U.S., European and Japanese companies opened shop there when Deng Xiaoping announced the 'open door policy' in 1978 but that China had not done the same in Pakistan. "CPEC doesn't give Pakistani young people, it doesn't give Pakistani companies the same opportunities that the Chinese themselves enjoyed decades ago. And that's one of the reasons why Pakistan's trade relationship with the People's Republic remains so lopsided," she said, criticising aspects of the CPEC on cost, debt, transparency and jobs.

Ms. Wells said there were reasons to "question the Chinese Communist Party's largesse" based on the BRI experience and that China offers financing, usually loans, but is not a member of the Paris Club, an informal group of creditor countries that discusses solutions to debtor country issues. China also does not report on its overall lending despite being the largest lender globally, Ms Wells said. The lack of transparency was a means to hide risks to countries that



Alice Wells, the U.S.'s top diplomat for South and Central Asia. •AFP

the Paris Club, an informal group of creditor countries that discusses solutions to debtor country issues. China also does not report on its overall lending despite being the largest lender globally, Ms Wells said. The lack of transparency was a means to hide risks to countries that

borrowed from China to finance the development projects, as per Ms Wells.

The case of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka and a runway in the Maldives were among the projects cited as examples of China financing projects of questionable commercial viability, resulting in unsustainable debt.

Ms Wells described the first ministerial meeting of the Quad - a group comprised of India, the U.S., Australia and Japan - as "a real strong manifestation of our seriousness and being able to provide realistic alternatives for countries looking for infrastructure". The Foreign Ministers of the four countries met in New York at the end of September along the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session.

## SUDOKU

	9	1				5		
	2					3	9	6
				8		1		
		6		7	5	2		9
9				4				1
2		3	9	6		8		
	8		3					
3	6	7						8
		9				6	2	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	2	3	5	1	4	6	8	9
8	9	5	7	2	6	4	1	3
6	1	4	8	3	9	2	7	5
5	4	1	9	6	8	3	2	7
9	8	7	2	4	3	1	5	6
2	3	6	1	5	7	9	4	8
4	5	9	6	8	1	7	3	2
3	7	8	4	9	2	5	6	1
1	6	2	3	7	5	8	9	4

## Bloomberg buys record amount of ads

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a likely 2020 presidential candidate, plans to launch a \$31 million television advertising campaign on Monday.

The billionaire has purchased a total of \$31 million in advertising inserts, according to the ad tracking firm Advertising Analytics, the largest sum ever spent by a U.S. presidential candidate.

Senator Bernie Sanders attacked the decision on Friday, tweeting he was "disgusted by the idea that Michael Bloomberg or any billionaire thinks they can circumvent the political process and spend tens of millions of dollars to buy elections".

Mr. Bloomberg registered on Thursday with the U.S. Federal Election Commission - another step towards a run at the White House.

## Lula vows to 'defend Brazilian people'

Brazil's ex-President says he will make life hell for those who unjustly jailed him

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
SAO PAULO

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, freshly out of jail, vowed to fight Brazil's far-right government and the forces he says unjustly incarcerated him, saying he would make "their lives hell."

"They don't know what it is to face a 74-year-old passionate man," the former President, who governed Brazil from 2003 to 2010, and became one of the world's most popular politicians before being ensnared in corruption scandals, told supporters late on Friday.

Mr. Lula was the star of the conference of his Workers' Party, which started on Friday in São Paulo. Many still think he could be the party's standard-bearer once again in 2022 - though he is currently barred from seeking office due to a corruption conviction.

Mr. Lula left jail earlier this month after 19 months in a cell when the Supreme Court ruled that a person



**Still popular:** Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva being carried by supporters in Sao Bernardo do Campo on Saturday. •AP

can be imprisoned only after all the appeals have been exhausted.

### 'Feel much stronger'

"Today I feel much stronger than the day I surrendered to the federal police," he said on Friday night. "I am more willing to fight for this country than in any other moment. You will see me travelling around this country, not only making their lives hell, but also defending the Brazilian people who don't

we will see (if he will run), in case he is eligible," he said. Mr. Lula is hoping that the Supreme Court will deliver a ruling that could cancel the cases against him - and such a ruling would legally open the path to another presidential run.

Many on the left still see him as the only politician who can today organise the opposition to Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's current far-right President. The Workers' Party remains the biggest party in the lower house, with 54 seats. But even under Mr. Lula, it required alliances with smaller parties to govern.

Political analyst Ffbio Kerche, at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro state, said Mr. Lula has already sent signals he would try to reach beyond the party, to the centre and centre right, possibly building a broader democratic front. On Friday, Mr. Lula indirectly acknowledged this, saying stopping Mr. Bolsonaro "is not a task for a single party."

## ELSEWHERE



### Amazon files suit over contract to Microsoft

Amazon.com Inc filed a lawsuit in a federal U.S. court on Friday contesting the U.S. Defense Department's decision last month to award a Pentagon cloud computing contract worth up to \$10 billion to rival bidder Microsoft Corp. •REUTERS

### U.S. the biggest source of instability: China

BEIJING The U.S. is the world's biggest source of instability and its politicians are baselessly smearing China, the Chinese government's top diplomat Wang Yi said on Saturday. Meeting Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok on the sidelines of a G20 Foreign Ministers meeting in the Japanese city of Nagoya, Mr. Wang hit out against the U.S.'s "unilateralism and protectionism". •REUTERS