

**HONG KONG IN 2018: RELATIVE CALM
AND GETTING DOWN TO WORK**

LIM Tai Wei

EAI Background Brief No. 1415

Date of Publication: 18 December 2018

Executive Summary

1. After four tumultuous years, Hong Kong in 2018 has been relatively uneventful and calm, especially under the watch of Chief Executive Carrie Lam. Hong Kong society continues to polarise, albeit in a mostly peaceful and legal manner.
2. The island territory was hit by one of the biggest typhoons in history, causing environmentalists, pro-green politicians and concerned intellectuals to voice their concerns about constructing the artificial island project, East Lantau Metropolis Plan. The Plan is scheduled to start work in 2025.
3. Pro-East Lantau Metropolis Plan forces argue that contemporary design and technologies have coping mechanisms to handle these Mother Nature exigencies.
4. The *raison d'être* for the West Kowloon station is to connect Hong Kong with the overland High Speed Rail system that is part of the overland component of the Belt and Road Initiative.
5. The US\$10 billion railway line will link the most dynamic cities in southern China, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen (the unofficial 'Silicon Valley' of China).
6. The West Kowloon station has a one-stop customs and immigration system that can process immigration procedures for those entering/departing from Hong Kong and China.
7. Another big 2018 issue in Hong Kong is the state of mass media freedom in the Special Administrative Region (SAR). This discussion was sparked off by the visa rejection of a *Financial Times* (FT) editor/journalist to Hong Kong. This denial made international news headlines as it was unprecedented in the SAR.
8. Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) was under attack prior to entry ban, as the governments of both Beijing and Hong Kong berated the FCC for allowing a pro-Hong Kong independence advocate (Andy Chan) to speak at its club on 14 August

2018. FT's Victor Mallet was the acting president of FCC when the invitation was issued to Chan.

9. Chan's party was considered to be in contravention of Hong Kong's national security. Pro-Beijing lawmakers are quick to condemn Chan's political aspirations. He has also been labelled as "Public Enemy No. 1" by some Hong Kong media.
10. Pro-government newbie to Hong Kong politics Chan Hoi-yan surprised observers by quickly disposing of two experienced pan-democracy candidates in the by-election for the Kowloon West seat in the Hong Kong legislature. There are perceptions that Chan won because of the support from the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong.