

Hong Kong falls out of top 30 in annual liveability rankings (SCMP By Ng Kang-chung 23 January, 2015)

Hong Kong has slipped out of a league table of the world's top 30 most liveable cities amid tense political disputes over the city's upcoming electoral reforms. The city ranked 33rd in the world this year, a plunge of 16 places from 17th last year, according to findings released by human resources consultancy ECA International.

ECA rated Singapore as the world's most liveable location for the 16th consecutive year.

The agency attributed Hong Kong's fall mainly to the Occupy protests, which paralysed traffic in several parts of downtown areas for 79 days. Poor air quality in the city was also a concern, it said.

ECA's regional director of Asia, Lee Quane, said Hong Kong's ranking could slip even further if the political tensions remained. "Hong Kong's sociopolitical score worsened as a result of the unprecedented unrest there in recent months and the restrictions placed on movement," Quane said.

"We don't know whether or not there is going to be another mass protest. At the moment, there is what we call political uncertainty."

Quane agreed that cities with freer democracy would find it easier to attract talent in the long term but maintained that his agency's study was not to judge whether the Occupy Central movement was good or bad. "Overall, Hong Kong does still remain one of the easier places in the world for an outsider to adjust to living and working," Quane said.

The 79-day sit-ins ended after the last protesters were cleared in the middle of last month.

Organisers had originally called for some 10,000 people to block streets in Central on October 1 last year in protest against Beijing's refusal to allow Hong Kong what they consider "genuine universal suffrage" in the 2017 chief executive election. Protesters blocked streets in Admiralty, Causeway Bay and Mong Kok, paralysing traffic for more than two months.

The ECA research, undertaken during the second half of last year, covers 450 cities around the world. Ten factors - such as health risks, air pollution, infrastructure and sociopolitical tensions - are taken into account to measure a city's liveability.

Highlights of the findings show that Shanghai ranks 110th globally but is the most liveable city on the mainland. Beijing ranks 122nd. Hong Kong took eighth place in the world in the 2010 ranking.

Within Asia, Hong Kong ranks sixth, after Singapore and four Japanese cities - Osaka, Nagoya, Tokyo and Yokohama. In Thailand, last year's coup drove down the rankings of Bangkok and Chiang Mai. The Thai cities shared the 112th spot this year, down from a shared 108th a year ago.

The survey, released annually, serves as a reference for multinational companies to determine whether their employees should need additional "location allowances" when transferring to these cities.

Reading & Writing Exercise

Date: _____

Class: S3 () Name: _____

Class No.: _____

Choose one of the following and write about 200 words.

(1) You have read this article and agree / disagree strongly with the finding that Hong Kong has fallen out of the top 30 most liveable cities in the world. Write a response letter to the editor. You should express your emotions clearly, strongly and courteously.

(2) You are the Hong Kong representative at an international youth conference. All representatives have to give a talk at the opening ceremony presenting their city to other representatives. Write the speech. Pay attention to awareness of audience.