

FREE HONG KONG NEWS DIGEST

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Silencing Blank votes

Authorities will make organising blank votes illegal

Encouraging people to boycott or cast blank ballots can face jail term up to 3 years in new law. Authorities fear to miss every pro-Beijing vote.

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National Security Law Trials

Gaining Chinese characteristics

No jury, solitary confinement at a psychiatric center, suspected unauthorised representation, etc. -- the two first National Security Law trials resemble how defendants are treated in mainland China.

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“Yellow economy”: The last battlefield for democracy

Hongkongers flock to support a pro-democracy retail chain raided for mislabelled goods. Queuing up to support shops seems to be the last resort for protesting in Hong Kong.

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Dear friends,

Thank you for your continued interest in the Hong Kong situation. We have summarised local and international news from the first half of April we found relevant. A list of important dates until June has been provided at the end of the news digest.

ELECTIONS

SILENCING BLANK VOTES

Authorities will make organising blank votes illegal

POLITICAL CANDIDATES' ENTIRE PAST TO BE VETTED to ensure loyalty to Beijing

Candidates for public office will have their entire history searched and vetted before potential approval to step into office, said Hong Kong's Justice Secretary Teresa Cheng, after China announced a radical overhaul to ensure only "patriots" run the city. Cheng stated there would be no restrictions on their searches, meaning that anything a potential candidate has ever said or done, in any capacity, will possibly affect their chances of gaining political power. [\[HKFP\]](#)

Casting blank votes was one of the ways to protest in Hong Kong, to show discontent with the electoral system or distrust of all candidates. With the series of electoral reform, it is not difficult to see mass boycotts of voting or blank votes. Despite the assertion of public support, officials' suggestions show their fear of a low support rate.

Carrie Lam announced that the Hong Kong government will amend Election Ordinance to make it illegal to encourage others to boycott or cast blank votes, with jail terms of up to 3 years. [\[Asia Times\]](#)

The announcement came after Erick Tsang, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, said the government was considering the issue of blank votes, and would make any necessary arrangements. Pro-Beijing lawmaker Paul Tse said during an RTHK programme that urging Hongkongers to cast blank votes in protest over Beijing's new electoral overhaul for the city may classify as "inciting subversion" under the security law. [\[HKFP\]](#)

Commentator Stephen Vines commented, "they are now trying to eliminate non-overt acts of defiance because they want the flame of liberty to be extinguished in its entirety." [\[HKFP\]](#)

UPDATES ON ELECTORAL REFORM ▶

On 30 March, Beijing amended the election methods stated in Annex I and II of Hong Kong's Basic Law [Full text of amended [Annex I](#) & [Annex II](#)].

▶ Hundreds of new trade unions barred from LegCo Election

New provisions will ban votes from newly formed associations. Individuals can vote in the elections for only nine Functional Constituency (FC) seats, down from 23. Those nine FCs include pro-establishment strongholds like the Heung Yee Kuk (a statutory advisory body representing the New Territories) and a new FC consisting of members of national organizations, as well as traditionally pro-democracy FCs, like law and accountancy. [[NPC observer](#)]

Other FCs will be elected by eligible corporate voters including institutions, organisations, associations or enterprises which are representative and specified by law. The new provision states that: '...an association or enterprise may become a corporate voter for a functional constituency only if it has been operating for not less than three years after acquiring relevant qualifications for that functional constituency.'

This means the 495 newly registered trade unions in 2020 (total 917 trade unions by 2019, statistics from [Hong Kong Labour Department](#)) will not be eligible for the coming LegCo election. Forming new trade unions was a protest tactic in 2019-2020. [[Reuters](#)]

▶ Shrunk ratio of directly-elected candidates in LegCo

The Hong Kong government will table a bill to LegCo. The bill reduces the ratio of directly-elected candidates in LegCo by decreasing from 35 to 20 seats, while the total seats are to be increased to 90. [[HK GOV](#)]

▶ Eight press associations disqualified from Election Committee

While the election committee will be increased from 1200 to 1500, eight news associations, including the Hong Kong Journalist Association and Hong Kong Press Photographers Association, have been taken out from the *Sports, Performing Arts, Culture and Publication FC* in the proposed bill. [[Stand News](#) (Chinese)] The updated eligible list for the FC is so far only available in Chinese [[HKGGOV](#)].

Election dates announced:

- **LegCo election:** 19 December 2021
- **Election Committee election** (for Chief Executive election): 19 September 2021
- **Chief Executive election:** 27 March 2022

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY & JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

VETERAN ACTIVISTS CONVICTED FOR 2019 PROTESTS

On 1 April, seven veteran pro-democracy activists were found guilty of organising and taking part in an unauthorized protest - a historic 1.7-million march of 18 Aug. 2019. Among the defendants were media tycoon Jimmy Lai, "Hong Kong's father of democracy" Martin Lee, and Lee Cheuk-yan, cofounder of Hong Kong Labour Party and leader of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions. The convicted (total nine, among which two pleaded guilty earlier) may face up to five years in prison. The International Commission of Jurists called the conviction an attack on Hong Kong's human rights and the rule of law. The world's largest trade union organization, the International Trade Union Confederation, has condemned the conviction of Lee Cheuk-yan and urged the government to "respect their obligations under the international labour and human rights treaties they have ratified" and release all activists. Diplomats from the EU, Germany, Sweden, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand attended the hearing. [[RTHK](#), [SCMP](#), [Bloomberg](#), [ICJ](#), [ITUC](#)]

A week later on 7 April, Jimmy Lai, Lee Cheuk-yan, and another pro-democracy veteran Yeung Sum pleaded guilty to charges of participating in the unauthorized citywide protest of 31 Aug. 2019 - the same protest where policemen attacked civilians at Prince Edward station. "I plead guilty, but I've done no wrong in affirming the rights of people to peaceful procession and I believe history will absolve me," Lee said. [[Reuters](#), [Guardian](#)].

Sentencing for both cases is scheduled on 16 April 2021.

Joshua Wong jailed for four months for 2019 protest

Joshua Wong, who is among 47 people charged under the national security law, was sentenced to **four months in jail** on 13 April for unauthorized assembly and violating an anti-mask law during a protest in October 2019. Wong had pleaded guilty to both charges. Hong Kong court ruled mask ban constitutional for public meetings in December 2020. [[Reuters](#) [1](#), [2](#)]

“
I plead guilty, but I've
done no wrong ... history
will absolve me.

- Lee Cheuk-yan
(co-founder of Hong Kong Labour Party)

NATIONAL SECURITY LAW TRIALS

gaining Chinese characteristics

In the past two weeks, two NSL charged cases have appeared at court. The custody conditions and trial arrangement for the charged individuals arouse concerns about defendants' rights and fair trials.

Jury exclusion ▼

Tong Ying-kit, the first person charged under NSL, has applied for judicial review on jury exclusion, arguing that the Department of Justice's decision to prosecute without a jury, citing Article 46 of the security law (concerning 'personal safety' of jurors and their family) lacked a demonstrable basis. Tong was charged with acts of terrorism and inciting secession on 1 July 2020, the day after the security law was passed. He was accused of riding a motorcycle displaying the slogan 'Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times' into three policemen. Tong will be tried by three hand-picked national security law judges in late June. [[SCMP](#)]

Unknown whereabouts, solitary confinement at psychiatric center, and unauthorised representation ▼

Activist Andy Li, among the 12 youths abducted by the Chinese coast guard in August 2020, finished his seven-month imprisonment in China for 'illegal border crossing' and was returned to Hong Kong in March. Immediately upon returning, he was faced with serious criminal charges, including "colluding with foreign powers" under the National Security Law.

Li's NSL case was first mentioned in court on 31 March, but proceeded without his presence due to a compulsory quarantine. He was represented by barrister Lawrence Law, who was not arranged by Andy's family. On 7 April, a Twitter account that was set up to help find Li (@andy_is_missing) finally posted that Li had become reachable.

Li's whereabouts and custody conditions since his arrival in Hong Kong had been unknown for days, even to his family. It was reported that he was being held in solitary confinement at the notorious Siu Lam Psychiatric Center, but this could not be verified.

Over 100 Parliamentarians from 18 legislatures have called for Li's release and have committed to making urgent representations on his behalf to their respective governments. [[IPAC](#), [SMH](#), [HKFP](#)]

More arrests and charges...

Former lawmakers charged over interference of LegCo panel election

Two former Democratic Party members, **Andrew Wan** and **Helena Wong**, were arrested for suspected interference in the election of the Chairman of the Panel on Environmental Affairs of the Legislative Council in 2020. Wan and Wong are among the 47 activists who have been charged over secession under NSL (#NSL47). Wan is currently being remanded, whereas Wong was granted bail but has been re-arrested for “contempt”. Their case would first appear in court on 13 April. [[Standard](#), [Dim Sum Daily](#)]

Sedition charges

An administrator of a Telegram channel pleaded guilty to inciting violence and other criminal activities in 2019-- spreading hate speech, encouraging doxxing and assault against people supporting the government and police on Telegram. Sentencing is expected on 20 April. [[SCMP](#)]

Activist Tam Tak-chi (aka Fast-beat) is also facing sedition charges for uttering protest slogans 'Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times', 'Five demands, not one less', and 'Disband the police force'. [[HKFP](#)]

CIVIL FREEDOMS CONTINUE TO DECLINE

Press freedom

RTHK's award-winning programme *Hong Kong Connection* had a scheduled episode pulled last minute by its new editorial committee. The episode detailed issues faced by student unions in Hong Kong. This is the ninth case of censorship at RTHK since career bureaucrat Patrick Li joined the editorial board on 1 March. He replaced veteran journalist Leung Ka-wing as Director of Broadcasting, though Li has no previous journalistic or broadcasting experience. According to insider reports, at least five senior staff from the current affairs section have resigned. The remaining staff tell of a white terror regime in the organisation, where employees self-censor in order to comply with strict new guidelines. In addition, a recent statement from RTHK warned that the company has the power to recover the cost of production from the salaries of employees involved in cancelled projects. [HKFP [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#), [SCMP](#)]

Journalistic content can be searched and seized by national security police outside law governance, asserted the Department of Justice. After the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute was raided by police on 6 Jan., it has been made clear that in cases regarding the NSL, special warrants are not needed to seize journalistic material -- a legal precedent which can harm both the safety of journalists, as well as their sources. [[AppleDaily](#)]

The World Press Photo 2019 exhibition, which featured prize-winning journalistic photos of the Hong Kong protests, was held at a new private venue from 29 March - 10 April. The original host, the public Baptist University, pulled out three days prior to the event (formerly scheduled for 1 March) citing undisclosed "safety and security" concerns. It was not the first time that World Press Photo struggled to exhibit in "China". Further critique by pro-Beijing newspapers and politicians claim that art exhibitions are glorifying protest violence and in breach of the NSL. They called for increased scrutiny and censorship in the art-sphere, both public and private, in Hong Kong. [HKFP [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#)]

Human rights situation

Amnesty International criticised Beijing and the Hong Kong government heavily in their annual human rights report, stating that human rights were "greatly stifled" in Hong Kong. According to the report, freedoms previously enjoyed in Hong Kong suffered greatly last year, much under the pretence of national security and efforts to control the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Politics, the free press, education, and academics are all under immense pressure and scrutiny due to the intentional ambiguity of the NSL, Amnesty claimed. [[Amnesty International](#)]

Some human rights indexes have dropped Hong Kong as a separate measurement from China, claiming to do so in order to reflect its total absorption into the domain of the CCP. Meanwhile others are keeping it deliberately, saying that the unique history of Hong Kong warrants a recording and analysis of its fall down the ranking. [[CATO Institute](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Asia Nikkei](#)]

ECONOMY

Pro-Beijing party: China should acquire lands in HK

Jun-fei Wu, executive member of the newly established Bauhinia Party, wrote that the safety of “One Country” (in contrast to “Two Systems”), has been threatened by Hong Kong’s current land policy. He claimed that the policy is inadequate to tackle the land supply problem and had widened the gap between rich and poor. He suggested that the housing problems in Hong Kong could be solved within five years should the Central Government coordinate, citing the UK’s compulsory purchase order in 2012.

The Bauhinia Party was established in May 2020 and became active in December of the same year. Its main members have a strong Chinese background. Upon press inquiry, Charles Wong, one of the spokesperson, refused to confirm its participation in the coming LegCo election. [StandNews [\(1\)](#), [\(2\)](#) (Chinese)]

***“Yellow economy”*: the last battlefield for democracy**

Hundreds of shoppers in Hong Kong queued for days in front of stores to support a pro-democracy (‘yellow’) business, AbouThai, after it was seized for “mislabelled goods”.

Hong Kong customs reported it had seized US\$51,400 worth of goods at the outlets and warehouse of the pro-democracy retail household chain, stating that the packaging of products seized did not have bilingual labels. A staff member was arrested at the operation. Authorities said they would not rule out further arrests.

The retail chain is owned by Mike Lam King-nam, one of the 47 National Security Law defendants who have been convicted of ‘subverting the state power’ by participating in the unofficial primary election last year.

The queuing is a kind of display of solidarity and silent protest against the continued crackdown on freedom and democracy by authorities. Amid pandemic restrictions and the National Security Law, the support of the ‘yellow economy’, a pro-democracy economic circle, may be the only way left to protest.

[[SCMP](#), [HKFP](#)]

TRAVEL & EMIGRATION

MPF withdrawals hit a record HK\$1.7 billion

It has been reported that 8,100 Hong Kong residents, citing "permanent departure from Hong Kong" applied to withdraw a record HK\$1.7 billion from their mandatory provident fund (MPF) accounts in the third quarter last year - a surge of 72.6 percent quarter-on-quarter. On a yearly basis, the planned withdrawal amount rose by 21.9 percent. [[The Standard](#)]

UK launches £43m welcome programme for BN(O) arrivals

Further affirming its commitment to Hongkongers, the UK announced a £43 million welcome package for BN(O) passport holders looking to relocate. The Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) Integration Programme will help new arrivals adapt to life in Britain by providing support with housing, work and education. Welcome hubs will be established across the country to provide orientation and personal advice to the new arrivals, as well as tackle hate crime. A welcome pack with essential information is available on the government's website with a Cantonese translation. Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick, who spoke with four Hong Kong families through a video call, said that the programme will ensure BN(O) holders and their families have the "very best start as soon as they arrive, and support to help them find a home, schools for their children, opportunity and prosperity." [[GOV.UK](#), [SCMP](#)]

UK grants asylum to Nathan Law

Nathan Law has been granted political asylum in the UK, after arriving in July 2020 as Beijing imposed the national security law and placed him on a wanted list. "The fact that I am wanted under the national security law shows that I am exposed to severe political persecution and am unlikely to return to Hong Kong without risk," Law wrote. In a previous interview, Law revealed that he had already moved three times, and would "never" say that he is safe, even in London.

Law was born in Shenzhen, which makes him ineligible for the BN(O) passport. If he needs to renew his Hong Kong passport, he must go to a Chinese embassy. "Then I would be submitted to the authorities and might disappear." At the same time, he highlighted the plight of other Hongkongers seeking asylum in the UK, who might not have the same weight of evidence behind their claims. "To free more protesters from Beijing's authoritarian oppression, the Home Office could consider more comprehensive evidence."

China's foreign ministry called the asylum approval a "gross interference in Hong Kong's judiciary". Meanwhile, Britain has criticised China multiple times, for violating the Sino-British Joint Declaration with actions such as the imposition of NSL. [[Reuters](#), [HKFP](#), [NRC](#), [The Standard](#)]

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The fact that I am wanted under the national security law shows that I am exposed to severe political persecution and am unlikely to return to Hong Kong without risk.

- Nathan Law

UK & Australia keep accepting BN(O) for working holiday visa, Netherlands stops

In March, Hong Kong's government requested 14 consulates to stop accepting BN(O) passports in applications for the working holiday programme, in a move that enraged the UK. Britain and Australia have since declared that they will continue to recognize BN(O) passports for the programme. The US, while not having a working holiday scheme with Hong Kong, announced that BN(O) passports remain valid for visa and travel

purposes to the US. The Dutch embassy to Hong Kong responded to an enquiry that, for the working holiday scheme, mutual agreement between the two governments is needed in order to accept a non-HKSAR passport. Therefore, after the Hong Kong authorities announced that it will no longer recognize the BN(O), the Netherlands can no longer accept the passport for the working holiday visa. However, the Netherlands will continue to issue other visas for BN(O) holders. [[HKFP](#), [Independent](#), [Australian government](#), [Dutch government](#)]

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS ON CHINA

US legislation to counter Chinese influence and to support Hongkongers, Uyghurs, Taiwan

The US Senate introduced a draft of the "Strategic Competition Act of 2021", a legislation that would mandate measures to counter China's expanding influence by promoting human rights, combating disinformation, and providing security aid. The bill addresses support for democracy in Hong Kong and sanctions over the treatment of Uyghurs. It also calls for a stronger partnership with Taiwan. Taiwan's Foreign Ministry expressed thanks for the Senate's show of support, while the Chinese Foreign Ministry said that China "resolutely opposes" it. Also mentioned in the bill is the need to encourage allies to do more against China's "aggressive and assertive behavior", and a plan to counter its influence at US universities. The Foreign Relations Committee will vote on the bill on 21 April. [Reuters [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#)]

Japan tells China to stop crackdown on Hong Kong

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi called for better treatment of Uyghurs and a halt in the Chinese crackdown on Hong Kong during a 90-minute phone call to the Chinese foreign minister. An unusual move from the Japanese government, who tends to avoid confrontation with China, their largest trading partner. The Japanese prime minister will travel to the US on 16 April for a summit with the Biden administration. These events could signal a strengthening of relations between the US and Japan. [[Wall Street Journal](#), [Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)]

Twitter voices support for freedom

On 8 April, Twitter released an emoji for the Milk Tea Alliance in response to the massive growth in the online solidarity alliance. The company voiced its support for Myanmar and the Milk Tea Alliance, and reminded users of the importance of free speech and a free internet. [[Twitter](#)]

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Europe

Lithuania quits China's 17+1 and seeks trade with Taiwan

Lithuania announced that it will cease participating in China's 17+1 format, a cooperation between China and 17 Central/Eastern European states. MP Dovilė Šakalienė, who was on China's counter-sanction list as one of the founders of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC), also proposed a resolution to call Beijing's oppression against the Uyghurs a genocide. If the resolution passes, the Baltic state would become the second European country to recognize the Uyghur genocide, after the Netherlands. Furthermore, the country is now seeking trade relations with Taiwan, after criticising the EU on signing the CAI. An analyst wrote that the small middle-income country's recent actions, taken from lessons learned from Stalin and Putin, are a "rare European example of firmness and readiness to forsake material gain in the face of the Chinese regime's growing global intimidation tactics", that are sure to secure attention in the US, its most important NATO ally; but also suggests that if China decides to retaliate in terms of trade, local exporters may benefit from their previous experience in pivoting to new markets. [[LRT](#), [DW](#)]

Norway to follow EU's sanctions against China on Uyghurs

Norway announced on 29 March that it will follow the EU's latest sanctions against those complicit in human rights violations against Uyghurs, including four Chinese officials and a state-run organisation. [[Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)]

Merkel phones Xi, assures EU's independence and agrees on cooperation

German Chancellor and EU's de facto leader Angela Merkel phoned Xi Jinping on 7 April. Xi said that the EU and China should respect each other and "eliminate disruptions", and hopes the EU will make "correct judgement independently". According to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Merkel assured the EU's independence in global politics, and agreed that EU-China cooperation is in the interests of both sides. The German government's spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer said that the Chancellor stressed the importance of dialogue on "issues on which there are different opinions", without naming the issues where Germany and China differ. [[Reuters](#), [Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)]

Denmark calls China's counter-sanctions "a clear attack" on freedom, no comment on CAI

In retaliation for EU measures established in response to the crackdown on Uyghurs, Beijing has announced sanctions on the Alliance of Democracies, a non-profit thinktank founded by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, former Danish prime minister and ex-Secretary General of NATO. Foreign minister Jeppe Kofod said in a statement, "When China sanctions free, critical European politicians, institutions and dissidents, merely for having been critical against China, it is a clear attack on citizens' freedom of expression in Europe and Denmark." [[The Local](#)] However, he would not say whether Denmark continues to support CAI, an investment agreement between the EU and China, despite the growing number of Danish MEPs who want the EU to exit the deal. [[Information](#)]

Chinese company director warns Denmark of boycott

Dong Weizhi, commercial director of the Chinese energy group Envision Energy's Danish division, warned that Danish companies could be hit by a boycott. Some highly educated Chinese people in Denmark may consider leaving the country if Denmark is repeatedly involved in public criticism of China from Europe. [[Politiken](#)] Dong Weizhi is a board member of the Danish-Chinese Business Forum founded by major Danish companies including Maersk, Carlsberg, COWI, Danfoss, Vestas, LEGO, etc. [[DCBF](#)]

Netherlands' leaders speak to China against counter-sanctions

Dutch politicians, MP Sjoerd Sjoerdsma and EU-ambassador Delphine Pronk, have been sanctioned by China. Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Foreign Minister Stef Blok, and Parliament Chair Khadija Arib have all called the recent Chinese counter-sanctions "unacceptable".

Blok summoned the Chinese ambassador to express his dissatisfaction immediately after the sanctions were issued. "These are people who have done nothing wrong," said Blok, "But [they] cannot challenge [their] place on the list before an independent judge." In contrast, the Chinese officials on the EU sanction list can appeal for their innocence at court.

Arib has issued a letter to the ambassador, stating that the "unjustified" measure on Sjoerdsma, who was merely exercising his democratic duty, may have consequences on the relations between the Dutch and Chinese parliaments.

Sjoerdsma has been asking the Chinese embassy to provide evidence and judicial basis for the sanction since 23 March, but did not get a reply. He nonetheless reacted on Twitter: "As long as human rights are violated, I cannot be silent. These sanctions prove that China is sensitive to pressure. Let it be an encouragement to all my European colleagues: speak out!" [[NOS](#), [Trouw](#), [Sjoerd Sjoerdsma via Twitter](#)]

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Sanctions prove China is sensitive to pressure.

CHINA IN THE WEST

Swedish parties wants Chinese ambassador expelled for threats

Three Swedish political parties want to see Chinese ambassador Gui Congyou expelled, whereas two parties demand for greater pressure on China. Ulf Kristersson, Moderate Party MP, suggested a harsher tone and "targeted sanctions" as an appropriate response. Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde says Gui's actions are "completely unacceptable" but she does not believe that Gui should be deported, as she wants to keep a dialogue with China. [Expressen [\(1\)](#), [\(2\)](#) (Swedish), [Omni](#) (Swedish)]

Chinese ambassador to Canada: China is not a police state

China's ambassador to Canada says more Canadians should visit China, promising the "vast majority" should not worry about being kidnapped by police. "China is not a police state," said Ambassador Cong Peiwu. He also demanded that Canadians respect China, saying, "Mutual respect means we respect systems here and the choices of Canadians here, but Canadians do not respect the Chinese system." Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, also known as the Two Michaels, have been jailed in China since 2018 in what is widely regarded as a retaliatory arrest, taking place just days after the detention of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou. Meanwhile, China's critics in Canada are reportedly facing retaliation for activism, including threats and disappearance of family members and friends. [[The Post Millennial](#), [Global News](#)]

In Netherlands, Confucius Institute continues despite controversy

After a contract between the Groningen Confucius Institute and China's Hanban showed that a professor employed by the University of Groningen but co-funded by Hanban is prohibited from "damaging the image of China", the Dutch minister of education has initiated talks with the University's board due to the possibility that the contract may violate Dutch laws on academic freedom. The board has told the ministry that the contract in question will no longer be renewed in 2021, however the collaboration between the University and the Confucius Institute itself will continue, despite criticism from many China experts and almost 700 signatories in a student-led petition to terminate it.

In Norway, the Bergen Confucius Institute will be discontinued after spring semester 2021. In 2020, Sweden became the first country to close all of its Confucius Institutes. [[NU.nl](#) (Dutch), [Dutchnews.nl](#), [DVHN](#) (Dutch), [Bergen Confucius Institute](#)]

Chinese government plans to use tech giants' data

The Chinese government has proposed a plan to establish a joint venture with local tech giants, like Tencent, to oversee the data they collect from consumers and eventually facilitate data sharing with government-backed institutions. Under the new plan, privacy laws would have to be rewritten, and top executives would have to be approved by the regulator. [[Bloomberg](#)]

Hikvision helps CCP with surveillance, cameras used in EU

The world's biggest security camera companies Hikvision, Dahua, and Uniview collaborated with the Chinese government to write standards for facial recognition systems, with an unusually heavy emphasis on ethnicity, to be followed by all government agencies, which means they could apply to Hong Kong as well. The scale and centralization of the Chinese approach could also be of international concern, given China's role as a major exporter of surveillance technology.

Hikvision cameras are used in the concentration camps of East Turkestan (Xinjiang). The three Chinese companies' products are also exported all over the world. A prominent customer is the EU, where Hikvision fever cams are installed. Hikvision and Dahua fever cams were among seven devices recently tested to adjust elevated temperatures negatively, leading to false results. 35 MEPs have signed a letter to the EU President raising "grave concerns about the technology", and Dutch MEP Lara Wolters has submitted a motion to terminate the contract with Hikvision due to the "unacceptable risk" of the company contributing to human rights abuses. The motion will be voted on at the end of April.

In the Netherlands, where Hikvision's European branch is headquartered, Chinese surveillance technology has been under scrutiny since 2019. Similar criticism arose in the UK, and the UK government has warned against their use. However, Hikvision cameras have still been spotted at a public park in Amsterdam. In the US, all three companies are now listed as "unacceptable risks" to national security. Scandinavian firm Avarn Security recently stopped sales of Hikvision cameras, citing the risk of human rights violations. Last year, Denmark's AkademikerPension and Norway's Norges Bank Investment Management divested from Hikvision,

after the company failed to disclose a long-promised human rights review. [[Reuters](#), [IPVM \(1\) \(2\) \(3\)](#), [EU parliament](#), [NOS](#), Dutch parliament [\(1\) \(2\)](#), [US FCC](#), [IPE](#), [Twitter](#), [Journal of Biomedical Optics](#)]

Huawei had access to Dutch telecom's customer data

Huawei had unlimited access to the data of millions of customers of the Dutch telecom company Telfort, according to a confidential report at KPN, the parent company of Telfort. Customers have not been informed, nor was the Dutch Personal Data Authority (AP) notified, which was not an obligation when the report was made in 2011. In the years that followed, despite multiple warnings from the Dutch intelligence service (AIVD) about the risk of Chinese espionage, KPN did not conduct any further investigation into whether customer data was stolen.

In 2010, five years after KPN took over, Telfort switched to a new customer and billing environment built by Huawei, with the US company HP as service integrator. With this system, Huawei gained access to view, change, or delete customer data. Huawei was repeatedly asked by HP to change the access or close it, but did not respond. Michel van Eeten, member of the Dutch *Cyber Security Raad*, an independent advisory body to the cabinet, said it was "shocking" that logging and monitoring were off, and that "all the basic measures were insufficient."

In 2019, the Dutch cabinet decided to exclude Huawei from the most sensitive parts of the new 5G networks due to espionage fears. Huawei may still supply network components to the Netherlands. KPN and T-Mobile are using Huawei antennas in their new networks. [[de Volkskrant](#) (Dutch)]

Table 1: Hong Kong 2019 Protest Movement Database

| Item | Number of people | | | Last update | Sources |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Total arrested | 10 294 | | | 31 Jan 2021 | 1 |
| Total charged | > 2300 | | | 31 Jan 2021 | 1 |
| Total charges over rioting (up to 10 years imprisonment) | 695 (13-61 years old) | | | 31 Mar 2021 | 2 |
| | Found not guilty | Pleaded guilty | Found guilty | | |
| | 24 | 12 | 5 | | |
| | No. of trials scheduled | | Scheduled until | | |
| | 317 | | September 2023 | | |
| Longest jail charge | 5 years and 6 months (Rioting) | | | 19 Feb 2021 | 2 |

[Sources: (1) [Hong Kong Watch, HKFP](#) (2) [Stand News](#)]

Table 2: Hong Kong National Security Law Database

| Item | Number of people | | Last update | Sources |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------------|---------|
| Total arrested | 100 | | 2 Mar 2021 | 1,2 |
| | Secession & subversion | 82 | | |
| | Terrorist Activities | 1 | | |
| | Collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security | 7 | | |
| | * Some arrestees have unknown charges. | | | |
| Total charged | 56 | | 7 Jan 2021 | 2 |
| Overseas on wanted list | Around 30 according to state media | | 7 Jan 2021 | 1, 3 |

[Sources: (1) [Stand News](#) (2) [Bloomberg](#) (3) [SCMP](#)]

IMPORTANT DATES

April - June 2021

| Local | World | Dates | Events |
|----------------|-------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ● = Court case | | | |
| ● | | 16 April | Sentencing for unlawful assembly: - 18 August 2019 against 9 pro-democracy figures (7 found guilty & 2 pleaded guilty) - 31 August 2019 against 3 veteran pro-democracy figures (pleaded guilty). |
| | ○ | | Biden-Suga (US-Japan) Summit. |
| | ○ | 21 April | Voting of the US "Strategic Competition Act of 2021" by Senate's Foreign Relations Committee |
| ● | | 10-14 May | Trial for the 14 charges on activist Tak-Chi Tam, expected to last for 5 days. |
| ● | | 18 May | Andy Li's NSL case at High Court |
| ● | | 31 May | Hearing of NSL case for 47 opposition politicians and activists. |
| ○ | | 4 June | 32nd Anniversary of Tiananmen Massacre - Unknown arrangement of the annual vigil, that was rejected the first time in 2020 citing coronavirus measures. |
| ○ | | 9 June | 2nd anniversary of Hong Kong Anti-extradition Movement. Unknown arrangement. |
| ● | | 23 June | Trial of Tong Ying-kit, first person charged under National Security Law, expected a 15-day trial. |

End of News Digest