

FREE HONG KONG

NEWS DIGEST

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Banned June fourth vigils for Tiananmen massacre

Four activists were sentenced to months in jail for participating in last year's vigil, which was banned by the police. This year's vigil will be banned by Beijing.

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New “patriotic oath law” sparks mass resignation among district councillors

A new law demanding politicians pledge their loyalty has been passed. Those who refuse will be disqualified. Over 27 district councillors resigned in response.

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Jimmy Lai's asset freeze worries investors

Authorities used National Security Law to freeze €53 million of the convicted media tycoon's assets. Security Chief said it had nothing to do with press freedom. Taiwan warns about higher risks for businesses in Hong Kong.

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JUNE FOURTH

Prominent activists jailed over banned 2020 Tiananmen vigil

Four Hong Kong activists, including Joshua Wong, district councillors Lester Shum, Tiffany Yuen and Jannelle Leung pled guilty and were sentenced to four- to ten-month jail terms for taking part in an unauthorised assembly on 4 June 2020 to commemorate the Tiananmen Massacre, which was banned by the police citing coronavirus fears. This means the three district councillors would be disqualified from their posts.

Joshua Wong's jail term will be served consecutively to his other jail terms. Lester Shum and Tiffany Yuen have been remanded since the end of February due to subversion charges under the National Security Law for participating in the democratic primary elections last year. [[HKFP](#), [Stand News](#)]

Citing nine cases of peaceful, unauthorised assemblies over the past 20 years in Hong Kong, an Apple Daily report concluded a significant increase in the level of sentences since 2019. Before 2019, only fines and/or binding were handed by the court; whereas from 2019, defendants have been sentenced to imprisonment. [[Apple Daily](#) (Chinese)]

#6432 Tiananmen commemoration this year to be prohibited by Beijing

This year's 4 June vigil (32nd anniversary) has also been banned on health grounds. HKO1 reported that Beijing would punish any individuals who participate in the banned vigil. Any legislative councillors who are found participating in unauthorised assemblies can also be disqualified without any court procedures. [[HKFP](#); [HKO1](#) (Chinese)]

NATIONAL SECURITY

Prosecutors of NSL case: trial by jury not a constitutional right

Prosecutors defended the Department of Justice's decision for jury exclusion for Hong Kong's first national security suspect Tong Ying-kit, stating that the Secretary of Justice has no duty to provide reasons for the decisions, and that defendants in Hong Kong have no

constitutional or fundamental right to trial by jury. However, article 86 of the Basic Law states, "The principle of trial by jury previously practised in Hong Kong shall be maintained".

Prosecutors are also planning to add another charge against Tong – dangerous driving causing grievous bodily harm – pending the court's approval. [[RTHK](#)]

#SAVE12 lawyer barred from leaving China on national security grounds

China has barred human rights lawyer Lu Siwei, who helped one of the 12 Hongkongers that were detained in Shenzhen (#SAVE12), from leaving the country, claiming that his leaving "may endanger national security or interests". Lu was stopped by immigration officers as he was trying to board a flight to Seattle, where he was invited as a visiting scholar for a US government-sponsored fellowship program, in which other Chinese lawyers and even government officials have been able to participate.

Together with Ren Quanniu, another human rights lawyer who represented one of the 12 Hongkongers, Lu's legal license was revoked in January over "inappropriate speech made online". The two were appointed by families of the 12, and insisted on representing their clients even though authorities had requested them to drop the cases. [[Apple Daily](#), [SCMP](#)]

New national security arrests: students charged over social media comments

Five student members of a localist group "Returning Valiant" have been arrested by Hong Kong national security police for alleged subversion through social media comments.

The arrests were triggered by a burglary report at a local secondary school. During home searches of two of the burglary suspects, who were members of the group, the police found material advocating Hong Kong independence and passed the case to the national security

department. Three others were soon arrested in a series of raids against the student group. The mother of one of the arrested stated around 10 national security officers arrived at their home and arrested her son for allegedly posting information online that breaches the security law. The suspects, aged 15 to 24, may face life imprisonment under their subversion charges. [[SCMP](#), [The Standard](#)]

Tech giants supplied user data to HK government before NSL

According to transparency reports from Apple, Google, Facebook, and Twitter, the Hong Kong government made more than 1,400 requests for user data between July 2019 and June 2020. The requests involved at least 973 accounts and 765 financial identifiers. Only Twitter rejected all 13 of the requests made to the company, and 624 out of the remaining 1,388 requests were granted by the rest. The time period lies between the start of the pro-democracy protests and the introduction of the national security law, after which all these companies announced that they would halt data requests made by the Hong Kong government.

Social media and messaging apps are used extensively in the protest movement, but some of the requests may also have been made due to crimes unrelated to the protests. The anonymous messaging app Telegram, used by many protesters to coordinate actions, has not published transparency reports for any country, however a spokesperson told press that they "have not shared any data with the Hong Kong government." [[HKFP](#)]

MEDIA FIGURES

Radio show host with sedition charges denied bail due to links with Taiwan

A professional online radio host, Wan Yiu-sing Edmund (also known as "Giggs"), was arrested in November 2020 under the national security law for money laundering and funding acts of secession, and was arrested again in February 2021 under a colonial sedition law in connection with his radio shows during August-October 2020. Giggs has been denied bail since his February arrest. The reasons for his bail denial was recently published, showing that the judge considered his temptation to abscond is extremely high because of his connections with organisations in Taiwan.

Giggs has so far been charged with a total of five sedition and five money laundering charges. The latter were connected to his advocacy for a crowdfunding campaign for demonstrators, including those

who had fled to Taiwan.

[[HKFP](#), [Twitter](#), [HK judiciary](#)]

Newspaper critical of Beijing attacked for the second time in a month

A reporter for a newspaper critical of Beijing was attacked in broad daylight on the street right outside her home by an unknown assailant on 11 May. The newspaper, Epoch Times, is a media outlet associated with Falun Gong, a spiritual movement banned and persecuted in mainland China. The reporter, Leung Zhen, who is also head of the Hong Kong Association of Falun Dafa, accused the Chinese Communist Party of orchestrating the "triad-style scare tactic" attack.

The attack comes a month after a sledgehammer raid on the newspaper's printing presses, which took place on 12 April as terrified staff members looked on. The Hong Kong Journalists Association said in a statement after Leung's attack that it "strongly condemns violence against media" and that press freedom is the "core value of Hong Kong's success." [HKFP [\(1\)](#), [\(2\)](#)]

Jimmy Lai's asset freeze worries investors

Hong Kong authorities used article 43 of the National Security Law for the first time to freeze one's assets. HK\$500 million (about €53 million) of media tycoon Jimmy Lai's assets have been frozen. Security Chief Lee Ka-chiu said in a press conference that the freezing of Lai's assets has nothing to do with press freedom nor private property, in response to a question regarding conflicts with article 6 of the Basic Law, which states that the HKSAR shall protect private property rights.

Following that, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council warned the international community about higher risks for businesses in Hong Kong. A local scholar has also pointed out that the asset freezing would further erode Hong Kong's reputation and business environment in the eyes of both locals and foreigners. [[HKFP](#); [Inmediahk](#) (Chinese); [HK gov news](#); [Stand News](#) (Chinese)]

ECONOMY

Over 40% of top US businesses plan to leave Hong Kong

A survey conducted in May shows that over 40% of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong's members were planning to move out of the city, with 62% citing the national security law as a key reason. Over 25% of those who are planning to leave intend to leave by the end of the year, whereas 48% will leave within 3-5 years. [[HKFP](#)]

A 2018 American Chamber of Commerce survey found that US business leaders favoured Hong Kong because of government transparency, rule of law, free flow of information, business friendly policies, availability of talent, and integrity of the 'one-country, two systems' framework. [[Hong Kong Watch](#)]

Matthew J. Cronin, the National Security & Cybercrime Coordinator at the US Department of Justice, wrote in an opinion piece: "a binding treaty and hundreds of billions of dollars in yearly profits did not protect Hong Kong. What hope then does any company — no matter how large — have against the CCP's predations?" [[The Hill](#)]

EDUCATION

► **Public libraries pull books authored by activists due to national security law**

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) ordered public libraries to remove and suspend services for nine pro-democracy titles, stating that the books must be reviewed in light of national security policies. The books' six authors are former lawmakers Albert Ho and Tanya Chan,

political commentator Bruce Lam, editorial board of the Hong Kong University Students' Union "Undergrad", and Chinese activists Yu Jie and Liao Yiwu.

This is not the first time that the government removed books from public libraries over national security concerns. In July 2020, shortly after the national security law came into force, the LCSD pulled nine other pro-democracy titles by three authors (namely Joshua Wong, Tanya Chan, and scholar Chin Wan) from its libraries.

Ho and Lam suggested their books, being commentaries on societal issues, are unlikely to endanger national security, and interpret their removal as a fear of violating the ambiguously-worded national security law among government officials. Yu Jie, author of one of the pulled books *Nazi China* (translated title), said the government's move confirms his observation that Hong Kong, just like China, has fallen under a regime that bans books from its people. [[Apple Daily](#) (Chinese), [HKFP](#)]

► **New textbook claiming British rule as illegal occupation not subject to review**

A new textbook, claiming that China has always had sovereignty over Hong Kong and that the colonial period under British rule was "an act of occupation violating international law", has been sent by publisher Ling Kee to secondary schools as material for the Citizenship and Social Development subject, which is set to be the replacement for Liberal Studies starting next academic year, after the latter had been criticised by the authorities multiple times for "radicalizing" the youth. Earlier, when another publisher provided material to schools that included topics such as civil disobedience and the rule of law as illustrated by professor and activist Benny Tai Yiu-ting -

which were topics discussed in Liberal Studies - the Education Bureau said it was "deeply regrettable" that the book has not been sent for review.

Regarding the book published by Ling Kee, the Bureau said that the material is "not a textbook" and that publishers are not subject to their review when compiling non-textbooks. A Liberal Studies teacher described Ling Kee's book as a transcript of official lines that did not allow for discussion, and expressed that teachers nowadays often do not know how to teach in the current era of "either right or wrong". [[Mingpao](#) (Chinese)]

► **40% of teachers considering to quit due to political pressure**

A survey conducted by the Professional Teachers' Union on 1,178 teachers found that two

out of five teachers are contemplating leaving the education sector, with most of them having between 20 and 30 years of experience.

Of those considering resignation, 71 percent cited increasing political pressure as the major reason. The Union's chairman said that political pressure on teachers increased after the national security law came into force, and called on authorities to refrain from means such as de-registering teachers, which would effectively bar them from the profession. [[RTHK](#)]

Since the national security law was enacted, two teachers have been disqualified for "spreading ideas of independence". Another is facing possible disqualification pending an ongoing investigation of "biased materials". [[HKFP](#)]

LOYALTY OATH

The “patriotic oath law”, which requires, not only civil servants, but also politicians to make an oath to pledge loyalty to the government and the Party, has been passed by the Legislative Council.

New “patriotic oath law” sparks mass resignation among district councillors

Forced and Vague Patriotism

District councillors who do not take the oath will lose their positions. As for those who do decide to pledge their loyalty, the Commissioner of Oaths can still decide on the spot that the subject failed to make the oath by not being "sincere". The new law also allows the Secretary of Justice to launch actions against any politician or official who is judged to have violated the oath by conducting a broad range of listed unpatriotic behaviours, from insulting official flags to "endangering national security". Those accused would be promptly suspended without pay until the conviction is made, and barred from elections for five years.

Mass Resignation

The law also applies to community-level district councils, which are currently dominated by the pro-democracy camp thanks to a landslide victory in November 2019. Over 10 district councilors, some of whom having already decided to resign, announced that they will not take the oath. Overall, 27 district councilors have opted for resignation, of which 12 are still in custody due to involvement in the 2020 primary elections.

As a result of this and due to disqualifications from protest charges, the pro-democracy camp could expect to lose 36 out of their current 389 seats in the district councils, and potentially two districts out of the 17 in which it currently holds a majority. 110 pro-democracy councillors have decided to take the oath, in the hopes that they could remain in the district councils and use what opportunities still exist to make their voices heard. [[Reuters](#), [Stand News](#) (Chinese), [HKFP](#)]

Civil servant resignation hits 14-year high

More than 1,800 civil servants have resigned in the last fiscal year-- the highest figure since 2006. They accounted for one per cent of the government's 178,000-strong workforce. According to the government, the majority of the resignees were probationers.

The government previously ordered all civil servants to pledge loyalty in order to avoid getting fired. 130 of them refused to sign the declaration, saying that it undermines their freedom of speech or that it conflicts with their foreign nationalities. Civil Service Chief Patrick Nip stressed that none of those reasons were accepted and that those workers' contracts will be terminated. [[RTHK](#)]

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

HK government: not all Canadians are entitled to consular protection

After Hong Kong's government announced it no longer recognises dual nationalities, the Canadian Consul General to Hong Kong and Macau, Jeff Nankivell, confirmed earlier reports that as long as persons in prison or on remand had entered Hong Kong with a Canadian travel document, they would have the right to receive consular protection. However, Hong Kong authorities cited consular agreements between Canada and China to point out that the above situation is only applicable within the validity period of the visa or visa-free entry, meaning that if Canadians nationals entered Hong Kong without a visa, then they may no longer receive protection after the usual visa-free period of 90 days. [[Stand News](#) (Chinese)]

EU response to Hong Kong blocked by China-Hungary-Germany nexus

In May, the EU Council once again dropped plans to counter Beijing's tightening of control in Hong Kong, as the conclusions were again blocked by Hungary, even after having been revised to be milder. "Some member states were against conclusions without Hungary, as this would undermine EU unity," said a diplomat. This showed Beijing they need not worry about the EU as long as they have one ally in the bloc.

In terms of economic leverage, Germany carries more heft than China. In March, Hungary did not veto the EU sanctions on China, despite calling them "pointless" within hours. "Germany has all the tools it needs if it wants to force Hungary to change positions," said Janka Oertel, director of the Asia programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "But it's obviously more difficult to do if you have a special relationship with China of your own."

On 20 May, the EU Parliament voted overwhelmingly to urge the Council to "adopt conclusions on Hong Kong irrespective of a lack of unanimous support," and to freeze ratification of CAI until China lifts its sanctions. [[SCMP \(1\)](#), [\(2\)](#), [Politico](#), [EUObserver](#), [European Parliament](#)]

Sweden ends legal aid with HK

Swedish legislature passed a motion on 6 May to end legal aid agreements with Hong Kong, ensuring no democratic activists like Ted Hui could be prosecuted in Sweden. Other countries that ended extradition or legal assistance treaties with Hong Kong include Ireland, Netherlands, UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and Finland. [[Riksdag](#)]

Denmark attends democracy summit with Nathan Law and Tsai Ing-wen

Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod attended the opening of the Copenhagen Democracy Summit, in which Hong Kong activist Nathan Law and Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-wen were participants. While Denmark has long recognised China, but not Taiwan diplomatically, the Chinese embassy still argued that the summit violated the one-China principle by inviting Tsai. [[Reuters](#), [Politiken](#), [TV2](#)]

G7 shows united stance on China

Foreign ministers of the G7 met on 5 May to deliver a stern message on China. Concerns over Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Tibet, and the South China Sea were raised. They called on China to act in accordance with its international and legal obligations, and urged Hong Kong authorities to stop targeting activists and to uphold judicial independence. They also supported Taiwan's participation in the WHO. The G7 Summit will take place in June. [[Politico](#), [GOV.UK](#)]

CHINA IN THE WEST

Energy

UK solar farms linked to Uyghur forced labour

A detailed report by the US consultancy Horizon Advisory revealed that factories or major suppliers in Xinjiang produce roughly a third of the polysilicon material used to make the world's solar panels, and these companies have ties to Uyghur forced labour. They have manufactured up to 40 percent of the UK's solar farms. Earlier this year, it was reported that those panels were also among Swedish Vattenfall's bestsellers. [[Guardian](#); [Expressen](#)]

Wind energy researchers in Denmark hired by China suspected of industrial espionage

At least 30 researchers have been found to be recruited in Denmark under China's "1,000 Talents" program, where 8 of them have held leading research positions in the wind energy sector. According to US authorities, China uses the "1,000 Talents" programme to steal research from western countries. Some of the researchers never informed

their Danish employers about the affiliation. The wind turbine company Vestas urged the government to take the threat seriously, in order to maintain Denmark's leading position in the green industry. [[Politiken](#) (1) (2)]

Education

Aarhus University top researcher found to work with Chinese Military

A nanoscientist from Aarhus University was found to be the co-inventor of 27 patents in China and to have written 10 research articles with two military institutions under the People's Liberation Army, which his Danish employer was never made aware of. An investigation is ongoing at AU as of the time of writing. [[Politiken](#)]

UK university advises against recording lectures on Hong Kong due to national security risks

The SOAS University of London, renowned for its Asian Studies programmes, has urged its academics to stop recording classes about Hong Kong and China over the risks

of violating Hong Kong's national security law. In the university's internal guidance, SOAS warned that lecturers and students could face arrest if they carried copies of lecture notes when visiting Hong Kong or mainland China. It also warned about the risk of collaboration with academics in the region as they may be forced to help with any investigation against their foreign partners. [[HKFP](#)]

Confucius Institutes in Australia face closure under veto laws

Confucius Institutes hosted by 13 Australian universities have been criticized by the federal government amid propaganda concerns. Foreign Minister Marise Payne will decide whether to cancel the institute contracts on a case-by-case basis, but all the involved universities are expected to register the contracts for review by June 10. Under the newly passed foreign veto laws, Payne has the power to cancel agreements between foreign governments and Australia that are found to contradict its foreign policy. [[Brisbane Times](#)]

Politics

Denmark waits for China's approval on controversial work programme

While Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod said that he would like to pursue a "value-based" foreign policy with a focus on human rights, the draft of a new work programme for Denmark's strategic partnership with China has remained undisclosed for more than a year, making it impossible to have a democratic debate on the increasingly controversial issue. Kofod stated that the programme would only be published when a text has been approved by both the Danish and Chinese sides. [[Berlingske](#); [Folketinget](#)]

Oxford researchers find fake accounts and coordinated networks that promote Chinese diplomats' messages

Two reports from Oxford Internet Institute stated that China has significantly expanded its online public diplomacy efforts by making use of both state-controlled media outlets and over 270 diplomatic accounts on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to amplify the PRC's perspective on global affairs and current events. The social media accounts are often not labelled as owned by PRC's diplomats. [[University of Oxford](#)]

Chinese boycott of western brands less impactful than believed

In a new briefing for World Politics Review, Senior Researcher for the Danish Institute for International Studies Luke Patey argues that the recent Chinese boycott against Western businesses has its limits as a weapon against what China views as unwanted criticism over human rights abuses in the country. With foreign investment crucial to its economy, there is a price for wielding its market as a tool of economic coercion. [[World Politics Review](#)]

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)	720 (13-61 years old)	13 Apr 2021	2		
	Found not guilty			Pleaded guilty	Found guilty
	24			12	5
	No. of trials scheduled			Scheduled until	
317	Dec 2023				
Longest jail charges	12 years (Possession of explosives) 5 years and 6 months (Rioting)	23 Apr 2021	2, 3		

[Sources: (1) [Hong Kong Watch, HKFP](#) (2) [Stand News](#) (3) [HKFP](#)]

Table 2: Hong Kong National Security Law Database

Item	Number of people	Last update	Sources	
Total arrested	105	7 May 2021	1, 2, 4	
	Secession & subversion			87
	Terrorist Activities			1
	Collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security			7
<i>* Some arrestees have unknown charges.</i>				
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](#) (4) [The Standard](#)]

IMPORTANT DATES

May - July 2021

- 28 May: Sentencing for ten pro-democratic figures who pleaded guilty for organising and participating in unauthorised assembly on 1 Oct 2019.
- 31 May: Hearing of NSL case for 47 opposition politicians and activists.
- 4 June: 32nd Anniversary of Tiananmen Massacre - annual vigil rejected twice in 2020 and 2021 citing coronavirus measures. #6432
- 12 June: Overseas HKer groups to mark 2nd anniversary of Hong Kong Anti-extradition Movement at different cities
- 15 June: Court mentions Jimmy Lai and Chan Tsz-Wah for their NSL charges.
- 18 June: Court case for nine individuals among #SAVE12 for a new charge of perverting justice
- 23 June: 1st NSL case: Trial of Tong Ying-Kit, expected a 15-day trial.
- 1 July: 24 years since handover of Hong Kong
- 5 July: Trials of Radio Host 'Giggs', 5 sedition and 5 money laundering charges
- 21 July: 2 years since Yuen Long mob attack

End of News Digest