



January in Hong Kong

31 January 2022 / No. 217

A condensed press review prepared by the Consulate General of Switzerland in Hong Kong

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## Switzerland

### Switzerland's health minister slashes quarantine

Health minister A. Berset says country could soon see an endemic phase for Covid19. [SCMP](#), Jan 13

## Foreign Policy / International Relations

### EU Parliament debates resolution over 'deterioration' of media freedoms in Hong Kong

The national security law has shrunk HK's free press, MEPs say, and made it 'impossible' for human rights groups to work 'without fear of serious reprisals'. European lawmakers propose a review of status at the World Organization (WTO). It also urged EU member states to impose sanctions on HK leader Carrie Lam, and seven other senior officials, over the "ongoing human rights crackdown HK's" in the territory. The Chinese mission to the European Union said the Parliament should stop denigrating and distorting "one country, two systems." Hong Kong government expressed deep regret and rebuked politicians of Western countries in respect of their attempt to twist facts and issue slandering remarks on the enforcement actions taken in accordance with the law. [SCMP](#), [HKGov](#), Jan 20, 21

## Mainland

### Top liaison official in HKSAR expresses confidence in 'one country, two systems'

Delivering a virtual speech on Wednesday for the upcoming Chinese New Year, Luo said the city has taken on a brand-new look during the past year, following the implementation of the National Security Law and the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong", as well as improvements to the electoral system. Expressing a positive outlook about the central government's greater support for Hong Kong, Lau hoped the SAR could better leverage these favorable conditions to achieve new successes. [ChinaDaily](#), Jan 27

### China appoints former Xinjiang paramilitary chief as new Hong Kong garrison commander

China has appointed a former paramilitary chief in Xinjiang, Peng Jingtang, as the new commander of the People Liberation Army's garrison in Hong Kong. [Reuters](#), Jan 10

### PLA troops conduct first military training exercise of the year

The Hong Kong garrison of the People's Liberation Army has conducted a high-profile drill to "demonstrate its confidence and determination to defend" the city, after Chinese President Xi Jinping called on the military to adopt the latest technologies in training to win future wars. [SCMP](#), Jan 5

### Top Beijing official in HK lays out five expectations for new lawmakers

Xia Baolong, director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, tells lawmakers they must be 'firm patriots' who protect national security and defenders of executive-led model of government, among other duties, in an unprecedented meeting, urging them to cooperate with the executive branch while defending national security. [SCMP](#), Jan 5

## Domestic Policy / Politics

### Hong Kong to 'enhance' spy law to prevent acts of 'espionage and theft of state secrets,'

Hong Kong will expand the scope of its anti-espionage ordinance to tackle activities that present a "threat" to national security. Introduced in 1997 to replace the colonial-era Official Secrets Act, the Official Secrets Ordinance consists of three categories of offences: spying and espionage, unlawful disclosure of intelligence by members of the relevant services, and unauthorised disclosure of information by a public servant or government contractor. [HKFP](#), Jan 26

### Former leader CY Leung says city has 5 years before window of opportunity shuts

Former Chief Executive CY Leung has called for a visionary leader to grasp "the last window of opportunity" offered by Beijing's national development plans, but stopped short of confirming whether he wants the city's top job for himself. Separately, the government has announced that the nomination period for the Chief Executive election will run from 20 February to 5 March. [SCMP](#), Jan 27

### Chief Executive hopeful Checkley Sin proposes land development, bridge to Lamma and mega-prison

The first person to announce his intention to run in Hong Kong's small-circle chief executive election has proposed building a Lamma Island mega-prison to centralise all correctional institutions and release land for development, as part of his election manifesto. [HKFP](#), Jan 25

### Journalist group faces scrutiny from authorities, faces attack from Beijing-controlled papers

Labour authorities have asked the biggest journalists' group to justify its activities and provide additional financial information about its operations, amid fears of deteriorating press freedoms in the global

financial hub. Separately, Beijing-controlled Wen Wei Po attacked the group's chairperson Ronson Chan for smearing pro-China media and "standing in line with anti-China of the West." Meanwhile, Ta Kung Pao cited a legal expert that the association may be liable for sedition for a guest's commentary on freedom of expression and press freedom at the annual dinner. [SCMP](#), Jan 23

#### **New Bar Association chief draws line in sand on political issues**

The new chairman of the Bar Association has moved to immediately draw a line in the sand on political issues, after he and two other low-profile barristers took over the leadership reins of the outspoken legal body which has been a target of pro-Beijing media. [The Standard](#), Jan 21

#### **Chief Executive defends Omicron handling, pushes bureau revamp**

Chief Executive opened the new legislative term with a speech that resembled a policy address in ambition and scope, as she mounted a stout defense of her handling of the Omicron outbreak and announced details of a plan to restructure government bureaus. [SCMP](#), Jan 12

#### **Former Chief Executive outlines his vision for the government**

Former Chief Executive C.Y. Leung, who never ruled himself out of running for the top job again, said the most important task for the next chief executive is to establish a better relationship with the mainland. His right hand man has criticised Lam's plan to revamp government structure as "baby-sitting" her successor. Separately, former World Health Organization Director-General Margaret Chan is reportedly forming her own cabinet ahead of the election in March. [TS1](#), [TS2](#), Jan 12

#### **No. 2 John Lee slams 'baseless' Economist editorial on HK**

Chief Secretary John Lee has accused the Economist of misleading its readers about the situation in HK, in his second letter admonishing an international news outlet in as many weeks. In its January 8 edition, the London-based publication ran an editorial headlined: "Hong Kong's new legislature is a mockery of democracy". It condemned last month's Legislative Council poll as "rigged". [Ts](#), Jan 12

#### **Chief Executive to brief LegCo on bureaus overhaul, northern city progress**

Chief Executive Carrie Lam is expected to unveil details of the biggest overhaul of the government since 2007 at the inaugural session of the new legislature on Wednesday. [SCMP](#), Jan 11

#### **Mainland officials say western-style democracy "would doom Hong Kong to chaos"**

Hong Kong will be doomed to chaos if its political system cannot ensure patriots are firmly in charge, former and serving mainland Chinese officials said in Beijing. However, an official also said that the democracy in Hong Kong will not be "mainlandised." [SCMP](#), Jan 11

#### **Chief Executive meets Commander of Hong Kong Garrison**

Chief Executive Carrie Lam met PLA Hong Kong Garrison Commander-in-chief Major General Peng Jingtang, a former Xinjiang paramilitary chief, at Government House. She said her administration would work with the garrison to safeguard stability and prosperity in the city, according to a government statement. [SCMP](#), Jan 10

#### **End of road for two more pan-dem outlets, CE Carrie Lam denies links to national security law**

This comes within two weeks of media outlets Stand News, Citizen News and Mad Dog Daily announcing their closures. [SCMP1](#), [SCMP2](#), [SCMP3](#), [The Standard](#), [RTHK](#), Jan 3,4, 6

#### **Tiananmen vigil: HK activist jailed for 10 extra months following second incitement conviction**

A former vice-chairwoman of the group behind Hong Kong's Tiananmen Square vigil has been ordered to serve 10 extra months behind bars on top of her existing one-year term, after a magistrate convicted her of inciting others to join last year's banned event. [SCMP](#), [RTHK](#), Jan 4

#### **Incumbent president of Hong Kong's Legislative Council Andrew Leung re-elected unopposed**

With no opposition camp to put forward a challenger, pro-establishment veteran Andrew Leung was re-elected as head of the LegCo just minutes after the nomination period closed on Tuesday. A process that took days of debates in previous years. [SCMP](#), Jan 4

#### **90 new lawmakers sworn in for first LegCo of "patriots-only" era**

All 90 of newly elected lawmakers returned under Beijing's "patriots-only" overhaul of the political system were sworn in on Monday in a ceremony officiated by Chief Executive Carrie Lam, with none of the oath-taking protest antics by opposition legislators that led to their disqualification in 2016. Both the national and regional emblems will be present in the Legislative Council chamber in the new Legco term. [SCMP](#), Jan 3

## Economy / Finance

### **HK's economy grows 6.4% last year, export up 26.3%, imports up 24.3%, jobless rate 3.9%**

HK's economy grew 6.4 per cent last year but stringent social-distancing curbs amid the escalating fifth wave of the coronavirus posed a threat to the pace of recovery. Hong Kong's exports rose at 26.3 per cent last year, their sharpest pace in 33 years, in tandem with the global economic recovery. Imports leapt 24.3 per cent last year, the most since 2010 when they grew 25 per cent. The unemployment rate dropped to 3.9% in the final three months of last year, but the city's labour secretary has warned that extended Covid-19 social-distancing measures could lead to a rise again in joblessness. [SCMP3](#), [SCMP1](#), [SCMP2](#), Jan 18, 28

### **Asian Citigroup unit fined US\$45 mio for misleading clients over 11-year period**

Hong Kong's securities watchdog has fined a unit of the American banking giant [Citigroup](#) HK\$348.25 million (US\$45 million) for "pervasive dishonest behaviour" across its various trading desks over an 11 year-period. [SCMP](#), Jan 28

### **Retail banks having their worst time in a decade as profits plunge**

Retail banks are having their worst time in a decade, as the low interest rates amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic crimped profit margins across the industry for the third consecutive year. The average pre-tax profit of 30 licensed retail banks fell by 18.6% in 2021. [SCMP](#), Jan 26

### **Euro Cham says city risks exodus over extended COVID isolation**

Hong Kong may not reopen until early 2024 because of its strict COVID-19 policies, which could trigger an exodus of foreign firms and staff and jeopardise the city's role as a financial hub, its European Chamber of Commerce said in a draft report. Separately, the Bank of America reportedly has started a review of its HK business to identify workers who can be relocated to Singapore. [Reuters](#), Jan 26

### **Hong Kong has grown more isolated as aviation hub: global airline association**

The director general of the International Air Transport Association, Willie Walsh, said the city as a top aviation hub has become increasingly isolated while the rest of the world has started to open up to international travel. [SCMP](#), Jan 25

### **AmCham survey finds 53% of members consider leaving on personal grounds**

Covid-19 restrictions have pushed over half of the members of an influential American business group to consider leaving Hong Kong on personal grounds, with about one-third being forced to delay new investments, according to its poll. [SCMP](#), Jan 19

### **Potential buyer says "no red money" behind bid for Taiwan-based Apple Online**

A Hong Kong businessman who wants to buy Taiwanese news website Apple Online said the potential acquisition did not involve any funding from mainland China. Meanwhile, more than 1,000 Hongkongers in the UK gathered for the third consecutive weekend to protest the deterioration of press freedom in Hong Kong. [SCMP](#), Jan 14

### **Consultancy firm expect much smaller deficit for the current fiscal year**

Ernst & Young expects the Hong Kong government to record a deficit of HK\$18 billion for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, which will be 80 percent less than the government's previous forecast in February last year. [TS](#), Jan 13

### **Increase of house prices by 10% this year predicted due to the Northern Metropolis scheme**

Plans to create a booming economic and residential hub for some 2.5 million residents near Hong Kong's border with mainland China may boost home prices in those areas as much as 10% this year and by up to half in the coming five years, analysts say. [SCMP](#), Jan 5

### **Retail sales up 7.1% in November, missing market expectation**

Retail sales rose ten months in a row, up by 7.1% year on year to HK\$30.7 billion in November, government data showed, but it missed market estimation of a 9.7% growth. [SCMP](#), Jan 3

## COVID-19 / Health & Environment

### **Fifth wave hits the city**

- **Second building placed under 5-day lockdown as Omicron cluster surpasses 100 cases:**  
The government has put another public housing building to a 5-day lockdown with four more undergoing an overnight lockdown for residents to be tested on Saturday. [HKFP](#), [RTHK](#), Jan 18 & 23

- **Police arrest two ex-flight attendants:** Police said they arrested and charged two former flight attendants of an airline for violating Covid rules. The pair has been released on bail and their cases will be heard on 9 February. [RTHK](#), Jan 17
- **NGO calls for financial assistance for those left jobless or underemployed :** While a recently announced relief package is aimed at shoring up affected businesses by the recent re-imposition of strict social-distancing rules, the Society for Community Organization notes rank-and-file workers have been left out. The organization proposes workers receive up to 80% of their salary, capped at HK\$16,000 per month, for as long as six months. [SCMP](#), Jan 16
- **Government announces 5<sup>th</sup> round of Covid-Relief measures**  
Amidst the fifth wave, the government has tightened social distancing measures which has impacted the business of certain sectors and has announced the fifth round of Anti-epidemic Fund Measures, committing to HKD 3.57bn. [HK Government](#), Jan 14
- **Hong Kong bans transit from over 100 countries and extends social distancing measures:** The Airport Authority said HK would ban the transit of flight passengers from more than 100 countries and territories from Sunday until 15 Feb. Meanwhile, the government reportedly would extend current social distancing measures, including a ban on evening dine-in services, for two more weeks. [RTHK](#), [SCMP](#), Jan 13 & 29
- **Tough Omicron clampdown imposed, billion-dollar loss predicted:** HK is re-imposing some of its toughest Covid-19 social-distancing measures, restaurant, closing bars and gyms and imposing a 6pm curfew on dine-in services, and banning flights from eight countries. Affected industries in shock and dismay, predicting losses of up to HKD8bn (USD1.03bn) as a result. HK leader expressed 'deep disappointment' at some of top government officials for attending a big birthday party. Ban to be extended into Chinese New year. [TS](#), [SCMP](#), [SCMP2](#), [SCMP3](#), [RTHK](#), Jan 6, 14

## Macau

### SAR, Beijing slam Taipei over Macao remarks

The Macao government and a Chinese mainland spokesperson slammed Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party over remarks made on Macao affairs. [Macao Business](#), Jan 8

## Special Focus: NSL

### Xi Jinping lauds the city's transition to order

In his Chinese Lunar New Year address, Xi said order was restored in HK, and more efforts were made to combat secessionist forces and facilitate the national reunification. [The Standard](#), Jan 31

### Impartiality of hand-picked national security judges 'not to be questioned,' says Chief Justice

In a speech for the opening of the 2022 legal year, Chief Justice Andrew Cheung said the impartiality of the city's designated national security judges was not to be questioned, and that judicial independence exists as a fact. He also condemned intimidation against judges handling protests-related cases and NSL cases as direct affront to the rule of law. [HKFP](#), Jan 24

### Priority of constitutional duty to enact national security laws under Basic Law Article 23

Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng said the first and foremost task is to fulfil its constitutional duty to enact national security laws under Basic Law Article 23. The Secretary said Beijing has stern determination to implement 'one country, two systems' and she is confident that the common law system will continue to apply in Hong Kong beyond 2047. [RTHK](#), Jan 24

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