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Switzerland

Chinese-Swiss researchers declare path to cheaper clean energy with advance in perovskite solar cell manufacture

With global carbon emissions increasing year by year, the development of clean energy such as solar cells is attracting a lot of attention. Emerging photovoltaic technology has long been dogged by complex preparation, high cost and poor stability. Scientists at the Wuhan National Laboratory for Optoelectronics, Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST) in China, and from the Swiss Laboratory of Photonics and Interfaces at the EPFL have proved greater PSC stability when the technology is scaled up. [SCMP](#) Jan 26

G rard Dubois, the Swiss  tissier and entrepreneur, believes in investing in people

He tells Andrew Sun about staying fit during Covid, supplying La Rose Noire baked goods to 57 countries and surrounding himself with smart, driven people. [SCMP](#) Jan 22

As Davos wraps up, what was gained from the glitzy event?

Worries about the war in Ukraine, a warming planet and a cooling global economy dominated discussions about the world's ills. The 53rd edition of the weeklong gathering in the Alps drew notables such as Ukraine's first lady, climate activist Greta Thunberg and actor Idris Elba, plus hundreds of presidents, prime ministers, CEOs and other decision-makers who hashed out deals and voiced demands on everything from trade to tanks for Ukraine. [SCMP1](#) [SCMP2](#) Jan 19 & 20

Switzerland works to meet their needs as it prepares to welcome Chinese tourists

Anticipating the return of visitors from China, Swiss tourism officials are working on proposals to satisfy their preference for holidays off the beaten track. Chinese tourists want boutique holidays and country works to meet their needs as it prepares to welcome them. [SCMP](#) Jan 16

Mainland

Chinese Foreign Ministry hits back as Gregory May criticises Beijing's interference in HK

The [office](#) of Foreign Ministry's Commissioner in HK slammed May, Consul General of the US in HK and Macao, for smearing the SAR's rule of law and freedoms and for his 'shameful political show.' The office added that the US is in no position to defend human rights and American officials with 'ill-intent' to trouble HK and China are destined to hit a dead end. [TS](#) [RTHK](#) Jan 26

- **'Arbitrary twisted' and 'intentionally smeared' Beijing's interpretation on NSL, HK government slams US envoy:** The [SAR government](#) condemned and objected to May's criticisms, and said that the interpretation would not harm the independence of HK courts. It said that the chief executive would not replace the court in resolving other disputes in cases, nor would he be making rulings for courts. [HKFP](#) Jan 26
- **20% of Americans in HK left in past 2 years:** May said that the strict anti-Covid measures and 'diminishing freedoms' have 'clearly impacted HK and the people in it.' May cited the departure of roughly 15 000 Americans as one of the outcomes. He said about 70 000 Americans and 1 300 US companies are currently present in Hong Kong. [TS](#) Jan 26

Beijing's new liaison office head to bridge communication between HK and central authorities

Zheng Yanxiong, former director of the Office for Safeguarding National Security, said HK had a bright future and all the qualities to succeed, as long as it 'did not descend into chaos or head in the wrong direction.' He said his appointment is part of a regular succession arrangement by the central government based on needs. [SCMP1](#) [RTHK1](#) [HKFP1](#) [TS1](#) [SCMP2](#) [HKFP1](#) [RTHK2](#) [TS2](#) Jan 14 & 17

Beijing's interpretation of National Security Law does not confer new power on anyone

Attending the Ceremonial Opening of the Legal Year 2023, Secretary for Justice Paul Lam said it is 'wrong and misconceived' that some suggest the interpretation has expanded the powers of the Chief Executive and eroded the judicial independence. He stressed that the government will not interfere with the Judiciary. [TS](#) Jan 16

Beijing tells HK to revise local laws to align them with National Security Law

Xia Baolong, the director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, said the NSL has an overriding effect on the local laws. He pointed to the 'dual enforcement mechanism' of the legislation, where HK assumes the main responsibility of safeguarding national security, while the central authorities can step in to tackle 'intractable' problems the city's government cannot resolve. [RTHK](#) [SCMP](#) [TS](#) Jan 13

Foreign Policy / International Relations

US extends special 'safe haven' status for Hongkongers seeking refuge

10 days before the expiration of the 'deferred enforced departure', US President Joe Biden announced to extend the Hongkongers' refuge in the US by two years, noting 'compelling foreign policy reasons'. Biden wrote in the extension memorandum that 'China has continued its assault on HK's autonomy, undermining its remaining democratic processes and institutions, imposing limits on academic freedom, and cracking down on freedom of the press'. [SCMP](#) Jan 27

Lawmakers condemn UK parliamentary group's invitation withdrawal decision

The UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association agreed to withdraw the invitation to lawmakers Dominic Lee and Carmen Kan to attend the 2023 Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliament, citing the 'deteriorating situation' in HK. Lee said the decision is 'childish', and is a political manipulation and an assault on HK's 'enhanced system'. LegCo president Andrew Leung said lawmakers would not take part in events with 'blatant political bias'. [TS](#) Jan 29

UK to work 'constructively' with HK, but slams National Security Law

The UK released the latest six-monthly parliamentary [report](#) on HK. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly wrote in the foreword that freedoms were being systematically eroded by Beijing on multiple fronts. The report suggested that the national security law had seeped into 'all aspects' of the city and accused Beijing of failing to comply with the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Cleverly said the UK intended to work 'constructively' with Chief Executive John Lee but will judge the administration based on its actions. [SCMP](#) [TS Reuters](#) Jan 12

Beijing hits back calling the Britain report 'a piece of waste paper'

Chinese Embassy in the UK slammed the report while Beijing's foreign affairs office in HK urged London to stop interfering in the city's internal issues by claiming it had a 'so-called historical responsibility', calling it 'proof of the British colonial nostalgia and its obsession with political grandstanding'. Meanwhile, the SAR government vehemently refuted 'the slandering remarks and ill-intentioned political attacks' on the SAR. [SCMP](#) Jan 12

Domestic Policy / Politics

Overseas lawyers could be 'banned from HK security trials within 6 months'

Secretary for Justice Paul Lam promised on 24 January to amend legislation to block overseas lawyers from involvement in national security trials within the first six months of the year. But he said he planned to consult the legal profession and the public, adding he was prepared to listen to 'constructive' viewpoints. Meanwhile, Gregory May, the American Consul General, said Beijing's interpretation 'could further undermine the independence of HK's judiciary system by expanding the HK executive branch authority to make decisions affecting cases without judicial oversight.' May added that 'Beijing's actions could further force many of the city's best and brightest to flee. Bar Association urges against blanket ban on overseas lawyers in NSL cases. Victor Dawes, the re-elected head of the Hong Kong Bar Association, said on 19 January that a blanket ban on the involvement of overseas lawyers in national security trials in HK would not be 'conducive to the administration of justice and rule of law.' [SCMP1](#) [RTHK](#) [SCMP2](#) [SCMP3](#) Jan 19, 20, 24

HK Journalists Association slams omission of names from LegCo meeting minutes

The group said the move could impact public understanding of official procedures and how the media reports on the LegCo. The change has been implemented since the seventh LegCo term began last January, although it is not clear exactly when. [HKFP](#) Jan 18

Six major developers appointed to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

They include New World Development executive vice chairman and chief executive Adrian Cheng, Sun Hung Kai executive director Adam Kwok and Wheelock chairman Douglas Woo. Sino Group chairman Robert Ng, CK Hutchison Holdings chairman Victor Li and Henderson chairman and managing director Peter Lee gained another tenure as members of the top political advisory body. [TS](#) Jan 19

Chief Executive meets new Beijing liaison chief

Chief Executive John Lee met Zheng Yanxiong, the new director of the central government's liaison office in HK, to extend welcome on Zheng's assumption of the new post. Lee said he would work together with Zheng in implementing the principles of 'one country, two systems' and 'HK people administering HK' with a high degree of autonomy, and implementing the principle of 'patriots administering HK.' [TS](#) Jan 17

Australian justice appointed to top court argues foreign judges shouldn't 'vacate the field'

Patrick Keane has dismissed criticism of his appointment to the Court of Final Appeal, saying he weighed up the role carefully. He said given how successful the court has been in its role in upholding the rule of

law, one should be very slow indeed to decline the opportunity to serve on such a successful court. He believed it was better to play a role rather than 'vacate the field.' [The Guardian](#) Jan 17

Committee backs ban on overseas lawyers in national security cases

The Committee for Safeguarding National Security said after its meeting that it 'supports the government to introduce amendments to the Legal Practitioners Ordinance as soon as possible'. The committee, headed by Chief Executive John Lee, and with Luo Huining, the director of Beijing's liaison office in HK, as an adviser, also said it would 'fully fulfil the obligations' of following up on the work set out in Beijing's interpretation of the NSL. [SCMP](#) Jan 11

Economy

New Cathay Pacific CEO pledges to pay HK\$1.2 billion in deferred dividends to HK Gov

Hong Kong's flagship carrier Cathay Pacific remains committed to paying nearly US\$153 million in deferred share dividends it owes the government and will push forward with rebuilding operations ahead of the launch of the airport's three-runway system, the airline's new CEO Ronald Lam has said. He also said that profitability is back on the radar for the stricken airline and there's hope for the aviation industry in general after three pandemic-hit years, but he warned that there were still challenges hindering a rapid return to normality. [SCMP](#) Jan 30 & 31

HK's Exchange Fund posts record US\$25.8 billion loss after an 'exceptionally volatile' year

The Exchange Fund, the war chest used to defend the Hong Kong dollar from attacks by short-sellers, reported the worst year on record in 2022 as it lost HK\$202.4 billion (US\$25.8 billion) during a historically bad year in the global financial market, according to the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA). The record annual loss, the first since 2015, compares with a gain of HK\$191.9 billion in 2021. It is only the third time that the fund has reported an annual loss since the HKMA, which manages the fund, began disclosing annual results in 2000. [SCMP](#) Jan 30

Government has all the land needed for light public flats but will cut cost by stripping out air con

Housing Secretary Winnie Ho said on Monday that the government has already found all the land it needs to build the 30,000 light public flats announced in the chief executive's latest policy address. However, she also revealed how the government has managed to cut down the price tag for the 30,000 light public flats it plans to build, saying it will save millions by not installing air conditioners. [RTHK1](#) [RTHK2](#) Jan 30

Financial Secretary hints fiscal policy change ahead of budget and warns of more taxing days

[Paul Chan](#) said the administration adopted an expansionary fiscal policy in the past few years to cope with the Covid pandemic. He said the measures were counter-cyclical but caused a huge fiscal deficit. Entering the post-pandemic era, Chan said the government has to invest in the future and boost development. He further warned of heavier tax burden as the fiscal policy of the next budget will shift from "expansionary" to "relatively balanced" due to huge deficit from three years of Covid pandemic. [RTHK](#) [TS](#) Jan 28 & 30

December exports fall 28.9%, biggest monthly drop in 7 decades

The Census and Statistics Department said that HK's exports plunged in December by the most since the 1950s at 28.9%, extending an eight-month streak of declines fuelled by China's slowdown and a global demand drop-off. [TS](#) Jan 27

Job numbers go up as Covid hurdles go down

Employment improved for the eighth consecutive month in December with the jobless rate falling to 3.5% in the last quarter from 3.7% in the September-November period, latest government job figures showed. [TS](#) Jan 20

HK to attract Middle East companies with promotion drive

In an exclusive interview with [SCMP](#), Financial Secretary Paul Chan said the government aims to attract Middle East companies to visit the city this year and explore possible stock market listing opportunities, as part of an 'aggressive' policy drive to promote itself to rest of the world. Lee plans to visit the Middle East in the coming months to forge close economic ties with Gulf States. Lee also said that he hopes to attend APEC meetings in US in coming November but admitted uncertainty over whether US' sanctions against him would derail his plan. [SCMP](#) [TS](#) [RTHK](#) [TS](#) Jan 1 & 19

Global talent scheme 'exceeds expectations', attracts 5 300 applicants, says labour chief

Secretary for Labour and Welfare Chris Sun said the number of applications for the Top Talent Pass Scheme almost double the 2 600 received as of 4 January which showed that HK is an attractive place. About 3 600 of the applications have been approved. [SCMP](#) [TS](#) Jan 14

Hong Kong to Return as a Top Property Investment Location

HK has returned to the top five Asia-Pacific investment destinations by property consultancy CBRE for the first time since 2020, thanks to an expected pandemic recovery and low pricing. The report on real estate investor intentions for 2023 showed the Asian financial hub came in at number five after Tokyo, Singapore,

Ho Chi Minh City and Sydney among the most preferred cities for cross-border investments. [Bloomberg CBRE](#) Jan 12

Hong Kong Companies Will Have to Disclose Climate Risk

Companies listed on the HK Stock Exchange will soon need to disclose risks related to climate change in line with emerging global standards, the city's top financial regulator said Wednesday. [Bloomberg](#) Jan 11

HK's isolation estimated to cost economy \$27 billion

The economy lost an estimated EUR25.4 billion in potential growth due to the effects of the pandemic and the city's strict Covid curbs, according to Natixis SA. Natixis based its calculation on the assumption HK's economy would have grown an average annual 2.8% over the past three years in the absence of Covid, and amounts to about 7% of the city's gross domestic product in 2018. [Bloomberg](#) Jan 4

COVID-19 /Environment

Quarantine requirements for Covid-positive individuals to cancel on 30 January

High-speed rail link to resume on Jan 15 amid border reopening with mainland China on Jan 8. Up to 60,000 travelers from Hong Kong will be allowed to cross over to mainland China daily from Sunday, authorities revealed at a press briefing for the long-awaited reopening of the border after three years of strict Covid-19 pandemic curbs. John Lee announced the latest relaxation on Covid restriction policies today. Sources said the SAR government will drop mask mandate between March and April at the earliest. [SCMP](#) [TS](#) Jan 5 & 18

Macao

Jobless rate rises to 3.7% in 2022

The Statistics and Census has announced that the general unemployment rate last year stood at 3.7%, while local residents' the unemployment rate amounted to 4.8%, up by 0.8 and 0.9 percentage points respectively year on year. [MPD](#) [MN](#) Jan 30

Almost quarter-million visitors flood Macao at Lunar New Year

Between the eve of New Year and the third day of the holiday, Macao welcomed a grand total of 244 664 visitors, with an average daily rate of 61 166, marking an increase of 276.9% compared to that in 2022. [MN](#) Jan 26

22 newbies among local members for 14th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

A total of 38 people from Macao have been appointed as members of the upcoming 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference CPPCC, one person more than in the current 13th CPPCC National Committee. They comprise 29 members 'invited from Macao' and nine members who belong to other sectors such as business, education, journalism and publication, health, and social services. [MPD](#) [MD](#) [MB](#) Jan 18

Legislators pass state secret bill and trade union law upon first reading

The state secret bill passed at the Legislative Assembly with little opposition. Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong pledged that it will not compromise citizens' right to information. Under the bill, the Chief Executive or a national body has the legal power to draw up a definition for a state secret, which can be kept out of reach for as long as 30 years. An offender could face a prison term of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the offence. At the same time, the trade union bill was also passed although with criticism from several lawmakers. They added that it lacks protection mechanisms for the workers involved in trade union activities. The bill also does not include the right to collective negotiation agreements nor the right to protest through strike action. [MB](#) [MDT1](#) [MPD](#) [MN](#) [MDT2](#) Jan 17

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