

# Press Review Hong Kong

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## Switzerland

### Watchmaker Swatch apologises for 'slanted eyes' ad after China social media uproar

Watchmaker Swatch has pulled an ad featuring a model pulling the corner of his eyes following a backlash on Chinese social media. As calls for a boycott escalated, Swatch apologised and said it had "taken note of the recent concerns regarding the portrayal of a model," according to a statement. [HKFP](#), Aug 19

## Mainland

### Beijing slams G7 for 'slandering and defaming' Hong Kong police over bounties

On August 8, the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, supported by the EU and associate members Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Sweden, condemned Hong Kong's decision to issue HK\$200,000 (~€22 100) bounties on 15 overseas activists linked to the "Hong Kong Parliament" group. In response, the Hong Kong government, the Commissioner's Office of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong, and the Chinese Embassy in the UK strongly rejected the criticism between August 9 and 10, accusing the G7 of defaming Hong Kong police and interfering in China's internal affairs. [SCMP Global Times](#), Aug 11

## Foreign Policy / International Relations

### Taiwan €203 billion pension avoids Hong Kong firms for mandates

Bloomberg reported on August 20 that Taiwan's Bureau of Labour Funds, which manages approximately US\$235.2 billion (€203 billion), has advised external asset managers to avoid using Hong Kong-registered entities. The verbal guidance, in place since last year, reflects growing geopolitical concerns over Hong Kong's integration with mainland China. [Bloomberg](#), Aug 20

### Government strongly disapproves and rejects US report on human rights

The government 'strongly disapproves and rejects the unfounded and biased content' related to HK in the US Department of State's 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. The US report pointed out that 'human rights situation deteriorated in HK's as 'the regional and central governments further dismantled HK's political freedoms and autonomy during the year.' [US report](#) [HK statement](#), Aug 15

### UK and EU Support for Hongkongers Facing Political Persecution

The UK has assured it will not extradite resettled Hongkongers for politically motivated reasons, emphasizing judicial safeguards. Meanwhile, the EU condemned extraterritorial arrest warrants issued by HK authorities against 15 pro-democracy activists, including an EU citizen, calling the move an unacceptable attempt to intimidate and suppress freedom of expression. Separately, activist Carman Lau reported British police pressured her to self-censor and avoid public gatherings. [EU Statement](#) [SCMP Guardian](#), Aug 1, 4

## Domestic Policy / Politics / Law

### Bloomberg journalist latest to be denied Hong Kong work visa 'without reason'

Bloomberg journalist Rebecca Choong Wilkins has been denied a work visa renewal by the HK Immigration Department, with no reason given, according to a statement by the Foreign Correspondents' Club. It is the latest in a string of unexplained visa denials for journalists, despite HK's drive to attract talent and repeated assurances over press freedom. [HKFP](#), Aug 24

### Migrant domestic worker group hits back over pay freeze petition

A migrant workers' group has expressed disagreement with a recent petition calling on the authorities to freeze foreign domestic workers' minimum wage amid the sluggish economy. A salary freeze would not alleviate the economic hardships, the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body said in a statement. [HKFP](#) Aug 22

### Public Opposition to Same-Sex Partnership Bill Remains Strong

The proposed same-sex partnership bill has faced significant public resistance, with over 80% of the 10'775 submissions received during the consultation period opposing the initiative. Despite extensive lobbying efforts by Secretary for Mainland and Constitutional Affairs Eric Tsang, the government has not succeeded in shifting political support. Concerns range from threats to traditional marriage to broader social implications. With the Legislative Council currently in recess and elections approaching in December, the timeline for further legislative progress remains uncertain. [HKEJ](#), [HKFP](#), Aug 7, 11, 18

### Hong Kong cancels passports of 12 activists wanted under NSL after involvement with overseas group

In early August, Hong Kong authorities cancelled the passports of 12 activists wanted under the National Security Law for involvement with overseas groups. Albert Ho, former chair of the Hong Kong Alliance, plans to plead guilty in a subversion case, with trial set for November. Meanwhile, police summoned the father of activist Alan Keung Ka-wai to assist in investigating the banned 'HK Parliament' group, of which Keung is wanted for subversion. [HKFP1](#) [SCMP](#) [HKFP2](#) [HKFP3](#), Aug 4, 12, 13, 14

### **Former Chief Executive raises concerns over HK's capacity to accommodate talent influx**

In a social media post published on August 12, former HK Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying renewed his scrutiny of the city's talent admission schemes, warning that existing infrastructure may struggle to accommodate the growing population of mainland-born residents and imported professionals. He pointed out that the Basic Law has imposed stringent requirements for the status of Permanent Residents. [The Standard](#), Aug 13

### **Economy**

#### **Hong Kong home prices log fourth straight gain in July as market shows signs of recovery**

According to data from the Rating and Valuation Department on 27 August, secondary home prices in Hong Kong have increased 1.05% since April, narrowing this year's price decline to 0.45%. Meanwhile, Midland Realty stated that they expect secondary residential transactions to increase more than 9% this year to 45'000, a four-year high. Data from Centaline Property Agency on 25 August also showed that the new home sales were likely to hit a six-year high of more than 20'000 units this year. [SCMP](#), Aug 27

#### **Local retail giant cuts staff amid Hong Kong retail malaise**

DFI Retail Group is set to lay off staff, as the operator of Wellcome, Mannings and 7-Eleven adapts to shifting consumer trends in the city. CEO of HK's largest retail group Scott Price told employees that the company would take actions to simplify operations to meet customer expectations of lower prices. [SCMP](#), Aug 25

#### **City's overall consumer prices rise by 1% in July**

The Census & Statistics Department announced on August 21 that overall consumer prices rose 1% in July, a smaller increase than the 1.4% registered in June. The government attributed the smaller rise in overall consumer prices to the 'lower ceiling of rates concession' in June, compared with the same month last year, while there was no such concessions in the July both this and last year. [HK GOV](#) [RTHK](#) [The Standard](#), Aug 22

#### **Stock exchange's first-half profit jumps nearly 40% to record**

Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing (HKEX) reported a record first-half profit of HK\$8.52 billion, up nearly 40%, fueled by increased trading activity and a revived listings market. The launch of the Technology Enterprises Channel in May has sparked a wave of confidential filings by biotech and AI firms, such as Zelos Tech and MiniMax, seeking private listings. New listing rules, effective August 4, easing public float requirements and prioritizing institutional investors, have further incentivized major Chinese companies to list in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, Malaysian budget airline AirAsia is exploring a potential HKEX listing by mid-2024. [Reuters1](#) [Bloomberg](#) [Reuters2](#) [Bloomberg](#) [TVB](#), Aug 21, 15

#### **Mainland medtech firms use HK gateway to boost international push**

According to Invest Hong Kong, over 30 biotech firms set up in the city last year alone, with double-digit growth expected this year in inquiries and new setups across the innovation sector. Andy Wong Wai-cheuk, Head of Innovation and Technology at InvestHK, said Hong Kong's policy advantages are key drawcards, with mainland firms now making up 60 to 70% of new arrivals. [The Standard](#), Aug 20

#### **Hong Kong jobless rate rises to 3.7%**

Preliminary data released by the Census and Statistics Department showed that Hong Kong's unemployment rate rose to 3.7% over the past three months, with authorities partly attributing the change to university graduates entering the job market, and the construction, catering, retail and property sectors taking the biggest hits. This marks the highest rate recorded in 33 months, when the unemployment rate stood at 3.8% from August to October 2022. [SCMP](#) [The Standard](#), Aug 20

#### **Financial Secretary says global supply chain realignment a boom for Hong Kong**

Financial Secretary Paul Chan said that the city is benefiting from global supply chain realignment with double-digit growth in merchandise trade in recent months. He noted that HK's exports to Vietnam and Malaysia surged more than 50% and 30% respectively in the first half, while imports from these nations grew about 70% and 30%. Separately, Chief Executive John Lee revealed that he received more than 6'900 submissions in policy address consultations, an increase of 10% from last year. Lee stated that his annual policy blueprint will include measures aimed at fostering patriotism in students through education. [The Standard](#) [SCMP](#), Aug 18

#### **HKMA poll shows Hong Kong's banks desperate for AI, green finance talent to avert 2030 shortage**

HK lenders were expected to face a talent shortage in artificial intelligence (AI), green finance and expertise related to the Middle East and Asean markets over the next five years, according to a study led by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA). 'We want to see local banks provide more training for their staff to upgrade their knowledge and skills to plug the talent shortage gap, instead of using higher pay to fight for talent from other banks,' Arthur Yuen, HKMA Deputy Chief Executive, said on August 15 ahead of the survey's release on August 18. Separately, Bloomberg reported that over the past year, Hong Kong's insurance regulator has been

steering some of the financial hub's biggest life insurers to move investment decision-making functions back to the city following their relocation to Singapore. [SCMP Bloomberg](#), Aug 18

### **CK Hutchison's Panama Ports Deal Faces Delays Amid Legal Challenges**

On August 1, Panama Ports Company, a unit of HK-listed CK Hutchison, announced plans to engage with the Panamanian government and stakeholders following two legal cases filed by Panama's comptroller general, one seeking to nullify the company's contract to operate two key ports on each side of the Panama Canal, and another challenging its constitutionality. An expert warned on August 8 that a possible state partnership could fundamentally change the ports' operating structure and potentially trigger significant financial losses for CK Hutchison, including aborted transaction costs and breach-of-contract damages from buyers affected by the now-canceled global ports deal. Despite these challenges, CK Hutchison's Co-Managing Director Frank Sixt stated on August 14 that the US\$23 billion (€19 billion) deal will not close this year but remains hopeful that ongoing talks will lead to a beneficial outcome for all parties. [FT](#) [The Standard](#) [SCMP](#) [SCMP](#) [The Standard Guardian](#), Aug 5, 8, 15

### **Chief Executive to lure non-local companies while tapping emerging markets**

On August 10, Chief Executive John Lee pledged to attract more mainland and international enterprises to establish headquarters or corporate divisions in HK, aiming to boost the economy and generate employment. On the same day, Financial Secretary Paul Chan revealed that the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises will soon announce its fifth batch of a dozen strategic enterprises coming to HK; many of which are global leaders from the pharmaceutical industry. Separately, an article published by The Diplomat on August 6 argued that HK is being repositioned to serve China's Global South agenda, gradually moving away from its conventional role connecting China and the West. [The Standard](#) – [CE](#) [The Standard](#) – [FS](#) [The Diplomat](#), Aug 11

### **HK brands thrive in mainland e-commerce as 78% consumers favour Hong Kong products**

According to a report released by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) on August 7, consumers from the mainland exhibit a strong confidence in brands from HK, with 78% having purchased Hong Kong products online within the past year. Meanwhile, the average rating for HK products has reached 8.7, particularly for electronics, luxury items, and fashion products. [The Standard](#) [RTHK](#) [SCMP](#), Aug 8

### **Cathay Pacific Unveils Boeing Jet Deal Amid Market Challenges**

Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific announced an US\$8.1 billion order for 14 Boeing jets, marking its first purchase from the US manufacturer in over a decade. Despite this major investment, the airline warned of declining airfares, ongoing challenges at its budget carrier, and uncertainty in the cargo market, which caused its shares to fall nearly 10% to a one-month low. Cathay noted that its cargo business has remained resilient despite tariff changes in the US earlier this year. Meanwhile, HK and Shanghai Hotels, operator of The Peninsula Hotels, highlighted that visits from high-spending North American tourists have yet to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels. [HKFP](#) [Reuters](#) [SCMP](#), Aug 6, 7

### **Hong Kong ranks 8th in global smart cities index, beating Seoul and Singapore**

In the International Society for Urban Informatics Smart City Index 2025 published by HK Polytechnic University on August 6, HK has ranked eighth globally, outperforming many of its peers in Asia, including Seoul and Singapore. The city was the second-highest performing Asian city in the ranking, with Tokyo the only location on the continent to outperform it at fifth. [SCMP](#), Aug 07

### **China Mobile buys over 14% stake in local network operator for €120 million**

On August 4, state-owned China Mobile, the world's biggest wireless carrier by users, confirmed that it had bought a 14.4% stake in Hong Kong-based broadband service provider HKBN for HK\$1.08 billion (€120 million). The deal gives China Mobile a nearly 30% stake in one of the largest telecommunication operators in Hong Kong. [Reuters](#), Aug 5

### **HK's economy grows 3.1% in Q2**

According to the figures released on July 31 by the Census & Statistics Department, Hong Kong's economy in the second quarter increased 3.1% year-on-year, picking up from the 3% growth in the preceding quarter. Compared to a year earlier, exports of services rose by 7.5% in the second quarter, while imports of services went up 7%. Separately, Frederick Ma Si-hang, Chairman of the Trade Development Council, highlighted that 'as many foreign enterprises are using Hong Kong as a gateway into the mainland, this reinforces the city's status as an international financial hub.' He added that Hong Kong should explore new markets such as Africa, and take reference from Switzerland in striking a balance among development in finance, industry, and tourism. [RTHK](#) [The Standard](#), Aug 1



### HK unis accept over 60 students affected by US policy

On August 3, Education Minister Christine Choi said HK's eight public universities received over 1'000 transfer enquiries after welcoming students facing discrimination under US policies. More than 60 offers have been made to students from various US universities. Choi also noted that HK universities remain active in attracting top global talent. Separately, Cathay Pacific announced on August 4 the resumption of direct flights between Brussels and HK. [RTHK Brussels Times](#), Aug 6

### Macao

#### Macao Highlights Economic Diversification and Business Growth

Macao is reinforcing its commitment to building a more resilient economy. On August 7, Secretary for Economy and Finance Tai Kin Ip stressed the importance of economic diversification to address structural challenges and safeguard long-term stability amid global uncertainties.

Latest figures from the Statistics and Census Service reflect steady business activity in the second quarter of 2025, with 1,107 new companies established—mainly in wholesale, retail, and business services—against 283 closures. The total registered capital of new firms reached MOP 98 million, underscoring continued investor confidence in the SAR's market. [Gov Macao](#) [Macao News](#) [Macao News](#), Aug 8, 12

#### Macao Strengthens Regional Cooperation with Hong Kong, Guangdong, and Shanghai

Macao is stepping up regional collaboration following two high-level meetings this August. On August 5, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee led a delegation to Macao, where he met with Chief Executive Sam Hou-fai. Both leaders pledged to deepen cooperation between the two SARs and reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the Greater Bay Area (GBA) initiative. Lee underscored the importance of the Guangdong–Macao In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin as a model for strengthening the "one country, two systems" framework. Two days later, on August 7, Macao signed a series of cooperation agreements with Shanghai after talks between Sam Hou-fai and Shanghai Mayor Gong Zheng. The memoranda span areas including financial collaboration, the convention and exhibition industry, academic exchange, scientific innovation, and education. These initiatives aim to expand Macao's role in national development while enhancing synergies with major mainland cities. [Macao News](#) [Macao Business](#) [The Standard](#) [RTHK](#) [Macao News](#), Aug 6, 8

#### EU condemns authorities for arrest of former lawmaker and activist

The European Union issued a statement on August 2 condemning the arrest of former Macau lawmaker and activist Au Kam-san, expressing concern over the erosion of political pluralism and freedom of speech. On August 1, Portugal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed it is monitoring the case through its consulate in Macau, while the Liberal Initiative party announced plans to propose a vote of condemnation in the Assembly of the Republic. In response, the Macau government, the Commissioner's Office of China's Foreign Ministry in Macau, and China's mission to the EU strongly rejected the EU's statement between August 2 and August 4, criticising it as interference in China's internal affairs. [SCMP](#) [TSF](#) [MOGOV](#) [OCMFA](#) [PRC mission to EU](#), Aug 2

### Special Focus: Jimmy Lai Trial

#### Hong Kong's Jimmy Lai Trial comes to close: Press Freedom and National Security in Focus

In August 2025, Hong Kong's national security trial of pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai drew intense attention. The government strongly rejected external criticisms about Lai's treatment and defended the city's media environment. Closing arguments, initially scheduled for August 14, were delayed due to weather and Lai's health, with proceedings resuming on August 18.

US President Donald Trump expressed his commitment to help Lai, despite expected pushback from China. Press freedom group Reporters Without Borders condemned the trial as a crackdown on press freedom, while Beijing-backed media accused critics of trying to influence the case.

Prosecutors accused Lai of collaborating with foreign actors to undermine China, while judges debated whether his newspaper, Apple Daily, published "seditious" content. Lai's defense argued the paper was part of public discourse and deserved broad freedom of expression.

Facing charges of foreign collusion and sedition, Lai risks a life sentence if convicted, with the trial underscoring ongoing tensions around press freedom and national security in Hong Kong.

On August 28, after more than 1.5 years the trial comes to close. Judge Esther Toh Lye-ping did not give a date on when the court would deliver its judgment, she indicated that the judiciary would inform both parties in a 'good time' once they are prepared to deliver their verdict.

[HKFP1](#) [Hong Kong Gov](#) [SCMP](#) [Fox News](#) [Reuters](#) [HKFP2](#) [Wen Wei Po](#) [SCMP](#) [The Witness](#) [HKGGOV statement](#) [HKFP3](#) [HKFP4](#) [HKFP5](#) [HKFP6](#) [SCMP](#) [DW](#) [The Standard](#), Aug 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 29

Consulate General of Switzerland in Hong Kong

62/F, Central Plaza, 18 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, Phone: +852 3509 5000

[hongkong@eda.admin.ch](mailto:hongkong@eda.admin.ch), [www.eda.admin.ch/hongkong](http://www.eda.admin.ch/hongkong)

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