FREE HONG KONG NEWS DIGEST

By WONG Yik-Mo, Befria Hong Kong (Sweden), Netherlands for Hong Kong, Hong Kong Committee in Norway and Støt Hong Kong (Denmark)

The first National Security Education Day

A "riot police theme park" in HK, kindergarteners receive national security education, and pupils imitate police attacks at the metro, a "nightmare" to HongKongers.

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Journalist convicted for use of public records

Journalist Bao Choy convicted for making false statements to obtain vehicle ownership records while researching for her documentary on mob attacks in 2019. Her documentary reveals the Police collusion with mobs.

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HK passes law that can stop people leaving

No court order is required and there is no recourse to appeal. The Bar Association said the bill's wording gave "apparently unfettered power" to the immigration director.

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legislature to tackle "doxxing". Foreign Correspondents' Club calls "fake news" a vague and subjective way to attack unfavourable coverage.	Trial updates			

ELECTION CAMPAIGN SPENDING REFUNDS BARRED BY GOVERNMENT

Candidates for LegCo elections under investigation for NSL breaches will not be refunded campaign expenses, after Hong Kong government's revision of guidelines on 20 April. The government also retains the right to ask candidates to pay back the money if the individual is later found to be "not entitled".

Under the original guidelines, candidates with valid nominations were entitled to "receive a payment from the government in an amount equal to the declared election expenses". However, the pro-Beijing camp criticised the reimbursements as "channelling money to fund the anti-China elements". [SCMP]

HONG KONG'S 1ST NATIONAL SECURITY DAY: AN OPEN DAY FOR CCP PROPAGANDA

Wednesday 14 April saw the first National Security Education Day in Hong Kong, as the police put up a show for the public and students at the Police College, with military marches and action shows that created a kind of "riot police theme park". Other highlights for the day included:

- 'Forbidden colour': Journalists were demanded to remove black face-masks at Police College without giving reasons.
- Kindergarteners received national security brochures about China's 16 "strategic areas for national security"
- Schoolchildren played with mock weapons, being encouraged to imitate police brutality inside the metro, which reminds the public of how bare hand citizens on trains were attacked by police on 31 Aug 2019.
- Secondary schools marched and chanted for national security in Mandarin, the official language in China, instead of Cantonese.

'The Education Bureau will also continue to provide relevant training for teachers and render professional support and advice to schools on all fronts, such as school visits and forming teachers' learning circles," said Secretary for Education Kevin Yeung for the day. [CNN, HKFP, Reuters, Stand News (Chinese), Apple Daily 1,2,3 (Chinese), HKGOV]

JOURNALIST CONVICTED FOR USE OF PUBLIC RECORDS

in her award-winning documentary about police

Hong Kong documentary producer, Bao Choy, has been found guilty and fined HK\$6,000 for making false statements to obtain vehicle ownership records while conducting research for an RTHK documentary on the 2019 Yuen Long mob attacks ('Who Owns the Truth'). Choy has received support from the RTHK Staff Union, citizens, as well as the EU and the Foreign Correspondents' Club Hong Kong, who have both issued statements. The latter was condemned by the Office of The Commissioner of the Chinese FM in HK for "meddling with Hong Kong affairs".

The Yuen Long mob attack in July 2019 was one of the most controversial incidents in the 2019 protests. The police watchdog defended claims for police collusion in its report issued in May 2020. RTHK broadcasted the episode *Who Owns the Truth* in July 2020, also available on <u>YouTube</u>. [HKFP, <u>Twitter</u>, <u>FCCHK</u>, <u>RTHK</u>]

PRESS FREEDOM

Even though I was found guilty, I don't see journalism as a crime. I hope the industry will find [a] way to pursue our highest values of journalism in the long run.

- Bao Choy

JOURNALIST RESIGNS AFTER WHO INTERVIEW

about Taiwan's membership

RTHK has been asked to respond to the commerce minister's criticism regarding violations of the One-China policy. This is in response to an interview with WHO's Bruce Aylward about Taiwan's WHO-membership status in 2020. Sources say the RTHK producer, Yvonne Tong, who conducted the interview and has since been attacked by pro-Beijing media and doxxed, has resigned. [Twitter, HKFP]

PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE RTHK ON TIGHT LEASH

Since the new director took office at Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), at least five senior staff have resigned. The remaining staff tell of a white terror regime in the organisation.

▶ 10th case of axed content

Hong Kong Connection, one of the city's most trusted current affairs programmes, had its latest episode "Journalist's Wayout", documenting on newspapers *Citizen News* and *Hong Kong Free Press*, scrapped after a month-long vetting. This is the tenth cancellation after Patrick Li took office as Director of Broadcasting on 1 March.

According to the team, RTHK management also told them that their refusal to include interviews with pro-establishment media outlets amounted to "disobeying orders," adding that they might hold the team accountable and impose fines if the episode was not "impartial." [HKFP]

RTHK's TV production, who faces a 4.6 percent budget cut in 2021/2022, may undertake a restructuring as soon as May. [RTHK, Apple Daily (Chinese)]

▶ Videos to be deleted after one year

According to its staff, management plans to delete all videos on its YouTube channel one year after being aired. Award-winning investigative videos about police violence are among those to be deleted. Staff criticise the action as a means for new management to delete unpopular content. [Stand News (Chinese)]

► Rejected awards

The episode "Who Owns the Truth" of *Hong Kong Connection* won a local press freedom. However, RTHK rejected the award. RTHK had also announced to withdraw two other major journalism awards. [HKFP (1), (2)]

AUTHORITIES TO SET THEIR "FAKE NEWS" RED LINE

Hong Kong's government is the "biggest victim of fake news," Chief Executive Carrie Lam told lawmakers. She pledged to submit a bill to tackle "doxxing" within the current legislative term, in the chamber where no opposition is represented.

Hong Kong's Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) has urged the Police Chief, who has also supported the "fake news bill" in public, to clarify the definition of "fake news", as the term is "vague, subjective, and has been used... to attack coverages they view as unfavourable." The FCC has also invited the Police Chief to questions about the term. [HKFP (1), (2), FCC]

HONG KONG PASSES BILL THAT CAN STOP PEOPLE LEAVING

Hong Kong has passed a new immigration law that includes powers to stop people entering or leaving the city, raising fears of Chinese mainland-style "exit bans" in the international business hub. The law will come into effect on August 1.

No court order is required and there is no recourse to appeal. The Bar Association (HKBA) said the bill's wording gave "apparently unfettered power" to the immigration director. [HKFP, The Guardian]

HONG KONG'S GREAT FIREWALL FOR THE INTERNET

Websites of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Taiwan's ruling party, have been blocked from Hong Kong, along with that of Taiwan's military, and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Hong Kong's national security authorities are alleged to be behind this.

The Church was reported by Wen Wei Po, a Beijing-controlled newspaper, to have been involved in a crowdfunding project to support Hong Kong protesters to study in Taiwan. [Apple Daily]

CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN CIVIL SERVICE

▶ Disloyal civil servants to be fired

NSL of Hong Kong requires anyone "who stands for election or assumes public office" to declare their loyalty in writing or via oath-taking (Article 6). It also stipulates that those who violate the declared allegiance will be removed from office upon conviction and disqualified from standing for elections (Article 35). [HK NSL]

Among 170,000 civil servants who were required self-declarations, 129 refused the pledge. 25 of them have resigned, and the rest have been suspended from duty or put on unpaid leave while being put into the queue of termination.

► Loyalty pledge encourages backstabbing

Backstabbing among civil servants has intensified after the announcement of the oath-taking arrangement, a unionist claimed. More than 10,000 cases of oath violation reported by civil servants have been recorded. [HKFP, SCMP, Anadolu Agency, Standard]

For reference, within a similar period of time, over 80,000 reports of NSL violation have been received since the NSL hotline was set up in the city last November. [Twitter]

PROTEST GROUP ACCUSED BY POLICE

Civil Human Rights Front, a group that organises mass protests, has been accused by the police of breaching Society Ordinance, as the group is not officially registered. Offenders could face up to 3 months imprisonment. A former convener explained that it would be against freedom of association if the front was registered at the police. He also found the timing of the police action peculiar, as the latter have granted no-objection letter to the front for the past 18 years and have been aware that the front was unregistered.

Police have also requested an explanation by the front for taking part in a joint petition with other groups last December asking a United Nations agency to urge the Beijing and Hong Kong governments to improve human rights. [SCMP, Stand News]

COVID-19 IN HONG KONG

Measures were met with distrust, China pushes vaccine on Hongkongers

The Hong Kong government's attempts to mitigate the pandemic in the city have been met with little cooperation, due to the people's rock-bottom trust in authorities. Free COVID-19 tests proved unpopular due to fears that patient DNA will be sent to China. Surveillance concerns have dissuaded many from installing the government's contact-tracing app, and ambush-style building lockdowns have sparked outrage among the freedom-loving populace.

Vaccination rates remain at only 5.9 percent, as people refused to choose between Sinovac's vaccine and that of Pfizer-BioNTech, which is distributed there by Fosun Pharma, a Chinese company. The government tried to encourage vaccination by allowing businesses to re-open if employees are vaccinated. Mung Siu-Tat, leader of the Confederation of Trade Unions (CTU), said workers were angry about the arrangement. "[Carrie Lam] said they would not make the vaccination scheme mandatory, but now [authorities] use people's job security to threaten [them] to get vaccinated." Some workers were told they would be suspended or asked to take unpaid leave if they are not vaccinated, CTU revealed.

Chinese authorities are now saying that visa applications will be expedited for people who have received a Chinese-made vaccine, in a bid to convince Hongkongers who have family or business in China to choose Sinovac. Health Secretary Sophia Chan said that standards had not been lowered to accept Sinovac, and there was no pressure from Beijing to get it approved. However, the city's vaccine-approval committee was not asked to consider Sinovac's efficacy in comparison to any peer-reviewed vaccine.

A public health specialist told The Economist, "About one-third who took Sinovac were coerced, another third did it for some sort of personal gain or to curry favour with someone, and the final third just wanted to get vaccinated." The queue for Sinovac is shorter than that of Pfizer-BioNTech, due to the latter's more popular demand. A medical scientist in Hong Kong stated, "The politicians have all got Sinovac and the medical experts have all got BioNTech: what does that tell you?" [Economist, SCMP, Reuters]

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

Australian government cancels Belt & Road deal

citing inconsistency in foreign policy.

Social credit system creeps into Canada

in a chain hotpot restaurant. Videos will be sent to China.

China pressures Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

to suppress freedom of speech.

EU Foreign Affairs Council withdrew measures

drafted in response to HK. Sources said Hungary vetoed.

MEPs asked to reassess extradition treaties

in letters sent to these countries' Permanent Representatives.

EU steps up in the Indo-Pacific region

with new policy that counters China's influence in South China Sea

Hungary pays to build a Chinese uni campus

in Budapest with €1.5B. Construction will be done by a Chinese company, with workers and materials.

French & German leaders talked with Xi

without mention of Hong Kong or human rights.

China condemns Lithuania

for a Uyghur genocide discussion in parliament.

UK government to cut human rights budget in China

For human rights initiatives, to a sum of £900,000.

British MPs call for sanctions on HK

and declare China's Uyghur treatment a genocide

HK government lobbied US politicians

not to support the HK Human Rights & Democracy bill with millions of taxpayer money.

Australian government cancels Belt and Road deal

Australia announced on 21
April it would revoke a state
government's deal to join
China's Belt and Road
Initiative. Canberra last year
introduced new laws that
allow it to scrap any
agreements between state
authorities and foreign
countries deemed to threaten
the national interest. Foreign
Minister Marise Payne said
that these arrangements were
inconsistent with the nation's
foreign policy.

Canberra has already taken steps to limit China's influence in the country, such as banning Huawei from building Australia's 5G network and tightening foreign investment laws for corporations. However the Chinese government-backed Confucius Institutes remain at Australia's public universities. [HKFP]

China's social credit system creeps into Canada

Ryan Pan, a Haidilao Hot Pot restaurant manager in Vancouver, confirmed that over 60 surveillance cameras have been installed in the restaurant as part of the social credit system in China. The cameras, whose footage was sent back to China, were reportedly installed to "punish" staff and to "people track". However the reason for sending the footage to China was, according to Pan, a "secret".

Although concerns over whether the social credit system can also be used to spy on Canadian citizens have been raised, Harry Bains (Minister of Labour in British Columbia), Lisa Beare (Minister of Citizens' Service in British Columbia) and Prime Minister Trudeau (via Prime Minister's Office) did not respond when asked if they were aware of the issue. [SundayGuardianLive]

Chinese pressure on Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to suppress freedom of speech

New documents for the Special Tibet Commission revealed that the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been directly behind attempts to persuade Parliament members not to meet with prominent Tibetan exiles, including the Dalai Lama. [Berlingske]

New evidence regarding the intervention in the lawful demonstrations during the official visits from China in 2011 and 2012 also emerged

showing that Foreign
Ministry officials had spoken
directly about the "location of
protesters". In several cases,
Tibetan protesters were
hidden away from the
Chinese delegation and
deprived of their Tibetan
flags. [Jyllands-Posten]

EU drops measures against Hong Kong's electoral reform

The EU's drafted measures in response to Hong Kong's electoral reform, originally to be announced at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 19 April, have been withdrawn. Hungary is believed to have vetoed the text, which included suspension of extradition treaties and a lifeboat proposal. The issue could be revisited in May, an EU official said. [SCMP]

MEPs asked Permanent Representatives to reassess extradition treaties

A cross-party group of MEPs have sent letters dated 28 April to the Permanent Representatives of 10 EU states, asking them to reassess extradition treaties in light of Beijing's crackdown in Hong Kong. Citing Ted Hui as an example, the letter mentions a "dangerous trend" within the EU, in which China

demanded the extradition of activists for financial crimes, sidestepping the existing provisions against political persecution. [Twitter <u>Finbarr Bermingham</u>]

EU new policy counters China's influence in South China Sea

The EU called out China on 24 April for endangering peace in the South China Sea and urged all parties to abide by a 2016 tribunal ruling which rejected most of China's claim to sovereignty in the sea. The EU also resolved on 19 April to step up its influence in the Indo-Pacific region, with a plan that could mean a higher EU diplomatic profile on Indo-Pacific issues, more EU personnel and investment in the region, and possibly a greater security presence, based on the promotion of democracy, rule of law. human rights, and international law. [Reuters]

Hungary pays China €1.5B to build a Chinese university campus in Budapest

According to the Hungarian government's proposal to have a campus for Shanghai's Fudan University in Budapest, the construction will be done by China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC), using Chinese workers and materials. The project is estimated to cost Hungary €1.5 billion, which is more than the entire higher education system operation cost in 2019. The government will also provide the land, worth €2.3 million, free of charge. The Budapest municipality has voiced its opposition as it is not clear what advantage Hungary could gain from the project.

In 2019, Fudan University's charter on freedom of thought and academic freedom was replaced by a declaration of allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party. The company CSCEC had previously built the African Union's headquarters in Ethiopia, which was later discovered to be full of hidden microphones, and where data was secretly copied to servers in Shanghai every night. Last year, the company was blacklisted by the US due to its close ties to the Chinese army, which oversees most of China's intelligence activities.

In February, the EU sent a concept note to European authorities and universities to warn about "foreign interference" of a "coercive, covert, deceptive, [and] corrupting" nature occurring

in some EU research institutes. [<u>Direkt36</u>, <u>Der</u> <u>Standard</u>, <u>EU Observer</u>]

French and German leaders met with Xi online

French President Macron and German Chancellor Merkel had a virtual summit with Xi Jinping on 16 April, at which no mention of Hong Kong, sanctions, or human rights was made. [SCMP (1), (2)]

In another talk on 28 April, Merkel called for human rights dialogue while China asked for more cooperation. [SCMP]

China calls Uyghur genocide talks in Lithuania a farce

On 22 April, Lithuania's parliament had a human rights discussion, which included topics on Uyghur repression that may be recognised as genocide. Uyghur representative and human rights lawyer Rayhan Asat told the MPs that over a million people are illegally imprisoned and subjected to forced labour in China. The Chinese embassy in Vilnius later condemned the talks as "an anti-China farce choreographed by some anti-China individuals intended to smear China." [LRT]

UK government to cut human rights budget in China

The UK government has announced cuts in its budget for human rights initiatives in China by 95 percent. The money will instead be geared towards Africa and the Indo-Pacific. [Politico]

British MPs call for sanctions on Hong Kong and declare China's Uyghur treatment a genocide

103 UK parliamentarians, led by Lord Patten, the last British Governor of Hong Kong, called on the UK government to sanction Chinese and Hong Kong officials, in response to Chinese sanctions on British lawmakers and entities.

On 22 April, the UK
Parliament unanimously
declared China's treatment of
the Uyghur people a
genocide. After the US,
Canada, and the Netherlands,
the UK becomes the fourth
country to accept such a
motion. [Hong Kong Watch,
Apple Daily, IPAC, CNN, The
Guardian]

HK government spent millions of taxpayer money to lobby against US act

An investigation by HKFP has revealed an effort by the Hong Kong government to persuade US politicians not to support the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, which was passed in November 2019 and paved the way for sanctions to be imposed on senior officials in the city, including Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

Between 2014 (when the Act was first introduced) and 2020, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), a statutory body led by business leaders and senior government officials, paid US lobbyists close to HK\$84 million (US\$10.8 million). In total, the HKTDC spent a total of HK\$458 million (US\$58.9 million) on its lobbying efforts in the US.

Although the engagement contracts were signed by the HKTDC, the lobbyists received instructions from the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO) in Washington DC, which is Hong Kong's official representative in the US. The Chief Executive Office did not respond to HKFP's enquiry on whether the chief executive authorised or knew about the HKTDC's lobbying efforts. [HKFP]

TRIAL UPDATES

18 & 31 AUGUST PROTEST TRIALS

Organizers of historic 2019 protests jailed, foreign parliamentarians condemn

Nine veteran activists, who participated in the 1.7 million-people protest on 18 Aug. 2019, have been convicted of organising unlawful protests, and were sentenced to 8 to 18 months' jail-terms. Two activists who pleaded guilty, Leung Yiu-chung and Au Nok-hin, received lighter sentences of 8 and 10 months respectively. Au, along with "Long-hair" Leung Kwok-hung, Jimmy Lai, Lee Cheuk-Yan, and Cyd Ho, were jailed immediately. Martin Lee, Margaret Ng, Albert Ho, and Leung Yiu-Chung received suspended sentences. With the exception of Chung, they have decided to lodge appeal. [Stand News (1), (2), HKFP, BBC, Apple Daily, DW, Hong Kong Watch, Amnesty International]

Yeung Sum, founding member of the first pro-democracy party in Hong Kong, pleaded guilty to charges related to the 31 Aug. protest. He told the court, "I admit to the charges, but I do not admit that I did wrong". The judge suspended his sentence due to a silver medal he received from the government in 2009 for his political work, an award that for him now only symbolises a lost Hong Kong.

If I'm in jail, then I'm living my life meaningfully.

- Jimmy Lai (72)

Jimmy Lai, who has been found guilty for organising both 18 and 31 Aug. protests, will be imprisoned for 14 months in total. In his last interview as a free man, Lai told the BBC: "If I'm in jail, then I'm living my life meaningfully". However, he also admitted that he fears for his family and for the city.

Leung Kwok-Hung (aka "Long-hair"), who received the heaviest sentence of 18 months, was pushed by the jail term to marry his partner Chan Po-ying -- despite the pair having always considered marriage unnecessary and patriarchal -- in order to give Chan greater prison and court visitation rights to Leung's case.

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS >

Eight parliamentarians from the UK, US, and Canada have condemned the sentencing of the 'most moderate and distinguished' pro-democracy activists, calling it "sheer injustice" and "exactly what the National Security Law was designed to do." "Having arrested the majority of Hong Kong's most prominent dissidents using the repressive national security law, the authorities are now mopping up remaining peaceful critics under the pretext of bogus charges related to the 2019 protests," says Amnesty International.

NSL₄₇ - LEGAL PROCEEDINGS: A FOUR-DAY ORDEAL

▶ A Thrill Kill

Out of the 47 activists arrested for their involvement in last year's primary elections, only 15 were granted bail. Yet the Department of Justice immediately filed for review in court, meaning all of the defendants were taken back and did not have a chance to meet any loved ones since their last presence at police stations on 28 Feb. Only 11 were eventually granted bail at the High Court, while others must remain in custody until the upcoming trial on 31 May.

▶ Political Death

At least 12 of the 47 activists announced both on social media and in court that they would no longer be involved in politics, any kinds of election campaign, or posting any sensitive and politically related information. Some deleted their official Facebook pages; some even resigned their positions, or withdrew from parties. Several district councillors, including Sam Cheung Ho Sum and Gary Fan, publicly announced that they would resign and no longer perform any district councilor duties.

► Exploitation of Human Rights

The marathon hearings lasted four days and all 47 defendants were subjected to more than 40

hours of hearings. They were denied a change of clothes and initially even a shower. Ten were taken to hospital due to physical exhaustion. Three current and former judges said that the bail proceedings – herding opposition figures into a single courtroom for days, and depriving them of sleep and other basic rights – are a dramatic departure from the common law tradition of Hong Kong.

▶ China-style Hearing

No audience, including relatives, were allowed in the courtroom either. They could only see the faces of their loved ones through a television in an adjacent room. The police cordoned off the area of the Magistrate's court and forbade anyone to gather outside. After the judge granted the public prosecutor's appeal, there were gasps heard outside the courtroom. Some started weeping, others shouted. All 36 of the 47 who were not granted bail will be kept behind bars until their court appearance on 31 May, with no indication of when their trial might begin. This means that the detained might have to be remanded for months or even years before being formally convicted. [Citizen News (in Chinese), Reuters]

Table 1: Hong Kong 2019 Protest Movement Database

Item	Number of people	e		Last update	Sources
Total arrested	10 294			31 Jan 2021	1
Total charged	> 2300			31 Jan 2021	1
Total charges over rioting	720 (13-61 years old)			13 Apr 2021	2
(up to 10 years imprisonment)	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 5 years and 6 month	-		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	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) <u>Stand News</u> (2) <u>Bloomberg</u> (3) <u>SCMP</u>]

IMPORTANT DATES

May - June 2021

- 6 May: Sentencing for 4 activists for unauthorised Tiananmen Massacre vigil in 2020.
- 10-14 May: Trial for the 14 charges on activist Tak-Chi Tam, expected to last for 5 days.
- 18 May: Trial begins for 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 annual vigil rejected twice in 2020 and 2021 citing coronavirus measures.
- 12 June: Overseas HKer groups to mark 2nd anniversary of Hong Kong Anti-extradition Movement at different cities
- 15 June: Court mention of 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.

End of News Digest