



THE SIX-MONTHLY REPORT ON HONG KONG

1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2025

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Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

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FOREWORD

I was honoured to be appointed Foreign Secretary in September, and I am proud to support the UK's longstanding commitment to Hong Kong and its people.

In this role, it is my duty to provide these regular updates on the implementation of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, and on the state of Hong Kong's political and economic autonomy, something which was promised in the Sino-British Joint Declaration, which has been key to Hong Kong's prosperity up to this point, and which remains critical to its future.

The 57th report to Parliament on Hong Kong covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2025. While this reporting period saw Hong Kong retain autonomy over its economic, monetary, and financial systems, the continued erosion of democratic rights and freedoms is deeply concerning. It is hardly surprising that hundreds of thousands of people have already left to live in places where those freedoms are better protected.

I remain concerned by the use of national security legislation to diminish the city's political autonomy and political pluralism. Two pro-democracy parties moved to disband during this reporting period. Activist Joshua Wong was rearrested and faces further charges under the National Security Law. Jimmy Lai's imprisonment persists despite international calls for his release and concerns regarding his health. It remains the UK Government's view that Mr Lai's ongoing prosecution is politically motivated, and we continue to call for his immediate release.

UK Ministers have raised our concerns directly with Hong Kong and Chinese officials, including when a UK Member of Parliament was unfairly denied entry to Hong Kong. Such actions are damaging Hong Kong's reputation as an open and international city.

It also remains imperative that the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities end the deliberate targeting of opposition voices in the UK and elsewhere. In my previous role as Home Secretary, I joined the former Foreign Secretary in raising deep concerns after the Hong Kong authorities issued further arrest warrants and bounties for overseas activists, including individuals living in the UK. Any such attempt to intimidate UK residents represents a serious and unacceptable threat to our national security and sovereignty. In response, we are strengthening efforts to tackle transnational repression, including the introduction of more dedicated police training, and online guidance to support victims.

The safety of the Hong Kong community in the UK is a top priority for this government. We are committed to the BN(O) visa route and continue to support Hong Kongers as they build new lives across the UK. Their contributions enrich our society, and we will continue to do everything necessary to ensure that they feel protected and valued in the country they have made home.

As global actors, both the UK and China have an obligation to work together to find pragmatic solutions to complex challenges. A pragmatic and consistent relationship requires mature dialogue, even when views diverge. The British government will

therefore continue steadfastly championing rights and freedoms for the people of Hong Kong and insisting that China complies with the commitments it made freely under the Joint Declaration. That is the best way to maintain a thriving Hong Kong, for the benefit of its people, for the UK and for China.

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

INTRODUCTION

This series of Six-monthly reports reflects our continuing interest in developments in Hong Kong and our commitment to the faithful implementation of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration. This Declaration guaranteed that, for 50 years from 1997, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) would enjoy a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign and defence affairs, and that it would be vested with executive, legislative and independent judicial power. The continuation of Hong Kong's social and economic systems, lifestyle, and rights and freedoms is guaranteed under the Sino-British Joint Declaration. This arrangement was popularly referred to as 'One Country, Two Systems'.

The report structure is based on Annex I of the Joint Declaration, which outlines the agreements made by the Chinese Government. Each section summarises the current situation in Hong Kong with relevance to the provisions of Annex I and then reports on important developments over the reporting period.

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

- **13 February** – The Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute announces the indefinite suspension of all self-funded research activities following the detention of its President and CEO, Robert Chung Ting-yiu, for investigation under national security legislation.
- **19 February** – A planned five-day strike by the local taxi industry, aimed at urging regulation of unlicensed ride-hailing services is called off after a warning from Chief Executive John Lee.
- **27 February** – Former Democratic Party legislator Lam Cheuk-ting is sentenced to 37 months' imprisonment for participating in a riot at Yuen Long MTR station on 21 July 2019.
- **6 March** – Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, founder of *Apple Daily*, concludes his 52-day defence testimony in his ongoing national security trial. Closing arguments were scheduled for 14 August 2025.
- **6 March** – The Court of Final Appeal overturns the convictions of three former members of the disbanded Hong Kong Alliance, including vice-chair Chow Hang-tung, for failing to comply with police requests under the National Security Law.
- **19 March** – The Legislative Council passes the Protection of Critical Infrastructures (Computer Systems) Bill.
- **31 March** – The United States Government imposes sanctions on six officials from Beijing and Hong Kong, citing actions deemed to undermine Hong Kong's autonomy.
- **2 April** – The State Council of the People's Republic of China appoints Joe Chow Yat-ming, formerly Deputy Commissioner of the Hong Kong Police Force, as Commissioner of Police.
- **10 April** – UK Member of Parliament Wera Hobhouse is denied entry to Hong Kong and deported after being questioned by immigration authorities.

- **11 April** – The Judiciary announces the resignation of the Hon Mr Justice Robert French, a non-permanent judge of the Court of Final Appeal.
- **13 April** – Members of the Democratic Party pass a motion authorising the party’s leadership to proceed with its proposed disbandment.
- **15 April** – The Court of Appeal dismisses an application for leave to appeal by Joseph John, a dual Portuguese and Chinese national, who had been sentenced to five years’ imprisonment for conspiracy to incite secession under the National Security Law.
- **30 April** – National Security Police arrest the father and brother of overseas activist Anna Kwok Fung-yea for allegedly handling financial assets belonging to an “absconder”. Her father is subsequently charged for handling funds belonging to an absconder under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO).
- **12 May** – The Legislative Council holds an urgent meeting to consider new subsidiary national security legislation, which was gazetted without amendment.
- **19 May** – The Office of the Ombudsman announces the removal of certain investigation reports from its website, citing concerns over “misleading” content.
- **30 May** – Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi attends the signing ceremony for the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organisation for Mediation (IOMed) in Hong Kong.
- **30 May** – Zhou Ji, Executive Deputy Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Office (HKMAO), is appointed Director of the Central Government Liaison Office in Hong Kong.
- **3 June** – National Security Police arrest five individuals on suspicion of conspiracy to commit terrorist activities, including issuing bomb threats and inciting independence for Hong Kong and Taiwan.
- **4 June** – Police arrest two individuals for obstructing officers and failing to produce identification. Ten others are taken away for suspected breaches of public peace.
- **6 June** – Activist Joshua Wong Chi-fung is re-arrested on suspicion of collusion with foreign forces under the National Security Law.
- **6 June** – Enactment of the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Minimum Tax for Multinational Enterprise Groups) Ordinance 2025.
- **12 June** – The Office for Safeguarding National Security (OSNS) and the Hong Kong National Security Police conduct their first joint operation under new subsidiary legislation, interviewing six individuals suspected of foreign collusion.
- **24 June** – The Court of Appeal upholds the decision to deny early release for Adam Ma Chun-man, citing provisions under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance.
- **25 June** – The Legislative Council passes the Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill, granting authorities powers to reject new union registrations on national security grounds and disqualify offenders from holding union office.

- **29 June** – The League of Social Democrats announces their disbandment, citing political pressure and safety concerns.

CONSTITUTION

Hong Kong continues to function as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. Its constitutional document is the Basic Law. Under the Basic Law, the Hong Kong SAR exercises a high degree of autonomy. And in line with the Joint Declaration, the Hong Kong SAR continues to be constitutionally vested with executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication.

Hong Kong's Chief Executive is selected by an Election Committee, rather than by popular vote. In 2021, China's National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) made extensive changes to Hong Kong's electoral system, introducing vetting for election candidates and reducing the number of LegCo members elected by the public. In May 2022, John Lee was selected as the fifth Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR. He was the only candidate.

English continues to be used in official government communications and in the courts. In addition to displaying the national flag and national emblem of the People's Republic of China, the Hong Kong SAR continues to use a regional flag and emblem of its own.

New Head of Central Government Liaison Office (CGLO) in Hong Kong

On 30 May, Zhou Ji, Executive Deputy Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Office (HKMAO), was appointed Director of the CGLO in Hong Kong, replacing Zheng Yanxiong. Zhou was also appointed to succeed Zheng as National Security Adviser to the Committee for Safeguarding National Security in the SAR. Apart from these two roles, China's State Council also removed Zheng from his post as Deputy Director of the HKMAO.

Legislative Council (LegCo)

Proposed Changes to the LegCo Rules of Procedure

On 25 April, Andrew Leung Kwan-yuen, President of the LegCo, announced that changes would be made to its rules of procedure to enhance transparency and accountability among members. The amendments would require lawmakers to achieve a minimum threshold of attendance, participate in a specified number of votes and submit regular work reports. Acts deemed "inappropriate" would be penalised. The proposals will be submitted to the relevant LegCo Committee for consideration and are expected to be implemented in the next legislative term.

Criteria for Candidates in LegCo Elections

In early March, during the "Two Sessions" in Beijing, Wang Linggui, Deputy Director of the HKMAO, stated that LegCo needs to be more "capable, responsible and accomplished" with expertise in innovation and technology. Wang added that the Hong Kong authorities were expected to consult local deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) on relevant electoral matters. Separately, HKMAO Director Xia Baolong reportedly told Hong Kong delegates to the CPPCC that the next LegCo should be composed of

individuals who are not merely observers but “active players” in the city’s development. He expressed hope that the next legislature would surpass the current one in performance and continue to support Hong Kong’s integration into national development.

BASIC RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Whilst the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in Hong Kong (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) remained protected in Hong Kong Law, rights and freedoms expressly required to be protected under the Joint Declaration, including “freedom of the person, of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association...of strike, of demonstration...[and] of belief” continued to be negatively impacted by the broad application of national security legislation. Same-sex partnerships are not recognised in Hong Kong, despite a CFA ruling in September 2023 that the lack of a framework for the recognition of same-sex partnerships in Hong Kong is unconstitutional.

Press and Media Freedom

World Press Freedom Index

On 2 May, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) published its 2025 World Press Freedom Index. Hong Kong was ranked 140th out of 180 countries and territories, a decline of five places from the previous year. For the first time, RSF categorised Hong Kong as being in the “red zone”, indicating a “very serious situation” for press freedom. This placed the city in the same category as mainland China, which ranked 178th. RSF attributed Hong Kong’s decline to a deterioration across all five of its assessment indicators: political context, legal framework, economic context, socio-cultural context, and safety. The organisation cited the September 2024 conviction of two former *Stand News* editors for sedition as a key factor, describing it as the first such case against the media since the handover.

Foreign Correspondents’ Club

On 22 April, the Foreign Correspondents’ Club (FCC) released a survey of its members. Out of 334 members, 69 responded. 65% of respondents said that they had exercised self-censorship in the last 18 months. Over 62% said the environment for journalists had “changed for the worse”, citing the NSL, its related trials and the “perceived exodus of international news organisations” as the major reasons. 30% considered leaving Hong Kong over concerns about press freedom.

Respondents also noted that their sources had become more concerned about sharing their opinions, with approximately 64% expressing that their sources were “less willing to be quoted or discuss sensitive subjects”.

Hong Kong Journalists Association

During the reporting period, the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) faced increasing difficulty in organising activities and events. In January, the HKJA Cup football tournament was cancelled after the Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced that the pitch would be closed for two months. In February, the HKJA’s

annual fundraising dinner was cancelled twice after two separate hotels retracted their bookings. One venue cited “water leakage” and “unstable electricity supply”, while the other provided no explanation. The HKJA chairwoman suggested the venues had faced “political pressure”.

At a press conference on 21 May, the HKJA revealed at least six independent news outlets – including *Hong Kong Free Press*, *InMedia* and *The Witness* – had been facing simultaneous tax audits and backdated demands from the Inland Revenue Department (IRD). In addition, 20 individuals linked to Hong Kong independent media, including current directors and shareholders of the concerned media outlets as well as both parents of the newly re-elected chairman of HKJA Selina Cheng, were facing similar tax inspections. In a statement, *Hong Kong Free Press* said that the additional scrutiny “has diverted resources, manpower and funds away from journalism”.

IRD Commissioner Benjamin Chan responded that audits are routine and not industry-specific, describing the process as “transparent, fair and open.” On 27 May, Chief Executive John Lee said journalists have “no privilege to evade taxes” and warned against attempts to pressure the government during investigations.

Freedom of Information

During the reporting period, freedom of information remained under pressure as the Hong Kong authorities took further steps to restrict public access to government information. Examples included:

Office of the Ombudsman

On 19 May, the Office of the Ombudsman announced that it had removed from its website investigation reports and content deemed “no longer up to date” or potentially “misleading” to the public. In a statement, the Ombudsman explained that only reports from the past three years would be retained online to ensure accuracy and relevance. It added that older reports could still be accessed through written or online applications.

The Office also removed the “Code on Access to Information” from its website, a section that previously outlined procedures for public access to government-held information and included complaint cases related to information requests. Lawmakers expressed concerns over the removal. Local media reported that in a letter to the Ombudsman, lawmaker Tik Chi-yuen urged the office to restore all removed reports and the Code. He stressed that the Ombudsman’s duty to monitor government departments is based on openness and transparency.

On 26 May, local media reported that the Office of the Ombudsman had imposed further restrictions on access to archived investigation reports, following the removal from its website of all investigation reports published before April 2023. Members of the public are permitted to view a maximum of six documents during each pre-booked session.

Chief Executive's LegCo Q&A sessions

The Hong Kong SAR Government's Information Services Department (ISD) typically releases a transcript of the exchanges between the Chief Executive and lawmakers in its press releases. The relevant arrangements have been in place since the handover.

On 30 May, local media reported that following Chief Executive John Lee's regular LegCo Q&A session with lawmakers, the ISD did not release a full transcript. The government explained that this was a "trial arrangement" rather than a permanent policy, citing the importance of "making better use of resources".

Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute

On 13 January, the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute HKPORI's President and CEO, Robert Chung Ting-yiu, was taken in by National Security Police for questioning, allegedly in connection with assisting former deputy CEO Chung Kim-wah, who is currently living in the UK and wanted under the NSL. On 14 January, Chung Kim-wah announced the launch of Public Opinion Research Project for Domestic and Overseas Hongkongers. In the following days, his family members, along with two staff members of HKPORI, were also taken in by the police for questioning. At least eight individuals were investigated.

On 27 January, local media reported that Robert Chung was again taken in by National Security Police for questioning.

On 13 February, HKPORI announced that it would indefinitely suspend its self-funded research activities, including its regular surveys conducted since 1992 such as the Public Sentiment Index. In a statement, the institute stated that it "has always been law-abiding" but it would "undergo a transformation or even close down" given "the current environment". Chung welcomed interested parties to take over the Institute.

Freedom of Association

The Democratic Party

During a special meeting on 13 April, members of the Democratic Party - Hong Kong's largest pro-democracy political party - passed a motion authorising its leadership to proceed with the group's proposed disbandment. Chairman Lo Kin-hei stressed that this was not the final decision on disbandment, but the vote indicated members' willingness to dissolve the party. He said the party had considered the overall political environment before putting the motion to a vote, reiterating that it would continue to assess the political situation before making a final decision. Lo declined to comment on whether the party would complete disbandment before the legislative elections in December 2025.

Anitta Hipper, spokesperson for the European Union said on X (formerly known as Twitter):

“The EU is deeply concerned about the further narrowing of the space for civil society in Hong Kong. We are aware of pressure put on the Democratic Party to disband, while the independent polling institute PORI has suspended research activities. Journalists and rights-based civil society organisations are under increasing pressures, including the Hong Kong Journalist Association. The European Union urges the Hong Kong authorities to protect the ability of the people of Hong Kong to exercise their rights.”

The League of Social Democrats

On 29 June, the League of Social Democrats (LSD), a pro-democracy political party established in 2006 and known for its advocacy of democratic reform and support for grassroots communities, announced its decision to disband. The party cited “immense political pressure” and concerns for the safety of its members as the reasons for its closure. In a statement, the LSD noted that “over these 19 years, we have endured hardships of internal disputes and the near-total imprisonment of our leadership, while witnessing the erosion of civil society, the fading of grassroots voices, the omnipresence of red lines, and the draconian suppression of dissent. Despite such adversities, LSD persisted – doing what little we could – just to remain true to our founding values and beliefs”.

One of its founders, former legislator Leung Kwok-hung (also known as “Long Hair”), is currently serving a prison term of six years and nine months. Another member, Jimmy Sham Tsz-kit, was released in May after being sentenced to four years and three months in prison. Both were convicted for conspiracy to commit subversion in the “NSL 47” case.

Industrial action

On 19 February, the local taxi industry, led by the Hong Kong Tele-call Taxi Association, called off a five-day citywide strike demanding government regulation of unlicensed ride-hailing services. The decision followed a warning from Chief Executive John Lee, who stated that the planned strike would be against public interest and could result in “individuals with ulterior motives” to “hijack the issue”. After meeting with transport officials, the association’s chairman apologised for causing “unease” to the public.

On 9 May, representatives from more than 20 taxi groups staged a protest outside West Kowloon Government Offices to demand a crackdown on unlicensed ride-hailing services.

On 16 May, about 40 taxi drivers held a demonstration outside Government Headquarters in Admiralty, again petitioning for law enforcement against unlicensed ride-hailing services. A meeting was subsequently held between the sector and transport authorities to discuss effective regulation of ride-hailing platforms.

On 20 May, Chief Executive John Lee pledged to resolve the issue but warned that the industry should “provide rational and constructive feedback to avoid the issue being hijacked”. On 22 May, taxi drivers called off a rally initiated by the North West Area Taxi Drivers and Operators Association, which had been planned to petition for intervention from the central government. The association explained that the decision was due to a positive response from two mainland-based ride-hailing operators. Its chairman added that the industrial action was suspended as a “gesture of goodwill” towards the central authorities.

Civil Society

On 12 June, China Labour Bulletin, a Hong Kong-based civil society organisation focused on labour rights in mainland China, announced its dissolution. Founded in 1994 by Han Dongfang, a prominent figure in the 1989 pro-democracy movement, the organisation cited financial difficulties and debt as the reasons for closure. The dissolution coincided with the OSNS’s first publicly acknowledged joint operation with local security authorities.

Hong Kong Unison, a non-governmental organisation established in 2001 to advocate for the rights and welfare of ethnicities in Hong Kong, formally dissolved following a vote held at its general meeting on 28 February 2025. The chair of the NGO, Alice Chong, said its “historical mission” had been completed, and the dissolution was not due to political pressure.

Freedom of Assembly

No large-scale demonstrations or protests were reported in the first half of 2025.

On 22 April, the week preceding Labour Day, several trade unions held a joint press conference to propose policy recommendations. These included amending the Trade Unions Ordinance to safeguard national security as well as tightening controls on the importation of foreign labour and talent programmes. On 27 April, around 20 members of the Hong Kong Women Workers’ Association petitioned outside Government Headquarters, calling on the government to suspend the enhanced labour import scheme.

On 1 May, four members of pro-democracy political party the League of Social Democrats staged a protest outside Government Headquarters, under the observation of plainclothes police officers. In addition to opposing the importation of foreign labour, the group called for universal suffrage, an increase of minimum wage, and the introduction of standard working hours.

Remembrance of the Tiananmen Square Massacre

No candlelight vigil was held in Hong Kong’s Victoria Park on 4 June 2025, marking the sixth consecutive year without the annual commemoration of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre. From 2020 to 2022, police denied permission for the vigil citing Covid-19 restrictions. No applications for public gatherings were submitted in 2023, 2024 or 2025.

From 1 to 5 June, pro-establishment groups, including the Hong Kong Federation of Liaoning Associations and the Federation of Hong Kong Jilin Associations, held a

“hometown market carnival” in Victoria Park for the third consecutive year. Chief Executive John Lee again warned the public in advance to comply with the law.

Ahead of the anniversary, several members of the League of Social Democrats, including individuals previously stopped in on 4 June last year in Victoria Park, received calls from the police asking about their plans.

Arrests in relation to the commemoration of the Massacre were recorded. On 4 June, two individuals were arrested for non-national security offences such as obstructing police officers and failing to present identification documents. Another ten individuals were taken away on suspicion of breaching public peace.

On 4 June, the then-Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Indo-Pacific, the Hon Catherine West MP, said on X (formerly known as Twitter):

“On the 36th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre, the UK reaffirms its commitment to the protection of human rights and the defence of fundamental freedoms. We honour the memory of those who lost their lives while peacefully advocating for change.”

Installation of Surveillance Cameras

During the reporting period, the Hong Kong Police continued to expand its citywide surveillance infrastructure. On 12 April, Police Commissioner Joe Chow announced plans to install an additional of 6,000 to 7,000 cameras by the end of 2027 as part of its “SmartView” programme.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

In late April, the court allowed 93-year-old Catholic Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium – who is currently on bail for alleged foreign collusion under the NSL, with his passport confiscated by National Security Police – to travel to Vatican City to attend the funeral of Pope Francis. He was reportedly prohibited from giving media interviews during his trip.

Separately, for the fourth consecutive year, the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, did not hold public masses to commemorate the Tiananmen Square Massacre. In 2022, the Diocese cited concerns that the masses might contravene the NSL.

Equality

On 17 May, eight civil society groups co-organised an event in Causeway Bay to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT). The event, which included street booths and public engagement activities, was authorised by the Hong Kong Government.

On 4 and 5 June, the High Court heard a judicial review concerning the legal parental status of same-sex couples with children born via reciprocal in vitro fertilisation (RIVF). The applicants, a lesbian couple, were unable to list both their names on their son’s birth certificate. While the Court of First Instance had previously recognised one partner as a “parent at common law,” this status was not acknowledged under the

Parent and Child Ordinance. The judge said a decision will be handed down at a later date.

In September 2023, the Court of Final Appeal had set a two-year deadline – due in October 2025 – for the Hong Kong Government to establish an alternative framework for legal recognition of same-sex unions. As of the end of the reporting period, the Government had not yet proposed a framework for the recognition of same-sex partnerships.

LEGAL SYSTEM

The legislative power of the Hong Kong SAR is vested in LegCo. Most law in force in Hong Kong has been made locally and the Hong Kong SAR has maintained a common law system. Following the electoral overhaul in March 2021, implemented as required by the 2020 National Security Law, the UK has declared China to be in a state of ongoing non-compliance with the Sino British Joint Declaration.

Subsidiary Legislation for the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance

On 12 May, the Legislative Council's Panels on Security and Administration of Justice and Legal Services convened an urgent joint meeting to consider new subsidiary legislation introduced by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government. The legislation was brought forward under existing national security provisions, which empower the executive to enact subsidiary legislation in support of the National Security Law (NSL) and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO). This marked the first instance of subsidiary legislation made under the SNSO since its enactment on 23 March 2024.

The new measures set out the operational framework for the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government (OSNS) in the HKSAR. Among the key provisions was the designation of OSNS premises as "prohibited places", and the introduction of new criminal offences relating to non-cooperation with the Office. These include obstructing the OSNS in the exercise of its functions, providing false information, impersonating OSNS personnel, and the unauthorised disclosure or forgery of OSNS documents. Offences under the legislation carry penalties of up to HKD \$500,000 (approximately £50,000) and custodial sentences of up to seven years.

The subsidiary legislation includes the following key elements:

- **Mandate of the OSNS:** The legislation clarifies that the OSNS is responsible for overseeing and guiding the HKSAR, including the National Security Committee (NSC) chaired by the Chief Executive, in safeguarding national security. The NSC is required to act in accordance with the guidance and opinions of the OSNS, which are to be formally recognised in the decision-making process.
- **Handling of National Security Cases:** All government departments, agencies, and public servants are required to provide full cooperation to the OSNS, including assistance, facilitation, and protection, particularly in cases falling under Articles 55 and 56 of the NSL, which permit the transfer of certain cases to mainland jurisdiction. The legislation also criminalises failure to comply with

OSNS-issued legal documents and the unauthorised disclosure of information relating to OSNS investigations.

- Prohibited Places: Premises used by the OSNS are to be designated as “prohibited places”, a classification intended to protect against national security threats, including espionage.
- Extraterritorial Application: The legislation extends to acts committed outside the HKSAR, including the provision of false or misleading information to the OSNS.

During the Legislative Council meeting, the Secretary for Justice, Paul Lam Ting-kwok, stated that the new provisions were necessary to address perceived gaps in the existing legal framework, particularly in relation to the enforcement powers of the OSNS. The proposed legislation was published in the Government Gazette on 13 May under the negative vetting procedure and came into effect immediately. A bills committee was established on 15 May to scrutinise the legislation, completing its review on the same day without proposing any amendments.

OSNS’s First Operation with Hong Kong SAR Security Forces

On 12 June, the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People’s Government in the Hong Kong SAR (OSNS) conducted its first publicly acknowledged joint operation with local security authorities. The operation related to an investigation into suspected collusion with foreign forces under Article 29 of the NSL.

According to official statements, six individuals were interviewed as part of the investigation. Their residences were searched, and electronic devices and financial documents were seized. The individuals were also required to surrender their travel documents. The Hong Kong Police Force’s National Security Department confirmed that the OSNS had initiated the investigation. Authorities stated that the case remained under investigation and that cooperation with the OSNS would continue in accordance with the law. The identities of the individuals involved were not disclosed.

On the same day, the Hong Kong-based non-governmental organisation China Labour Bulletin (CLB) announced its dissolution, citing financial difficulties (see “Rights and Freedoms”).

Media coverage of the joint operation was limited, in part due to confidentiality provisions governing the work of the OSNS. No arrests or prosecutions had been reported by the end of the reporting period.

Passage of the Protection of Critical Infrastructures (Computer Systems) Bill

As stated in the previous Six-monthly report, on 25 June 2024, the Hong Kong Government proposed new legislation to regulate the cybersecurity obligations of operators of critical infrastructure. In December 2024, the draft ‘Protection of Critical Infrastructures (Computer Systems) Bill’ was introduced into the LegCo. The bill requires operators of designated infrastructure to conduct regular security audits, develop emergency response plans, and report cybersecurity incidents to the relevant regulatory authority.

The LegCo passed the bill on 18 March. The legislation is scheduled to come into force in January 2026. A new commissioner's office under the Security Bureau will be established to oversee compliance and enforce the law. The Secretary for Security, Chris Tang Ping-keung, stated that the legislation targets only the computer systems of large organisations and would not affect personal data or confidential business information. He further clarified that the law does not have extraterritorial effect unless an overseas server is directly linked to a Hong Kong-based operator.

Amendments to the Trade Unions Ordinance

The Trade Unions Bill, introduced in 1948, provides the legal framework for trade unions in Hong Kong. Article 27 of the Basic Law and Article 18 of the Bill of Rights guarantee freedom of association.

In February 2025, the SAR Government proposed amendments “to enhance the protection of national security” and improve regulation. Citing Article 9 of the NSL, authorities stressed the need to strengthen social organisations to complement national security. They noted 4,386 union registration applications during the 2019 protests, but some were allegedly submitted by individuals with “ulterior motives” to carry out unlawful activities under the guise of union work.

The proposed amendments included the following key provisions:

- Expanded powers for the Registrar of Trade Unions: The Registrar would be empowered to refuse applications for registration or amalgamation of trade unions on national security grounds. There is no mechanism for appeal.
- Disqualification of individuals: Persons convicted of national security offences would be permanently barred from serving as trade union officers or promoters.
- Restrictions on external affiliations and funding: Trade unions would be required to seek approval from the Registrar before affiliating with organisations outside the HKSAR or receiving funds from “external forces”. Approved funds could not be used for local elections.
- Membership and leadership criteria: Trade unions would be permitted to consider whether to admit individuals who are not ordinarily resident in Hong Kong. The amendments also regulate the assumption of office by trade union officers in organisations located outside the HKSAR.
- Prohibition on political affiliations: Trade unions would be prohibited from joining external political organisations. Affiliation with non-political organisations outside the HKSAR would require approval from the Chief Executive.

The Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill was published in the Government Gazette on 17 April and introduced to the Legislative Council for First and Second Reading on 30 April. The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Chris Sun Yuk-han, stated that the amendments were intended to close national security loopholes and prevent a recurrence of social unrest. He emphasised that the right to freedom of association is not absolute and may be subject to restrictions in the interests of national security and public safety, as permitted under the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The Legislative Council unanimously passed the Bill on 25 June. The amended Ordinance was published in the Government Gazette on 4 July 2025 and is scheduled to come into effect on 5 January 2026.

Elections of Chairmanship of Hong Kong Bar Association and Law Society of Hong Kong

On 23 January, Jose-Antonio Maurellet SC, who specialises in corporate and commercial law, was elected as the new Chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association, succeeding Victor Dawes SC. Maurellet was called to the Hong Kong Bar in 2000 and appointed Senior Counsel in 2016. He pledged to continue to uphold the independence of the Bar as a professional organisation, promoting Hong Kong's rule of law and justice system. Separately, on 3 June, the Council of the Law Society of Hong Kong re-elected Roden Tong Man-lung as President.

JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The judicial system in place prior to the establishment of the Hong Kong SAR continued to be maintained in general. The prosecuting authority in Hong Kong remained within the Department of Justice. The courts continued to exercise independent judicial power, decide cases in accordance with the laws of the Hong Kong SAR and refer to precedents in other common law jurisdictions.

Judges from other common law jurisdictions continued to sit on the Court of Final Appeal (CFA). Judges continued to be appointed by the Chief Executive in accordance with recommendations by the Judicial Officers Recommendation Commission. However, Hong Kong's courts are having to adjudicate on an opaque National Security Law that places the authority of the Chief Executive on security matters above that of their own. The Hong Kong SAR maintained arrangements for reciprocal juridical assistance with some foreign states, although many of these were suspended following the imposition of the NSL.

Jimmy Lai's National Security Law and Sedition Trial

Jimmy Lai Chee-ying, founder of the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily*, is currently standing trial under the NSL and the Crimes Ordinance. He faces two counts of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces under the NSL and one count of conspiracy to publish seditious publications. Mr Lai has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

The trial, which began in December 2023, has been one of the most high-profile proceedings under the NSL to date. On 20 November 2024, the defence opened its case, with Mr Lai taking the stand to testify in his own defence. His testimony concluded on 6 March, following 52 days of examination, cross-examination, and re-examination. During this period, Mr Lai consistently denied the allegations, rejecting claims that he had conspired with former *Apple Daily* staff or international actors to publish seditious material or to encourage foreign sanctions against China and Hong Kong.

Closing arguments for Lai's trial began on 15 August 2025 and concluded on 28 August 2025. Further details will be covered in the next Six-monthly report.

Trial of 47 Pro-democracy Politicians and Activists Under the NSL

As recorded previously in the Six-monthly report, on 19 November 2024, the High Court handed down sentences for 45 pro-democracy politicians and activists under the NSL. The sentences ranged from four to ten years.

12 defendants filed an appeal against their convictions and sentences, with another two appealing against their sentences only. Appeal hearings have been scheduled to take place at the Court of Appeal on 14 July 2025. The Court of Appeal will also handle the Department of Justice's appeal against Lawrence Lau's acquittal.

During the reporting period, eight defendants completed their custodial sentences and were released. On 29 April 2025, four former legislators - Gary Fan Kwok-wai, Claudia Mo Man-ching, Jeremy Tam Man-ho, and Kwok Ka-ki - were released after serving four years and two months. On 30 May, another four - Jimmy Sham Tsz-kit, Kinda Li Ka-tat, Roy Tam Hoi-pong, and Henry Wong Pak-yu - were released after serving four years and three months. In both instances, the authorities arranged for their transportation in private vehicles with covered windows, despite the individuals' stated intention to leave prison independently.

To date, no remission or early release for good behaviour has been granted to any of the defendants, in line with revised sentencing provisions under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO).

Implementation of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (Article 23 National Security Legislation)

Since its enactment on 23 March 2024 until the end of this reporting period, at least 20 people had been arrested under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO). A total of eight individuals had been charged. During this reporting period, at least five people were arrested and three charged under the SNSO.

Three defendants were convicted during this reporting period. All pleaded guilty. They were given prison terms ranging from 10 to 12 months.

During the reporting period, the convictions under the SNSO were as follows:

- 1 April: Logistics worker Lee Shu-ming was sentenced to 10 months after pleading guilty to sedition. The prosecution stated that Lee wrote graffiti that insulted Chinese President Xi Jinping and called for Taiwan independence. Under police caution, he admitted to expressing dissatisfaction with the sentencing of the "NSL 45" and the 2019 Yuen Long incident. Chief Magistrate Victor So said the slogans, visible in public, insulted central authorities and posed "invisible dangers" to peace, warranting a severe punishment to protect national security.
- 8 April: Chow Kim-ho, a former member of the now-disbanded pro-democracy political party League of Social Democrats, was sentenced to 12 months in prison for publishing seditious publications. He was found to have published

145 messages on social media “inciting hatred” against the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities. Chief Magistrate Victor So noted that Chow’s posts had the potential to reach a wide audience online, adding that the defendant must have been aware of their “criminal” nature given established legal precedents.

- 8 May: Technician Li Chun-kit was given 12 months’ imprisonment after pleading guilty to publishing seditious publications. He was found to have published 117 posts online “inciting hatred” against the police and judiciary. Chief Magistrate Victor So said the defendant’s posts “smeared” the police and “criticised” court rulings. In addition, the defendant was found to have incited hatred against what he called the “evil” NSL. The court concluded that his “radical statements” amounted to “utterly unfounded allegations”.

During the reporting period, the charges under the SNSO were as follows:

- 30 April: National Security Police arrested the family members of wanted activist Anna Kwok Fung-yee, including her father and brother, for allegedly handling funds or financial assets belonging to an “absconder”. On 24 December 2024, the police exercised their powers under the SNSO to label seven activists living overseas, including Kwok – for whom arrest warrants were issued on 3 July 2023 as “absconders”. The same day, police charged Kwok’s father with the SNSO offence. He was granted bail after his second application. The case was adjourned to 6 August 2025.
- 30 April: National Security Police charged waiter Chan Ho-hin with publishing seditious publications. He had allegedly posted content on social media “provoking hatred” against the authorities. The defendant was denied bail. He will be mentioned in West Kowloon Magistrates’ Courts on 9 July 2025.

National Security Offenders Denied Remission and Early Release

On 25 March 2024, Adam Ma Chun-man was denied early release from his five-year NSL sentence due to amended SNSO rules. Effective two days prior to his anticipated release, the amended rules bar early release for national security offenders unless the Commissioner of Correctional Services confirms it poses no threat to national security interests.

Subsequently, Ma brought a judicial review of the denial, the first ever legal challenge against the SNSO. On 6 December 2024, the High Court dismissed his application, ruling that remission is discretionary and that the Executive is in a more appropriate position than the Judiciary to ascertain whether early release would be detrimental to the interests of national security.

Ma appealed to the Court of Appeal (CA). An application hearing took place at the CA on 16 May 2025. On 24 June, a panel of three CA judges dismissed his application, upholding the lower Court’s reasoning. The Court of Appeal rejected Ma’s claim that national security was vaguely defined, affirming its broad framing allows flexibility. It upheld his imprisonment as “lawful” and ordered him to pay costs for the proceedings.

Police Issue Warning Over “Mobile App Endangering National Security”

On 10 June, the Hong Kong Police Force's National Security Department issued a public warning against downloading or promoting a mobile application titled *Reversed Front: Bonfire*. The authorities alleged that the app was released "under the guise of a game" and promoted secessionist ideologies, including "Hong Kong independence" and the overthrow of the constitutional order of the People's Republic of China

Police warned that sharing or possessing a game app could breach the NSL and SNSO, citing seditious intent and funding secession through paying for in-app purchases. The app was removed from both the Apple App Store and Google Play Store in Hong Kong. Authorities invoked Article 43 powers to disable related content, marking the first known use of national security laws to block a video game.

Activist Joshua Wong Chi-fung Re-arrested and Charged under the NSL

On 6 June, activist Joshua Wong, former Secretary-General of the disbanded political party Demosistō and convenor of student group Scholarism, was re-arrested while serving a four-year and eight-month prison sentence for conspiracy to commit subversion under the National Security Law (NSL). The re-arrest was made on the charge of conspiring to collude with foreign forces, also under the NSL. On the same day, Wong was officially charged with colluding with foreign forces and appeared before West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts. The prosecution alleged that between 1 July and 23 November 2020, Mr Wong conspired with activist Nathan Law Kwun-chung and others to request foreign governments to impose sanctions against Hong Kong and China. Wong was also suspected of requesting foreign entities to "seriously disrupt the formulation and implementation of laws or policies" by the central and Hong Kong authorities. The case has been adjourned until 8 August 2025.

In response, the then-Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Indo-Pacific, the Hon Catherine West MP, said:

"The UK is deeply concerned by the news of further charges under the National Security Law against Joshua Wong. We continue to call for the NSL to be repealed and for an end to the prosecution of all individuals charged under it."

Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (National Security Law)

On 3 June, National Security Police arrested a total of five people, including one man and four women, for alleged "conspiracy to commit terrorist activities". Police accused the group of issuing bomb threats and sending messages inciting Hong Kong and Taiwan independence. According to the Hong Kong Security Bureau, as of 13 June 2025, National Security Police had arrested a total of 326 people under national security offences, with at least 165 convicted. On 12 June, Secretary for Security Chris Tang Ping-keung stated that, since the establishment of a national security hotline in November 2020, over 920,000 reports had been received by the police.

The Hong Kong Alliance

As detailed in the last Six-monthly report, three former committee members of the disbanded Hong Kong Alliance, including vice chair Chow Hang-tung, filed an appeal

to the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) against their convictions for failing to cooperate with National Security Police. The Alliance had refused to hand over its financial reports and activities to aid an investigation, thereby allegedly breaching the NSL.

On 6 March, the CFA overturned the convictions of Chow and two other defendants for failing to cooperate with National Security Police under the NSL. All five CFA judges reached a unanimous decision to clear the defendants. They ruled that the prosecution had failed to prove the Alliance was a “foreign agent”. The CFA highlighted that the prosecution relied on “heavily redacted versions” of the police investigation report, which were “self-defeating” as they “redacted out the only material relied on for establishing the foreign agent element of the offence, so that, in its absence, the charge could not be proved”. The CFA ruling marked the first time that the CFA has ruled against National Security Police.

Separately, Chow and two other former committee members, Albert Ho Chun-yan and Lee Cheuk-yan, were charged with incitement to subversion under the NSL. In a case management hearing on 21 February, the court set the trial for 11 November 2025, expected to last 75 days.

As reported previously, Chow Hang-tung launched a Judicial Review in March 2024 challenging the prison authorities’ decision to block her access to four books, including one on the Tiananmen Square Massacre. According to the Judiciary’s website, a hearing had been scheduled for 1 April 2025. On 27 April this year, local media reported that Chow had withdrawn her legal challenge. Chow explained that the Chief Executive had issued a certificate, which is binding on the courts and not subject to judicial review, to support his own national security assessment that all four books “involved national security”. Chow revealed that, were she to proceed with legal action, she could be liable for legal costs exceeding seven figures in Hong Kong Dollars if she lost the case.

Joseph John

Dual Portuguese and Chinese national, Joseph John, also known as Wong Kin-chung, was sentenced to five years in prison for conspiracy to incite secession for publishing pro-independence posts online while overseas. He subsequently appealed against his sentence. On 15 April this year, the Court of Appeal dismissed his leave application, ruling that the mandatory NSL minimum sentence of five years is applicable to all conspiracy offences under the NSL. In May this year, local media reported that the defendant had filed an appeal to the CFA against his sentence. By the end of the reporting period no date had been set for an application hearing.

Actions Taken by National Security Police Against Activists Living Outside Hong Kong

As of the end of this reporting period, there were 19 arrest warrants issued for individuals overseas by the Hong Kong Police for national security offences. Following the announcement of further arrest warrants on 24 December, the then-Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon David Lammy MP, and the then-Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Indo-Pacific, the Hon Catherine West MP, met with the four UK-based activists affected on 21 January.

The then-Minister for Indo-Pacific said on X (formerly known as Twitter) on 21 January:

“The safety of the UK's Hong Kong community is a priority. Last week @DavidLammy & I made this clear when we met those recently targeted by the Hong Kong police with arrest warrants. Attempts by foreign governments to coerce, intimidate, or harm critics overseas are unacceptable.”

Hong Kong police brought eight individuals in for questioning, including family members and those connected to wanted activist Chung Kim-wah, former deputy CEO of the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute. The actions taken by National Security Police against Chung are detailed in the ‘Basic Rights & Freedoms’ section of this report. Throughout this reporting period, National Security Police also questioned family members of Carmen Lau Ka-man and Joseph Tay.

During the reporting period, some of the activists who face arrest warrants and bounties were targeted through threatening letters sent to their UK neighbours, urging them to hand the activists over to the Chinese Embassy to claim their bounty. The matter was referred to the UK police for further investigation.

Separately, on 30 April, National Security Police arrested the father and brother of wanted activist Anna Kwok Fung-yee. Kwok’s father was subsequently charged under the SNSO. Details of the arrests are recorded under “Implementation of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance”.

Non-permanent Judges on the Court of Final Appeal

On 10 January, the Chief Executive accepted the recommendation of the Chief Justice and extended the term of office of British non-permanent Court of Final Appeal (CFA) judge, the Rt Hon the Lord Hoffmann, for three years starting 12 January 2025.

At the Opening of the Legal Year on 20 January, Chief Justice Andrew Cheung acknowledged the contributions made by overseas non-permanent CFA judges in upholding the rule of law. Reflecting on “concerns” following recent departures, he stated that the office of an overseas non-permanent judge on the CFA has become “politicised” amidst the “escalating geopolitical tensions”. He expressed that “recruiting overseas judges with the right stature and experience may be less straightforward than it once was”. He reassured the public that the presence or absence of individual judges will not undermine the integrity of the judicial system.

On 11 April, the Judiciary, in response to media enquiries, confirmed that Australian non-permanent CFA judge, the Hon Mr Justice Robert French, had tendered his resignation to the Chief Executive. Justice French’s tenure was due to expire on 30 May 2026. In a statement, the Judiciary thanked Justice French for his support for the rule of law in Hong Kong. It noted that Justice French “expressed great respect for the judicial officers of the HKSAR as well as for their independence and integrity”. The Hong Kong Government expressed regret at his resignation.

On 8 May, the Chief Executive appointed the Hon Sir William Gillow Gibbes Austen Young, formerly Permanent Judge of the Supreme Court of New Zealand, as a non-permanent judge of the CFA for a term of three years. The Legislative Council approved the appointment on 4 June.

Since Beijing's imposition of the NSL in 2020, a total of ten overseas non-permanent judges (including Mr Justice Robert French) have left the CFA. At the end of the reporting period, six overseas judges from common law jurisdictions were serving on the CFA, including two from the United Kingdom, three from Australia and one from New Zealand. The Judiciary stressed that "the operation of the CFA will not be affected by the recent change in membership of the Court", adding that it will "continue to identify suitable local and overseas candidates for appointment as non-permanent judges".

Judicial Transparency: Remote Hearing

The Courts (Remote Hearing) Ordinance, gazetted on 22 November 2024 and effective from 28 March 2025, enables judges to order remote hearings across Hong Kong's courts and tribunals. Criminal trials, national security cases, and Juvenile Court proceedings are excluded. On 7 April, a Court of Final Appeal hearing was livestreamed for the first time under the new law.

Allegations of Judicial Copying Against High Court Judge Dismissed

In July 2023, a defendant, after losing a case involving damages for assault, harassment and intimidation, filed a complaint against High Court Judge Wilson Chan Ka-shun, claiming that he had adopted 95% of the plaintiff's submissions in his judgment and failed to analyse the facts.

On 13 February 2025, allegations against Judge Chan were dismissed after a Judiciary investigation found he maintained judicial independence despite the investigation suggesting that over 90% of the judgment was copied from the plaintiff's opening and closing submissions. A judicial panel dismissed the complaint. Chief Justice Andrew Cheung Kui-nung, along with the Advisory Committee on Complaints against Judicial Conduct, endorsed the panel's decision. However, they warned that excessive judicial copying casts doubts on the judges' application of independent mind and should be strongly discouraged.

Prosecutions Against Former Legislator Lam Cheuk-ting in relation to the 21 July 2019 Yuen Long Incident

Two non-NSL prosecutions against former Democratic Party lawmaker Lam Cheuk-ting resulted in convictions and prison sentences, both related to the 2019 incident at Yuen Long. In addition to the two non-NSL convictions, Lam is currently serving six years and nine months for conspiracy to commit subversion under the NSL for taking part in unofficial Legislative Council election primaries in July 2020.

Disclosure of identity of person under investigation

As detailed in previous Six-monthly reports, in February 2024, the High Court quashed the conviction of Lam for disclosing details of an Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) investigation into the misconduct of a senior police officer involved

in a 2019 incident at Yuen Long. He was acquitted on the basis that the ordinance covers investigation into bribery-related offences only, in which misconduct in public office is not specified. The Department of Justice subsequently appealed.

On 1 April 2025, the Court of Final Appeal (CFA), in a 3-2 vote, overturned Lam's acquittal, reinstating his conviction and four-month sentence. Three CFA judges, including the Chief Justice, supported a broader interpretation of the law and ruled that Lam's unauthorised disclosure of a misconduct investigation fell within the ICAC anti-graft ordinance, as it could potentially alert a bribery suspect under investigation. The other two CFA judges, Joseph Fok and Johnson Lam, disagreed, stating that the law should instead be interpreted strictly to apply only to the disclosure of persons under a bribery investigation.

Rioting

In August 2020, Lam Cheuk-ting and six others were charged with rioting at Yuen Long MTR station on 21 July 2019, accused of attacking individuals in white shirts. All pleaded not guilty but were convicted on 12 December 2024.

On 27 February 2025, Lam received the longest sentence of all seven convicted - 37 months. The other six defendants received jail terms ranging from 25 to 31 months.

District Judge Stanley Chan rejected Lam's claim of acting as a peacemaker, stating his presence in Yuen Long escalated tensions and that as a prominent politician, his actions exacerbated confrontations. All seven appealed in March 2025; no hearing had been scheduled by the end of the reporting period.

Use of United Nations Anti-Terrorism Law

On 9 September 2024, the trial of seven defendants charged under the United Nations (UN) (Anti-Terrorism Measures) Ordinance began. This marked the second time that the ordinance has been invoked in Hong Kong since its local enactment in 2002, following a binding UN Security Council resolution. In November 2022, all seven defendants were charged with conspiracy to commit bombing of prescribed objects. They stood accused of plotting to plant explosives at multiple locations across Hong Kong during the 2019 protests. All seven defendants pleaded not guilty to the charge. A nine-person jury was selected.

On 9 June 2025, the prosecution completed its nine-day initial examination. The prosecution will commence its closing arguments on 7 July. The trial continued throughout this reporting period, exceeding the 75 days originally allotted by the High Court.

Concluded Cases in relation to 2019 Protests

According to Hong Kong Police statistics, at least 10,279 people were arrested in relation to the anti-extradition bill protests in 2019. On 7 April, the Judiciary stated that out of the 2,350 related prosecutions, over 96% of cases (2,260 approx.) had been concluded as of February 2025.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Appointment of Commissioner of Police

On 2 April 2025, China's State Council announced the appointment of 52-year-old Joe Chow Yat-ming, formerly Deputy Commissioner of the Hong Kong Police Force, as the new Commissioner of Police, succeeding Raymond Siu Chak-ye who has reached the prescribed retirement age. Chow joined the Force in 1995 as an inspector and later served as the Commander of Criminal Intelligence Bureau. In April 2022, he was appointed as Deputy Commissioner of Police. Chow has extensive experience in criminal investigation and intelligence gathering. He studied previously at the College of Policing in the UK.

Speaking to the press upon his appointment, Chow stressed that there are "undercurrents" in Hong Kong, warning against different forms of "soft resistance". He vowed to prioritise safeguarding national security and modernising law enforcement.

Government Rules Out Legislation on Insulting Public Officers

The Civil Service Bureau confirmed that the current administration would not criminalise insults to public officers. In a document submitted to the Legislative Council, the Bureau stated that while the government does not tolerate acts of insulting public servants, laws specifically prohibiting insults against them are uncommon, and enforcement would be challenging and controversial. In addition, the Bureau noted that existing national security legislation, particularly the SNSO, is sufficient to address relevant acts that may threaten public order or the effective functioning of the civil service.

Promotion of "Xi Jinping Thought on Culture" Among Civil Servants

On 19 March, the Civil Service College held a talk on "Xi Jinping Thought on Culture" at the Central Government Offices, delivered by Vice President of the National Academy of Governance Li Wentang. About 160 politically appointed officials and civil servants in the directorate, senior and middle ranks attended. Secretary for the Civil Service Ingrid Yeung said Xi Jinping thought "serves as the theoretical guidance for the development of a socialist culture with Chinese Characteristics for a new era".

FINANCE

Over the reporting period, the Hong Kong SAR Government continued to have the formal autonomy to manage its own "financial matters, including disposing of its financial resources and drawing up its budgets and its final accounts".

On 26 February, Hong Kong's Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po presented the 2025/26 budget focusing on the new Northern Metropolis megaproject and allocated around £1.1 billion to an innovation and technology-related fund in support of AI R&D.

Following the enactment of the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Minimum Tax for Multinational Enterprise Groups) Ordinance on 6 June 2025, Hong Kong will implement the global minimum tax for multinational enterprise groups with retroactive effect from 1 January 2025 as part of the Global Minimum Tax (GloBE Rules) framework announced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development 's Pillar Two initiative under the broader Base Erosion and Profit Shifting project. These rules aim to ensure that large multinational enterprises pay a minimum level of tax – specifically, 15% effective tax rate – on the income they earn in each jurisdiction where they operate.

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The Hong Kong SAR Government maintained its “capitalist economic and trade systems” during the reporting period, retaining formal autonomy in economic and trade decisions. Hong Kong continues to be a separate customs territory and engages independently with other jurisdictions through its membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The International Monetary Fund published their Hong Kong Article IV report in January 2025 noting Hong Kong SAR’s economy was on a path of gradual but uneven recovery following a protracted period of shocks.

Hong Kong ranked 3rd on IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2025, an annual report which uses data and executive opinion surveys to benchmarks 69 economies across indicators including economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency, and infrastructure.

Contemporary Ampere Technology Co., Limited, more commonly known as CATL, an EV battery maker, offered their first listing on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange which was the largest IPO of 2025 as of the end of the reporting period, raising USD 4.6 billion.

Total funds raised on the securities market during the first six months of 2025 in Hong Kong amounted to USD 36 billion.

On 2 January 2025, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Final Rule on outbound investment relating to Executive Order 14105 took effect. This instituted controls, which relate to restrictions and notification obligations, regarding US investment into Chinese (including Hong Kong) companies involved in advanced technology sectors.

CK Hutchison Port Divestment Developments

On 4 March, CK Hutchison announced plans to sell a significant share of its global ports business – excluding Hong Kong and Mainland China assets – to a consortium led by BlackRock and Terminal Investment Limited, a subsidiary of Mediterranean Shipping Company. The move followed US criticism over CK Hutchison’s Panama Canal operations, and triggered scrutiny from Chinese authorities and state-linked media citing national security and geopolitical concerns. In late March, China’s State Administration for Market Regulation launched an anti-trust review of the transaction, while media reporting suggested that Chinese state-owned enterprises had been instructed by the Chinese government to avoid new partnerships with CK Hutchison and businesses associated with the Li family. In June, speculation emerged that China COSCO Shipping might join the consortium as a condition for Chinese regulatory approval to be granted.

US Tariff Policy Changes Towards Hong Kong

On 5 February, the US confirmed that tariff measures on Chinese goods, including removal of duty-free “de minimis” access for goods under \$800, would also apply to Hong Kong. Hong Kong products were included in all subsequent US tariff changes towards China. The Hang Seng Index also saw a marked fall after April’s “Liberation Day” tariff announcement, before recovering over the following month. Chief Executive John Lee stated Hong Kong would not impose countermeasures but would consider a WTO complaint, though no consultations were requested by period-end. Hongkong Post suspended US-bound mail twice, most recently from 27 April, citing opposition to US tariffs. Services remained suspended throughout the rest of the reporting period.

MONETARY SYSTEM

The Hong Kong SAR maintained its status as an international financial centre and was ranked third of 121 financial centres in the 36th Global Financial Centres Index. Hong Kong’s monetary and financial systems continued to be overseen by its four major independent regulators. The Hong Kong SAR Government continued to have formal discretion over its monetary and financial policies, intended to safeguard “the free operation of financial business and the free flow of capital within, into and out of the jurisdiction.” No capital or exchange control policy was applied to the SAR in the reporting period. The authority to issue Hong Kong currency remained vested in the Hong Kong SAR Government. Markets for foreign exchange, gold, securities and futures continued free of interference.

On 21 May, Hong Kong passed the Stablecoins Bill, which establishes a licensing regime for stablecoins, a type of cryptocurrency pegged to a stable asset such as USD or gold and issued by private companies.

On 22 June, a joint Hong Kong Monetary Authority-People's Bank of China (HKMA-PBOC) pilot scheme was launched to enable cross-border retail payments through a linking of financial infrastructure.

The Exchange Fund continued to be managed and controlled by the Hong Kong SAR Government, via the HKMA, and continued to regulate the exchange value of the Hong Kong dollar, within a band of HKD \$7.75 to \$7.85 to one US dollar. As of the end of May 2025, the official foreign currency reserve assets of Hong Kong amounted to USD 431.0 billion, representing over five times the currency in circulation.

SHIPPING

Hong Kong’s port maintained its status as an international maritime centre. It continued to operate as a free port. Hong Kong continued to host well-established professional ship management services providers, including in maritime insurance, ship finance and port infrastructure.

On 14 February, Hong Kong introduced the Block Registration Incentive Scheme, offering fee refunds for firms registering multiple ships under its flag, aiming to attract more shipowners and strengthen its position as a global shipping registry.

On 17 April, the US Trade Representative announced its planned Section 301 measures against China's shipping sector would also apply to Hong Kong, meaning ships linked to Hong Kong will face fees when calling at US ports from October 2025 onwards.

On 16 May, the Hong Kong Government launched the Port Community System (PCS) digital project, which aims to integrate multimodal transport data, enable real-time cargo tracking, and support trade finance and cross-border logistics through digital connectivity with mainland Chinese and international maritime networks.

June 2025 data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development shows Hong Kong's liner shipping connectivity has declined for the fourth consecutive quarter, dropping to 9th globally as major shipping alliances increasingly favour rival transshipment hubs like Shenzhen and Singapore. The Hong Kong Government has indicated it will look to prioritise growth in high-value-added maritime services, including ship management and insurance.

CIVIL AVIATION

The Hong Kong SAR Government continued to manage civil aviation in accordance with the provisions of the Joint Declaration. Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) continued to facilitate both commercial and tourism flows and enabled the city to maintain its status as an international and regional aviation centre.

On 1 January 2025, regular commercial flights of Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China's first domestically produced passenger aircraft began between Shanghai and Hong Kong. In February, Financial Secretary Paul Chan committed to facilitating the C919's integration into international markets, underpinned by a trilateral airworthiness cooperation agreement with mainland China and Macao, despite the aircraft not yet being certified by US or EU regulators.

Between January and June 2025, air traffic at Hong Kong International Airport continued its recovery, with steady growth in passenger volumes and aircraft movements, supported by the full operationalisation of the Three-Runway System in late 2024 and the gradual resumption of regional and long-haul services. However, various announcements from April onwards regarding US tariff rates towards Hong Kong and Chinese products caused volatility in the air-freight sector, especially in relation to e-commerce shipments.

EDUCATION

The Hong Kong SAR Government has maintained (as is stipulated in the Joint Declaration) an education system that covers kindergarten, primary, secondary, tertiary and international schooling. The languages of instruction at primary and secondary levels of public education continued to be English and Cantonese. Autonomy for post-secondary education institutions is largely upheld, although the Hong Kong SAR Government has set out that under the NSL, students are required to complete a mandatory course covering the Basic Law and NSL.

Updated National Security Education Curriculum

In May 2025, the Education Bureau updated the Curriculum Framework of National Security Education introduced in 2021 for all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, emphasising a holistic approach to promoting national security education. The renewed framework highlights the concept of “mega security” and calls for schools to integrate national security elements into the school curriculum, as well as to align with China’s new Patriotic Education Law.

The document states that teachers may incorporate relevant national security elements into different subjects (such as Mathematics, Music, Visual Arts and Physical Education) to help students understand the close connection between national security and daily life.

New Requirement for Schools to Remove Books Contrary to National Security

Also in May, the Education Bureau updated the School Administration Guide, requiring librarians to regularly review their schools’ collection and remove books that contain elements endangering national security or are “contrary to the interests of national security”. Its arrangements of school library collection mandates that any related content be “removed or withdrawn from use immediately so as to avoid causing negative impacts on students”.

National Flag-raising Ceremonies in Kindergartens

On 15 April, over 300 primary and secondary schools as well as kindergartens, involving nearly 160,000 students across Hong Kong, held national flag-raising ceremonies to mark National Security Education Day.

On 26 May, local media reported that the Education Bureau requested kindergartens hold flag-raising ceremonies to mark the fifth anniversary of the National Security Law imposed by Beijing on 30 June. The Bureau also provided samples of suggested speeches on the importance of national security.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND UK BILATERAL RELATIONS

The Hong Kong SAR Government continued to participate as members of delegations of the PRC, such as at the G20 and COP. As envisaged by the Joint Declaration, the PRC continued to extend to the Hong Kong SAR a wide range of international agreements to which it is party. The decision to extend the application of international treaties signed by the PRC to Hong Kong continued with consultation of the Hong Kong SAR, as required by the Joint Declaration. The Hong Kong SAR Government continued to implement agreements with states, regions and relevant international organisations in the economic, trade, financial and monetary, shipping, communications, tourism, cultural and sports fields.

Hong Kong participated in relevant international economic and trade organisations and forums such as the WTO and the APEC, as well as other international trade agreements.

The HKMA continued to participate in multilateral institutions and international forums and conferences, some as a separate member and others as a member of the PRC delegation.

There continued to be no international organisation that Hong Kong participates in as a separate member and where the PRC is not a member.

The Central People's Government continued to be responsible for bilateral agreements with foreign governments for consular missions in Hong Kong, as set out in the Joint Declaration. Similarly, the Central People's Government continued to enter into agreements and arrangements for the establishment of offices of International Organisations in Hong Kong.

Consular missions in the Hong Kong SAR, including the British Consulate-General, continued to operate. 14 Economic and Trade Offices continued to operate overseas and seven in the mainland on behalf of the Hong Kong SAR Government.

Signing Ceremony of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organisation for Mediation

On 30 May, Wang Yi, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, attended the Signing Ceremony of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organisation for Mediation (IOMed) in Hong Kong. A total of 33 countries, primarily from the Global South, signed the Convention. The UK was not invited to sign the Convention.

Wang remarked that the IOMed will address the "institutional gap" in international mediation and serve as "an important public good" in the field of the rule of law, contributing to improved global governance. Chief Executive John Lee noted that high-level representatives of over 80 countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, as well as the United Nations and about 20 international organisations were present. The same day, Wang met with Lee and principal officials of the SAR Government to discuss the work of the IOMed.

US Sanctions Against Six Beijing and Hong Kong Officials

On 31 March, the US Government imposed sanctions on six Beijing and Hong Kong officials for undermining the SAR's autonomy. In its statement, the US Department of State noted that the authorities in Beijing and Hong Kong "have used Hong Kong national security laws extraterritorially to intimidate, silence, and harass 19 pro-democracy activists who were forced to flee overseas, including a U.S. citizen and four other U.S. residents". In particular, the six sanctioned persons had "engaged in actions or policies that threaten to further erode the autonomy of Hong Kong in contravention of China's commitments, and in connection with acts of transnational repression".

The six individuals are:

1. Dong Jingwei, Director of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR
2. Raymond Siu Chak-ye, former Commissioner of the Hong Kong Police Force
3. Paul Lam Ting-kwok, Secretary for Justice of the Hong Kong SAR

4. Sonny Au Chi-kwong, Secretary-General for the Committee for Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong SAR
5. Dick Wong Chung-chun, Assistant Commissioner of Police, National Security
6. Margaret Chiu Wing-lan, Senior Assistant Commissioner (Director of Management Services) and former Assistant Commissioner of the Police's National Security Department

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR, and the Hong Kong SAR Government condemned the sanctions.

British National (Overseas)

On 22 May, the Home Office published the latest UK immigration statistics. Following its launch on 31 January 2021, until 31 March 2025, there were approximately 232,498 applications for the British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa route, with over 223,904 visas granted.

The Hong Kong SAR Government continued not to recognise the BN(O) passport as a valid travel document.

On 9 April, the UK Government updated its Immigration Rules in Parliament to exempt BN(O) passport holders from Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) requirements.

Visits

Between 13 and 14 April, the then-Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security, Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP, visited Hong Kong. He met Hong Kong Chief Secretary for Administration Eric Chan Kwok-ki and relayed the then-Foreign Secretary's concerns regarding MP Wera Hobhouse's denial of entry into Hong Kong. Minister Alexander also met Hong Kong Secretary of Commerce Algernon Yau to discuss areas of potential cooperation while noting that issues like the refusal of entry continued to make collaboration difficult.

Between 19 and 20 May, Hong Kong Secretary for Education, Christine Choi Yuk-lin, visited the UK, attending the Education World Forum in London. During the trip, she met with UK education officials to discuss enhancing higher education collaboration between the UK and Hong Kong and shared Hong Kong's latest developments in becoming an international education hub. Secretary Choi also had a bilateral meeting with the then-Minister for School Standards, Catherine McKinnell MP. The discussion covered education collaboration, AI and curriculum development. Minister McKinnell also raised concerns regarding Wera Hobhouse's entry denial into Hong Kong and Jimmy Lai's case.

On 30 May, during her visit to China, the then-Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Indo-Pacific, the Hon Catherine West MP, met Chief Secretary Eric Chan in Hong Kong. Following the meeting, the then-Minister said on X (formerly known as Twitter):

“The UK wants to see Hong Kong thrive as an open, international city. Speaking to Chief Secretary Eric Chan in Hong Kong today, I reiterated the UK’s deep concerns over Jimmy Lai’s prosecution, the targeting of Hong Kongers in the UK and a British MP’s recent refusal of entry”.

On 9 June, during a visit to London, Hong Kong Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Christopher Hui met with the then-Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Emma Reynolds. They discussed cooperation between the two international financial centres of London and Hong Kong, as well as areas of concern such as the restrictions facing British National (Overseas) visa holders when drawing down their Mandatory Provident Fund savings.

Trade and Investment

Hong Kong represents the UK’s 18th largest global trading partner, having accounted for 1.4% of total UK trade in the four quarters to the end of December 2024. Total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports) between the UK and the Hong Kong SAR was £25.0 billion in the four quarters to the end of December 2024, a decrease of 4.4% or £1.1 billion from the four quarters to the end of December 2023. Of this £25.0 billion, UK exports accounted for £15.6 billion.

Culture

Between 1 January and 30 June 2025, the British Council delivered 1,549 university and school entrance exams and 1,515 UK professional qualifications. 4,022 Young Learners and 1,077 Adult students attended in-person English language courses in the same period. The British Council also delivered 20,555 IELTS tests.

In January, the British Council held an information and networking event for agents who support UK universities in student recruitment. Over 90 local agents and representatives of UK universities attended the event.

In March, ten UK universities joined a UK Higher Education Mission to Hong Kong, the first university delegation of its kind to visit the city in a decade. Also in March, widely known as Art Month in Hong Kong, several UK cultural initiatives took place. Notably, the Design Museum’s *Weird Sensation Feels Good: The World of ASMR* (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) exhibition made its Asia debut in the city. The UK Department for Business and Trade also co-hosted the inaugural Hong Kong edition of the UK-China Screen Forum with Phoenix TV at the Hong Kong International Film and TV Market, featuring key representatives from the BBC and the British Film Institute.

In April, the UK Department for Trade and Business partnered with the Hong Kong Fashion Council to co-host the Asia Fashion Leader Forum. The event marked the launch of Hong Kong Fashion Fest – a flagship initiative for the city’s fashion industry.

Also in April, the British Council opened its Scholarships for Women programme 2025 in collaboration with the University of Bristol. This initiative is supported by the Sir Tang Shiu Kin Education Trust, which sponsors four women from marginalised communities to pursue graduate studies in the UK.

In May, the British Council presented a video tour of selected works from the British Council Collection at the UK's Great Art Pavilion during the Hong Kong Affordable Art Fair 2025, in collaboration with the UK Department of Business and Trade. The Pavilion also showcased a curated selection of commercial artworks by UK artists, attracting 4,116 participants. Also in May, senior representatives from the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Hong Kong Palace Museum took part in the UK Department for Business and Trade's mission to the Museums + Heritage Show 2025 in London.

DEFENCE

The maintenance of public order in the Hong Kong SAR continued to be the responsibility of the Hong Kong SAR Government. There has been no evidence that military forces sent by the Central People's Government to be stationed in the SAR for the purpose of defence have interfered in the internal affairs of the city. Expenditure for these military forces have been borne by the Central People's Government.

RIGHT OF ABODE, TRAVEL AND IMMIGRATION

The Hong Kong SAR Immigration Department remained the sole issuing authority for the Hong Kong SAR passport. Nationals who were entitled to visa-free access to Hong Kong prior to the establishment of the SAR continued to enjoy visa-free access. As of the end of the reporting period, nationals of 170 countries were entitled to visa-free access to Hong Kong.

UK MP Wera Hobhouse Denied Entry to Hong Kong

On 10 April, UK MP Wera Hobhouse was refused entry to Hong Kong upon arrival at Hong Kong International Airport. Hobhouse was travelling in a personal capacity. She was detained by immigration officials, questioned. She was subsequently deported.

Following the incident, the then-Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon David Lammy MP said: "It is deeply concerning to hear that an MP on a personal trip has been refused entry to Hong Kong". The then-Foreign Secretary confirmed that the UK Government would raise the matter urgently with both the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities. He said, "it would be unacceptable for an MP to be denied entry for simply expressing their views as a parliamentarian", adding that "unjustified restrictions on freedom of movement can only serve to further undermine Hong Kong's international reputation".

On 14 April, the then-Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security, Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP, met with Chief Secretary for Administration Eric Chan during his visit to Hong Kong, to relay the then-Foreign Secretary's concerns regarding MP Wera Hobhouse's denial of entry into Hong Kong.

Following the meeting, the UK Government issued a statement the same day:

“During his visit to mainland China and Hong Kong Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security the Rt Hon Douglas Alexander relayed our immediate and deep concern regarding MP Wera Hobhouse denial of entry into Hong Kong. Minister Alexander raised our concerns and demanded an explanation with senior Chinese and Hong Kong interlocutors including Hong Kong’s Chief Secretary for Administration, to understand why the Hong Kong authorities refused access to a British MP.

It is deeply concerning that a UK MP was refused permission to enter Hong Kong last week. Unjustified restrictions on the freedom of movement for UK citizens into Hong Kong only serves to further undermine Hong Kong’s international reputation and the important people-people connections between the UK and Hong Kong.

As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, and Minister Alexander relayed in person, it would be unacceptable for any MP to be denied entry for simply expressing their views.”

Also on 14 April, the Hong Kong SAR Government released the following statement:

“A HKSAR Government spokesman said that it is the Government’s standing policy not to comment on individual cases. The Immigration Department will deal with each case in accordance with the relevant law and immigration policy. It is the duty of immigration officer to ask questions to ascertain that there is no doubt about the purpose of any visit. The person concerned knows best what he or she has done. It will be unhelpful to the person’s case if the person refuses to answer questions put to him or her for that purpose.

In addition, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, today afternoon met with the Minister for Trade Policy and Economic Security, UK, Mr Douglas Alexander, who is visiting Hong Kong, to exchange views on the matter. Mr Chan also reiterated the stance of the HKSAR Government during the meeting.”

OTHER REPORTS

On 30 June, Amnesty International published a report entitled “*The State Can Lock Up People, But Not Their Thinking*” to mark the fifth anniversary of the enactment of the NSL. The paper analyses patterns in arrests, bail decisions and prosecutions under the NSL. According to its research, more than 80% of people convicted under the law had been “wrongly criminalised”. It stated that approximately 84% of the concluded cases involved legitimate expression, with no evidence of violent conduct or incitement. The data suggested that bail was denied in almost 90% of defendants and they were forced to spend an average of 11 months in pre-trial detention. Over 40% of national security cases involved detentions lasting one year or more before trial or a guilty plea.

On 27 February, Freedom House's 2025 Freedom in the World report scored Hong Kong 40 out of 100 and as "partly free", falling one place from 2024. Hong Kong's scores for political rights and civil liberties were ranked at 9 out of 40 and 31 out of 60 respectively. The report maintained that Hong Kong traditionally enjoyed substantial civil liberties and the rule of law, but the implementation of the NSL has "amounted a multi-front attack" on the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework. In particular, the report noted that the Legislative Council in March 2024 "quickly considered and passed a new security ordinance under Article 23 of the Basic Law, affecting online and offline discussion".

On 28 February, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)'s annual democracy Index 2024 ranked Hong Kong 87th out of 167 countries or territories. The EIU again categorised Hong Kong as a "hybrid regime", with an overall score of 5.09 out of 10.

Also in February, the US Heritage Foundation released its annual Economic Freedom Index, which graded Hong Kong as part of the mainland China section. Hong Kong was ranked 151st as part of mainland China.

On 31 March, the US State Department reported to Congress, as required annually under the US Hong Kong Policy Act. The report stated that "Beijing took new actions which directly threaten U.S. interests and are inconsistent with the Basic Law and China's obligation pursuant to the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 to allow Hong Kong to enjoy a high degree of autonomy". It noted that the Beijing and Hong Kong authorities continued to use "national security as a broad and vague basis" to aggressively prosecute prodemocracy and media freedom advocates, applying the NSL and SNSO extraterritorially to engage in transnational repression. The report added that, despite Beijing's permission for Hong Kong to retain some differences from mainland China which "offer unique contributions to Beijing's interests", the overall trend "has been one of centralization under Beijing".

CONCLUSION

Hong Kong continues to retain a high degree of autonomy in economic, monetary, and financial matters. The city's economic freedoms remain broadly preserved as envisaged in the Joint Declaration, and it continues to play a significant role as a leading international financial centre.

However, this reporting period has seen the further entrenchment of national security legislation and its application in ways that undermine the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Joint Declaration. The implementation of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance and the continued use of the National Security Law have suppressed dissent, limited freedoms, and threatened judicial independence in national security cases.

Transparency and access to government information have also come under increasing pressure. The removal of public records by the Office of the Ombudsman, restrictions on access to archived materials, and the withholding of transcripts from Chief Executive Q&A sessions in the Legislative Council mark a concerning trend towards reduced government accountability and diminished public oversight.

The UK Government continues to assess that China is in a state of ongoing non-compliance with the Joint Declaration. The disbandment of long-standing civil society organisations, the targeting of independent media, and the prosecution of individuals for peaceful political expression are inconsistent with the high degree of autonomy and fundamental freedoms promised to the people of Hong Kong.

The UK will continue to hold China to its international obligations. We remain committed to defending the values of openness, accountability, and the rule of law that underpin Hong Kong's unique identity.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation	APEC
British National (Overseas)	BN(O)
Central Government Liaison Office	CGLO
Court of Appeal	CA
Court of Final Appeal	CFA
Conference of the Parties	COP
Central People's Government	CPG
Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference	CPPCC
Department of Justice	DoJ
Economist Intelligence Unit	EIU
Foreign Correspondents' Club	FCC
Hong Kong Journalists Association	HKJA
Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office	HKMAO
Hong Kong Monetary Authority	HKMA
Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute	HKPORI
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	HKSAR
International Organisation for Mediation	IOMed
Legislative Council	LegCo
Member of the Parliament	MP
National People's Congress	NPC
National Security Committee	NSC
National Security Law	NSL
Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR	OSNS
People's Republic of China	PRC
Reporters Without Borders	RSF
Safeguarding National Security Ordinance	SNSO
United Nations	UN
World Trade Organisation	WTO