

Hong Kong again tops freedom index, but for how much longer?

Fraser Institute of Canada sounds alarm about Beijing's involvement in city's affairs

Danny Lee

November 30, 2016

Hong Kong has reaffirmed its No 1 status as the freest jurisdiction in the world, but Beijing's increased involvement in the city's affairs puts that top ranking in danger, the Fraser Institute of Canada has warned.

The city again topped the global Human Freedom Index survey, beating off Switzerland, New Zealand, Ireland and Denmark. The index measures 76 indicators of personal, civil and economic freedoms, in 156 countries and jurisdictions.

The warning about Hong Kong's leading position on the index came in the same month that China's top legislative body interpreted the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution, effectively barring two lawmakers-elect for insulting the nation and swearing allegiance to a "Hong Kong nation" when taking their oaths of office.

"While the freedom index doesn't measure democracy, democracy remains the best safeguard of personal freedoms, so if China encroaches on its 'one country, two systems' relationship with Hong Kong, we can expect Hong Kong's ranking to drop," said Fred McMahon, the Dr Michael A. Walker Research Chair in Economic Freedom at the Fraser Institute and editor of the study.

Hong Kong's place atop of the index was largely because of its high scores in economic freedom, the institute said.

Notably, the United States slid to 23rd place, down three spots. Other major economic and political powers, including Germany (13), France (31), Japan (32), Russia (115) and China (141), fell or held steady in their rankings.

Hong Kong came in 14th place on rule of law, 42nd on safety and security, and 25th on personal freedom.