

# Apple Daily's demise; Delta on the rise; spies in the library

The closure of Hong Kong's Apple Daily last week shows how the pro-democracy movement and press freedom are being crushed in the city under pressure from Beijing. We follow the final weeks of the flagship publication, including a first-person account from one of the last journalists to leave the building after colleagues were arrested and equipment seized. Analysis from China commentator Louisa Lim looks at how the final windows of defiance against the mainland's determination to stamp out media criticism are being resolutely shut via legal and financial pressure.

**The big story** [Page 10](#) →

The Delta variant of Covid-19 is behind a worrying resurgence in infections across the world. We investigate why, in the face of its increased transmissibility, pushing ahead with vaccination is imperative while even the inoculated may have to keep wearing their masks for a while longer yet.

**Spotlight** [Page 15](#) →

Could studying works of fiction from around the world have predicted a disaster comparable to the coronavirus pandemic or explain the China's unshakeable belief that it could defy international norms with little pushback from the west? Philip Oltermann, our Berlin bureau chief, reports on how a group of German literary scholars working with state intelligence thought they could gain a Cassandra-like insight into the geo-political future using textual analysis. It's a spy story that replaces fast action with fast reading.

**Reading between the lines** [Page 34](#) →



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### On the cover

As news of the closure of Apple Daily spread across Hong Kong, supporters gathered beneath its offices. This image of staff shining their phone torches into the darkness below the building on their final night at work shows the pride Hong Kongers had in their vibrant free media as well as their pain that it has now been crushed.

*Photograph: Anthony Wallace/AFP/Getty*

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