

July 13, 2020

Dear Editor,

Your July 4th coverage of Hong Kong and the new National Security Law (“A safe harbour no more,” “Hong Kong’s freedoms: The evening of its days,” and “Relations with China: Getting off the fence”), contained misleading statements on the Law and its impact on Hong Kong. So, too, did your July 11th article (“The party’s grip.”)

The Law is hardly “draconian” or “sweeping.” Rather, it is relatively mild as far as national security laws go, focusing on just four well-defined and well-confined acts and activities that can endanger national security: secession, subversion of state power, terrorist activities and collusion with foreign or external forces. Neither is it “spreading fear” among the vast majority of the people of Hong Kong. After a year of increasingly violent protests and traumatising social and business disruption, they are returning to a stable and secure life. Soon enough, Hong Kong will resume its status as among the world’s safest cities.

Hong Kong’s unique “one country, two systems” framework has been successfully implemented since 1997 and will continue to drive its progress. The national security legislation simply affirms that “one country” is central to the foundation of “two systems.” The Central Government enacted the Law only after the escalation of national security risks over the past year, and the inability of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and Legislative Council to enact security legislation required under the Basic Law, 23 years after the establishment of the HKSAR. As *The Economist* itself notes, “local opposition had stymied the government’s efforts to do so.”

The National Security Law stipulates that the Chief Executive shall designate a list of judges to hear national security cases. She may consult the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the HKSAR and the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal before doing so. This does not affect judicial independence at all.

The Economist’s charge that “censorship is spreading” following the removal of several books from the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) does not reflect the facts. The HKPL is guided by the principles of UNESCO’s Public Library Manifesto. Books must comply with Hong Kong law. The HKPL is reviewing nine books to establish whether they violate National Security Law stipulations. Until the review is completed, those books will be unavailable in the HKPL.

Let me stress that Hong Kong’s fundamental freedoms remain intact under the Basic Law and the applicable provisions of international covenants on human rights. Hong Kong will continue to thrive as a highly autonomous and vibrant international financial and business centre underpinned by the rule of law and an independent judiciary.

The Economist also notes that the people of Hong Kong are seen as “honest, hard-working and entrepreneurial.” The results underline that welcome statement. Between June 30, when the Law was passed, and its July 9 opening, the Hang Seng Index rose some seven

per cent. And cash equity market turnover on July 6, July 7 and July 9 surpassed HK\$200 billion (US\$26 billion) – the global financial centre’s highest daily trading levels in more than two years. In short, Hong Kong looks forward to a peaceful and prosperous future.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Cheung Kin-chung
Chief Secretary for Administration
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government