

January 11, 2021

The Editor,
The Economist

Dear Editor,

Your article "Cut down in the primary" (January 9, 2021) wrongly suggests that the recent arrests under the National Security Law (NSL) in Hong Kong represent an "escalation in repressive tactics" and undermine the Basic Law.

The NSL, introduced in accordance with the Basic Law last June, aims to restore and maintain calm and stability in the city following months of violent social unrest and turbulence. The law applies equally to everyone in Hong Kong.

The NSL targets universally unacceptable acts that undermine sovereignty and national security - secession, subversion, terrorist activities and collusion with foreign countries or external elements to endanger national security. It clearly stipulates that the rights and freedoms enjoyed by residents under the Basic Law and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as applied to Hong Kong shall be protected in accordance with the law.

Those arrested on January 6 were suspected to have violated the offence of subversion. By plotting the so-called "35-plus" and the "10-step mutual destruction plan", and conducting the so-called "primaries" among themselves in July 2020, the arrestees were suspected to have conspired to obtain 35 or more seats in the Legislative Council with a view to recklessly and blindly vetoing the government budget and public funding applications, forcing the resignation of the Chief Executive. The "10-step mutual destruction plan" aimed to bring the Government and society to a complete standstill through massive riots and other related moves, thus precipitating a constitutional crisis.

No one is above the law in Hong Kong. We deplore any sweeping remarks suggesting that people with certain political backgrounds should be immune to legal sanctions.

Let me assure you that Hong Kong remains a safe, open, vibrant and international city underpinned by the rule of law and judicial independence.

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