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By e-mail
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Sir,

Contrary to your editorial “The Demise of Hong Kong” (May 20), the Hong Kong government’s proposed amendments to current extradition law seek to make the city a safer place and a better partner in the international fight against crime by filling the legal vacuum in our existing mechanism for surrendering fugitive offenders.

Extradition and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters are long-standing international practices to combat crimes. Since Hong Kong does not have such an arrangement with Taiwan, there is a pressing need to establish, first, a legal basis to surrender a murder suspect to Taiwan for trial to uphold justice. This would also provide the legal foundation for Hong Kong to handle similar extradition requests with any places where we do not have long-term agreements on juridical co-operation. The proposed arrangement targets only those who have committed serious criminal offences.

Similar case-based surrender arrangements have existed in the laws in the UK and Canada for years. The proposal retains all procedural and human rights safeguards in the current law on surrender of fugitive offenders, including the right to judicial review, the double criminality principle, no surrender for a political offense, and protection against the death penalty, among others. These safeguards have been formulated with reference to the United Nations model treaty and accord with international practice. Under the rule of law, which will continue to thrive as our cornerstone, our independent judiciary will perform its gatekeeping role diligently in scrutinizing each surrender request without interference.

Similar to other bills, stakeholders may have different opinions on the proposed legislative amendments. The Government will continue to listen to the views and practical suggestions from society.

Sincerely,

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