



New York Times

August 10, 2020

Dear Editor,

The answer to the question raised by Fernando Cheung in his August 2 opinion piece, “Why Did Hong Kong Delay Its Election – by a Year?” is this: to protect public health and ensure fair elections.

Since July, Hong Kong has been battling a third wave of COVID-19 infections – our worst outbreak to date, which has resulted in our strictest containment measures yet. From July 1 to August 3, Hong Kong saw more than 2,300 confirmed cases – almost twice as many as the preceding six months. If not handled quickly and decisively, the current wave of infections could spiral out of control and overwhelm our public hospital system.

Given the increase in community transmissions, particularly those of unknown origin, meaningful electioneering activities are no longer possible. Stringent boundary control measures make it impossible for registered Hong Kong voters to return from overseas or the mainland of China to cast their votes. Legal, practical and time constraints mean that extra polling days, postal voting or e-voting are also not possible.

The decision to postpone the Legislative Council election from September 6, 2020 to September 5, 2021, was taken to protect public health as well as the rights of Hong Kong voters.

Hong Kong is not alone in prioritising public health over polls. The Swedish-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance has found that at least 69 countries and territories decided to postpone national and subnational elections due to COVID-19 between February 21 and August 2 this year. Hong Kong is among them, and others may follow.

Alongside public health, the Hong Kong SAR Government attaches the utmost importance to ensuring, and protecting, the constitutional right of Hong Kong people to take part in elections. This we will do freely, openly and in good faith in September next year.

Yours sincerely,



Erick Tsang Kwok-wai
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs