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Mr Nambath,

Your editorial “Special no longer: On Hong Kong” (2 April 2021) seemed to reflect some misunderstandings, which I would like to clarify.

The Standing Committee of the 13th National People’s Congress (NPC), China’s top legislature, approved the amendments to Annex I to the Basic Law on Method for the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and Annex II to the Basic Law on Method for the Formation of the Legislative Council of the HKSAR and its Voting Procedures on 30 March 2021. The amendments were made based on comprehensive consultation with various sectors of Hong Kong following the passage of the Decision on improving the electoral system of the HKSAR by the NPC on 11 March 2021.

It is imperative to understand how the amendments improve the electoral system of the HKSAR, thereby establishing a political structure that upholds the “One Country, Two Systems” principle, reflects the actual situation of Hong Kong and ensures “patriots administering Hong Kong”.

Safeguarding the right for Hong Kong permanent residents to vote and to stand for election is clearly stated in the Decision. Adjustments to the size of the Election Committee and Legislative Council (LegCo) by increasing the number of members by some 25% and 28% respectively, and to their composition, will broaden the representation of different sectors of Hong Kong society, thus reflecting a more balanced and orderly political participation which signifies an important move to advance the HKSAR’s democratic electoral system. Articles 45 and 68 of the Basic Law of the HKSAR, which stipulate respectively the ultimate aim of the selection of the Chief Executive and the election of all LegCo members by universal suffrage, remain intact.

A candidate eligibility review committee shall be established for the different elections of the HKSAR to provide a robust systemic safeguard for implementing the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong”, which is fundamental to our national sovereignty and security, as well as the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. It is natural and essential to require people vested with governing powers to be patriotic, which is also part and parcel of basic political ethics that applies everywhere in the world.

One has to understand the nature of District Councils, which according to Article 97 of the Basic Law, are only responsible for tendering advice to the Government on district administration. District Councils, however, have become politics-driven platforms in recent

years and been turned into anti-government bridgeheads hampering the governance of the HKSAR. The non-inclusion of members of the District Councils from the LegCo and the Election Committee is aimed to plug the loopholes in the electoral system.

The HKSAR Government will complete local legislation and relevant legislative amendments in accordance with the amended Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law as soon as practicable, and conduct the relevant elections efficiently in light of the actual circumstances in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

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Director

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