

CE outlines bright future for Hong Kong in Policy Address

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, delivered her fifth annual Policy Address today (October 6), the last one of the current-term Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, setting out her plan for the future of the city.

Under the theme of "Building a Bright Future Together", Mrs Lam said the city's "One Country, Two Systems" principle was back on track, with full support from the Central Government, following unprecedented challenges during the past two years.

"The implementation of the National Security Law and the improvement to our electoral system have restored safety and stability in society. Hong Kong is now ready again for a new start for economic development," Mrs Lam said.

She said that under the 14th Five-Year Plan, the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), and the Plan for Comprehensive Deepening Reform and Opening Up of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Co-operation Zone, enterprises and professional services providers in Hong Kong are presented with unlimited opportunities. She stressed that only by leveraging the Central Government's policies in support of Hong Kong can the city give full play to its unique strengths, which will in turn bring continuous impetus to the economy.

A flagship initiative, the Northern Metropolis and the Harbour Metropolis, which spearhead their respective economic engines and complement each other, will drive the future development of Hong Kong.

"This Northern Metropolis will be developed as an international I&T (innovation and technology) hub with unique metropolitan landscape marked with 'Urban-Rural Integration and Co-existence of Development and Conservation,' while the Harbour Metropolis supporting Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre will be expanded to include the reclaimed land of the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision," Mrs Lam said.

The Policy Address also proposed initiatives to support the development of sectors with good growth potential.

To boost financial services, Mrs Lam proposed enhancing the listing regime, expanding offshore Renminbi business and promoting green finance.

Another promising sector, Mrs Lam said, is high value-added maritime business services such as ship registration, ship finance and management, marine insurance, and maritime legal and arbitration services.

"Tax concessions will be introduced to attract members of the maritime industry to establish a business presence in Hong Kong," Mrs Lam said, adding

that the overseas service network of the Hong Kong Shipping Registry would be expanded to provide new desk services in San Francisco, Tokyo and Toronto to provide better support for Hong Kong-registered ships.

The Government will continue to promote re-industrialisation, including planning for a second Advanced Manufacturing Centre, in light of the positive industry response to the Advanced Manufacturing Centre in Tseung Kwan O, which will be completed next year.

Another new initiative is to promote research by setting up an InnoLife Healthtech Hub in the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park, which will be set up at the Lok Ma Chau Loop, at the boundary between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

"I know that quite a number of start-ups and large enterprises in life and health disciplines are interested in gaining a foothold in Hong Kong, so as to leverage our strengths in this area and the market potential of the GBA," Mrs Lam said.

To meet demand for the supply of housing and developable land, Mrs Lam said about 350 hectares of land had been identified, and that it would produce some 330 000 public housing units in the 10-year period to 2031-32. She will strive to secure approximately 170 hectares of land in the coming 10 years to make available to the market sites for the production of about 100 000 private housing units.

Mrs Lam also proposed to review the development potential of the "Green Belt" zones.

Improving people's livelihood has been a priority for the current-term Government, and Mrs Lam said that recurrent expenditure on social welfare has significantly increased, from \$65.3 billion in 2017-18 to \$105.7 billion in 2021-22, up 62 per cent over four years. She said the Government will focus on the implementation of planned policy initiatives in the year ahead and that the Government will, in the second half of next year, merge the Normal and Higher Old Age Living Allowances (OALA) so that the more lenient asset limits of the Normal OALA will be adopted across-the-board, and eligible applicants will receive payment at the Higher OALA rate.

She also said that the Government will strengthen child protection, including formulating a legislative proposal to provide for a mandatory reporting mechanism on child abuse cases, and training for practitioners in the relevant professions to identify child abuse cases will be enhanced at the same time. The Government will also further increase the number of places of the On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services from 9 000 this year to 10 000 in the 2022/23 school year.

Mrs Lam said the Government will devote about \$240 billion to take forward various measures on climate change mitigation and adaptation in the next 15 to 20 years, and foster a low-carbon lifestyle including green buildings, electric vehicles and phasing out the use of coal for daily electricity generation.

To enhance governance to meet new challenges, Mrs Lam said a re-organisation proposal will be worked out in the coming months for consideration and implementation by the next-term Government. She has asked the Secretary for the Civil Service to review the existing selection and appointment mechanism for senior levels of the civil service as well as proposed to establish more dedicated commissioner posts with specific responsibilities.

Mrs Lam said in her conclusion, "Today, under the double safeguards of national security and the improved electoral system, Hong Kong is back on the right track of 'One Country, Two Systems'.

"I am confident that Hong Kong is much stronger than ever, and I am most convinced that Hong Kong can integrate into the overall development of the country and play an irreplaceable role as our country strides towards the second centenary goal of the nation."