

CE's speech at National Day reception

â€‹Following is the speech (English translation) by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the National Day Reception in Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China today (October 1):

Distinguished guests, fellow citizens,

Today marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. This is the first National Day since the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has fulfilled its constitutional responsibility and historic mission of enacting local legislation for Article 23 of the Basic Law. It is also the first National Day following improvements in district governance and reforms to the District Councils. I am delighted to celebrate this meaningful and historic moment with each and every one of you here.

Looking back over the past three-quarters of a century, the Chinese nation has achieved a tremendous transformation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong. Our country has long been the world's second-largest economy. It is also the world's largest manufacturer, merchandise trader, and holder of foreign exchange reserves, with international influence that cannot be overlooked.

Over the past 75 years, the country has actively opened up to the world. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), China has signed more than 230 co-operation documents under the Belt and Road Initiative with over 150 countries and some 30 international organisations, offering Chinese wisdom for the transformation of the global governance system and demonstrating the responsibility of a major power. The national innovation system has continually improved, with new quality productive forces formed through practice that provide strong impetus for high-quality development.

Over the past 75 years, the country has remained committed to people-centred development. A complete victory was achieved in the fight against poverty. With gross national income per capita reaching US\$13,400 last year, our country has built a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

In the course of national development, Hong Kong has always been a participant, contributor, and beneficiary. The development of Hong Kong cannot be separated from that of the country, and the country will always be the strongest backing for Hong Kong.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the promulgation of the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Over the past five years, Hong Kong has continuously promoted high-level development within the Greater Bay Area, as well as broader and deeper interfaces of regulatory frameworks and mechanisms, expediting the development of a world-class bay area. Last year, the Greater Bay Area was given a new positioning

as a strategic fulcrum of the new development pattern, a demonstration zone for high-quality development, and a pioneer of Chinese modernisation, bringing even greater opportunities for Hong Kong.

In aerospace endeavours, our country has achieved remarkable results that have garnered global attention in recent years. The report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC proposed the goal of expediting the establishment of an aerospace power. For the first time, the country conducted its recruitment of payload specialists in Hong Kong, and a Hong Kong resident was successfully selected to become a preparatory astronaut. This marked a new breakthrough in Hong Kong's participation in the national space programme and a glorious chapter for the region.

The country's development is advancing at an unprecedented pace. On the journey ahead, Hong Kong will continue to leverage its unique advantages of enjoying strong national support while maintaining unparalleled connectivity with the world under the principle of "one country, two systems", grasp all opportunities, and fully dedicate itself to boosting the economy, advancing development, and improving people's livelihood in pursuit of happiness.

First, we will continue to strengthen our own advantages, seize development opportunities, and bolster our "golden reputations" in different realms.

The Global Financial Centres Index Report published last week showed that Hong Kong's ranking as a financial centre has risen to third globally, ranking first in the Asia-Pacific region. It demonstrates the resilience and strength of Hong Kong's financial system and business environment, proving that the Government has been charting the right course with its policy measures.

In maritime and port development, we will promote high value-added maritime and professional services. We will consolidate air-to-sea and air-to-land intermodal transport services between Hong Kong and the Mainland to achieve mutual development. With the Three-Runway System set to be completed this year, Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub will be further accentuated.

Hong Kong's progress in building an international innovation and technology centre has also been acknowledged. The report from an international research institution ranked Hong Kong second globally and first in Asia in the Emerging Startup Ecosystems category. Our achievements in attracting enterprises and talent are well recognised.

Second, we need to further deepen reforms, develop the economy, improve people's livelihood, and unite all sectors of society to promote Hong Kong's transition from stability to prosperity.

Since the commencement of this term of the Government, we have continuously sought change and progress, reversing the situation of negative economic growth. Median monthly domestic household incomes have increased by about \$2,800, or more than 10 per cent, over the past two years. Hong Kong is

in a state of near full employment. My goal is for the people of Hong Kong to have a better life and live in better housing, for our youth to have better opportunities, and for our elderly to receive better care. I aim to achieve a caring and inclusive society where the people of Hong Kong can live and work in contentment.

The Government will continue to uphold the top priority of safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and development interests. We will continue to promote mainstream values characterised by love for both the motherland and Hong Kong at the core and in conformity with the principle of "one country, two systems". We will continue to unite all sectors of the community and transform people's patriotic enthusiasm and love for Hong Kong into concrete actions, working together to advance Hong Kong from stability to prosperity.

Third, Hong Kong needs to maintain our proactive efforts in integrating into the overall development of the country, serving as a "super connector" and "super value-adder" in domestic-international dual circulation while fully boosting Hong Kong's international competitiveness.

Hong Kong will continue to actively dovetail with such national strategies as the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development, and the Belt and Road Initiative, while ceaselessly enhancing its international competitiveness.

The Belt and Road Initiative has entered its next golden decade. As a functional platform for the Belt and Road Initiative, Hong Kong has actively expanded its economic and trade networks in Belt and Road markets in such regions as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. We will continue to expand exchanges and co-operation in various forms, playing a greater bridging role. We need to continuously consolidate and enhance our status as an international financial and shipping centre, accelerate the development of an international innovation and technology centre, and strive to create an international hub for high-calibre talent to contribute to Hong Kong's development as well as the country's opening to the world and high-quality development.

Distinguished guests and fellow citizens, amid the accelerating global changes not seen in a century, Hong Kong is at a critical period of economic transformation. There will be challenges ahead, but the opportunities for Hong Kong outweigh these challenges. We must adapt to our circumstances, continuously reform, recognise and seek change, break through bottlenecks, address shortcomings, remove obstacles while consolidating and enhancing Hong Kong's advantages. We should actively explore new areas of development, fully seize opportunities, share the benefits of development with the people of Hong Kong, and contribute our strengths to meet the needs of the nation.

There is a Chinese saying: "Boundless is the ocean where we sail with the wind". Together, let us ride on the momentum of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC to advance reforms, progress, and prosper together with the country, and make new and greater contributions to building a great country and moving towards national rejuvenation through

Chinese modernisation.

Finally, I wish prosperity and stability for our motherland and Hong Kong. May all of you enjoy good health and success in your endeavours. Thank you very much.