

CE's speech in delivering "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address" to LegCo (1)

Following is the translation of the speech made by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, in delivering "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address" to the Legislative Council this morning (October 6):

Mr President, Honourable Members and fellow citizens,

I. Foreword: A New Era

1. Today I present the fifth Policy Address in my term of office, which is also the last one of the current term Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's five-year tenure. Despite this, my team and I attach great importance to this Policy Address. I have personally chaired 40 online and offline consultation sessions, attended live programmes and visited school campuses, meeting with over 3,500 members of the public from different sectors of the community. Coincidentally, some participants who spoke at the sessions shared my view that the double safeguards of The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the National Security Law) and the improved electoral system of the HKSAR have ushered in a new era whereby it is time for us to strive ahead with renewed perseverance and plan for the future of Hong Kong.

2. At the same time, we must bear in mind that this favourable era has come a long way. In contrast to two years ago on the same occasion when the Legislative Council (LegCo) Chamber was disrupted and paralysed by Members who were anti-China and even causing chaos in Hong Kong in an attempt to subvert the state power, today I can peacefully stand before you to deliver this Policy Address and all LegCo Members can solemnly perform their constitutional function to receive the policy address of the Chief Executive. This is a clear manifestation that the HKSAR has got back on the right track of "One Country, Two Systems" and that governance has returned to normal under the protection of the National Security Law and the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong". For Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability, each and every Hong Kong citizen should have a more comprehensive understanding of "One Country, Two Systems", safeguard national security with greater loyalty, and take pride in the development of our country and our Chinese identity, while striving hard to bring Hong Kong's unique strengths into full play to better integrate into the overall national development.

3. While today's Policy Address will focus on developing and mapping out Hong Kong's future, the 2021 Policy Address Supplement also published today provides a summary, in graphic and text form, of the effectiveness of our policies over the past four years or so to give the public a comprehensive

account of our work. Despite the severe and unprecedented challenges faced by the current term Government, we have maintained the spirit of overcoming all challenges and proactively serving the people, advocating policy breakthroughs and striving to resolve society's problems. Let me give a few examples:

(i) 96% of over 900 policy initiatives proposed in the past four Policy Addresses have been completed or are progressing on schedule;

(ii) we have adhered to the philosophy of the financial centre serving the real economy and introduced measures which include the two-tiered profits tax rates regime, enhanced tax deductions for research and development expenditure, and tax concessions to attract specific industries to develop their businesses in Hong Kong; we have issued Government Green Bonds and Silver Bonds, launched a public annuity scheme and revised our listing regime to cater for the needs of new economy enterprises;

(iii) to nurture talents and promote innovation and technology (I&T), we have increased our recurrent expenditure on education by over \$13 billion and invested over \$130 billion in I&T;

(iv) we have strived to improve people's livelihood by significantly increasing our recurrent spending on healthcare and social welfare to \$95.9 billion and \$105.7 billion respectively for the current financial year, an increase of 53% and 62% respectively over the past four years;

(v) we have introduced various initiatives on labour rights and benefits, including extending statutory paid maternity leave from 10 to 14 weeks, progressively increasing the number of statutory holidays to be on par with general holidays, substantially completing the preparatory work for the legislation for abolishing the "offsetting" arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) system, and enhancing the employment terms and conditions of non-skilled workers engaged under government service contracts; and

(vi) in the top priority area of housing, the Government has adopted a number of measures. These include tilting towards public housing in land allocation, establishing the housing ladder for home ownership, delinking the price of Home Ownership Scheme flats from market prices, imposing tenancy controls on subdivided units through legislation, providing cash allowances to eligible public rental housing (PRH) applicants who have been waiting for PRH for a long time, and building transitional housing units. As for land supply, a multi-pronged approach has been adopted to press ahead with the related work at full steam.

4. I must express my gratitude to the Central Government for its staunch and unfailing support for the HKSAR. My appreciation also goes to all Honourable Members here for their diligence and dedication, to the statutory bodies for their professional co-operation, as well as to the numerous government advisory committees for their suggestions and advice. I must also thank my governing team and civil servants at all levels for their hard work, as well as members of the public for their encouragement. I hope that the 2021

Policy Address delivered today will gain the recognition and support of the LegCo and the public at large.

II. Steadfastly and Successfully Implementing “One Country, Two Systems”

Staying True to Our Original Aspiration

5. This year marks the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The smooth return of Hong Kong to the Motherland on 1 July 1997 is an integral part of the CPC’s century-old cause. In his speech at the ceremony celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CPC, Secretary General Xi Jinping remarked that we should stay true to the letter and spirit of the principle of “One Country, Two Systems”, under which “the people of Hong Kong administer Hong Kong” with a high degree of autonomy; we should ensure the exercise of overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong by the Central Government and the implementation of the legal systems and enforcement mechanisms for the HKSAR to safeguard national security; and while protecting China’s sovereignty, security and development interests, we should ensure social stability in Hong Kong and maintain lasting prosperity and stability in the HKSAR. This important speech is a further unequivocal affirmation of the Central Government’s unwavering determination to uphold the “One Country, Two Systems” principle, consistent with the decision adopted at the fourth plenary session of the 19th Central Committee of the CPC in 2019 on “upholding the principle of ‘One Country, Two Systems’, maintaining lasting prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao, and promoting the peaceful reunification of China” as one of the notable strengths of the state and governance systems of our country.

6. Over the past two years, Hong Kong has encountered unprecedented political challenges, putting national security at huge risk. Nevertheless, the Central Government has continued to act in accordance with the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (the Constitution) and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China (the Basic Law) by upholding the principle of “One Country, Two Systems”. The promulgation and implementation of the National Security Law has provided a timely curb on the chaos in the city, while “patriots administering Hong Kong” has been ensured under the improved electoral system of the HKSAR. In this process, the Central Government has shown its firm commitment and stayed true to its original aspiration in the implementation of “One Country, Two Systems”. I have a profound first-hand understanding of this by being deeply involved in the related work over the past two years as the Chief Executive. Any accusation that these two major initiatives of the Central Government have undermined “One Country, Two Systems” is nonsense and groundless.

Improving the Implementation of “One Country, Two Systems”

Upholding the HKSAR’s Constitutional Order

7. In his address at the Celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong’s Return to the Motherland and the Inaugural Ceremony of the Fifth Term HKSAR Government held on 1 July 2017, President Xi Jinping pointed out that as a

pioneering initiative, the implementation of "One Country, Two Systems" was an evolving process. The experience over the past two years or so has clearly shown that in addressing new scenarios and new issues, we can only resort to steadfastly upholding "One Country, Two Systems" and implementing the Central Government's overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong while adhering to law-based administration without wavering. In the face of anti-China, destabilising forces entering the political system of the HKSAR through elections, deluding and inciting young people through education and the media, undermining Hong Kong's stability through illegal violent acts, and endangering national security through collusion with external forces, the Central Government has taken resolute action to defuse the crisis for Hong Kong and make sure that the implementation of "One Country, Two Systems" gets back on track. To ensure the robustness of "One Country, Two Systems", the HKSAR must continually improve the governance system under "One Country, Two Systems", resolve the problems at root and restore order from chaos.

Safeguarding National Security

8. The National Security Law was promulgated for implementation on 30 June last year. Since then, the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the HKSAR which I chair and the relevant enforcement authorities, under the guidance of the National Security Adviser appointed by the Central Government and with the support of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, have spared no effort to fulfil our responsibility to prevent, suppress and punish acts and activities that endanger national security in accordance with the law. That said, to safeguard national security in a comprehensive manner, there is still a substantial amount of work for the HKSAR Government, including:

(i) taking forward proactively the enactment of local legislation to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law in Hong Kong. By making reference to past studies and information, the implementation experience of the National Security Law and relevant court verdicts, as well as taking into account the actual circumstances in Hong Kong, the Secretary for Security is drawing up effective and pragmatic proposals and provisions, and formulating effective publicity programmes to prevent those who are opposed to China and attempt to destabilise Hong Kong from taking advantage of the situation to mislead the public with ill intentions;

(ii) reviewing or reviving existing legislation to ensure that, on the mission of comprehensively safeguarding national security, relevant laws are available to the enforcement authorities for action and strict enforcement, so as to bring offenders to account. The Film Censorship (Amendment) Bill 2021 already scrutinised by the LegCo is one of the examples. Other issues which need to be addressed include combating fake news and safeguarding cyber security. The Chief Secretary for Administration will coordinate the relevant work;

(iii) strengthening the work on the prevention of terrorist activities and proactively strengthening public communication, guidance, supervision and regulation measures over matters concerning national security, including those relating to schools, social organisations, the media and the internet.

In this regard, the Secretary for Education has already requested schools to formulate and implement as early as possible plans on national security education;

(iv) strengthening national security education and raising law-abiding and national security awareness of Hong Kong people, in particular the youth, through different activities and approaches. I am pleased to note that under the leadership of the Secretary for Security, the six disciplined services and the two auxiliary services are committed to enhancing their work in helping young people develop positive thinking and law-abiding awareness. For example, the Correctional Services Department will launch the Walk with YOUth Programme and set up a Change Lab to assist young persons in custody; and

(v) implementing further the oath-taking requirements for public officers as stipulated in Article 6 of the National Security Law and the amended local legislation, including for example all members of the just-formed Election Committee.

Fully Implementing the New Electoral System

9. Following the passage of the decision on improving the electoral system of the HKSAR by the National People's Congress (NPC) in March this year and the adoption of the amended Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law by the Standing Committee of the NPC on 30 March, the HKSAR Government has spared no effort to take forward the relevant work with the co-operation of the LegCo, and completed the necessary procedures on time, such as enactment of local legislation and relevant voter registration arrangements. The Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections, the first elections after improving the electoral system, were successfully held on 19 September. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) will work closely with the Electoral Affairs Commission to ensure that the two upcoming elections, namely the Seventh Term LegCo Election and the Sixth Term Chief Executive Election, are conducted in a fair, open and honest manner in accordance with the law, thereby fully implementing the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong". By drawing on our experience, we will improve the polling arrangements and take forward various enhancement measures. In light of the COVID-19 epidemic, the CMAB is also actively examining proposals to enable Hong Kong electors in the Mainland to cast their vote in the LegCo Election to be conducted in December.

Strengthening Education on the Constitution and the Basic Law

10. To ensure that the "One Country, Two Systems" principle is fully and accurately implemented, we must adhere to the Constitution and the Basic Law. The Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee will continue to take forward publicity and public education on the Basic Law through diversified approaches, whilst the Secretary for Justice is planning to host a Basic Law conference and publish the Basic Law: Selected Drafting Materials and Significant Cases in April next year. On education at the school level, the Citizenship and Social Development subject has been introduced to replace the Liberal Studies subject starting from Secondary Four in the current school

year, with "Hong Kong under 'One Country, Two Systems' " as one of the three themes of the subject. I found this an excellent start when I visited a secondary school to observe a lesson in early September. To enable teachers of the Citizenship and Social Development subject to have a better grasp of the constitutional status, powers and functions of the Chief Executive under "One Country, Two Systems", I have proposed to the Secretary for Education that I myself can give a class to teachers who are interested.

11. More channels should be provided for public education work. Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), as a public service broadcaster, should play an active role in promoting the Constitution and the Basic Law, so as to fulfil its public purposes and mission under the Charter of RTHK, which include promoting public understanding of the implementation of "One Country, Two Systems" in Hong Kong, as well as engendering a sense of citizenship and national identity. In this regard, I have expressly requested the Director of Broadcasting to follow up.

Showing Respect for the National Flag, National Emblem and National Anthem

12. The national flag, national emblem and national anthem are the symbols and signs of our country and must be protected by the law and respected by the people. Over the past year or so, the LegCo has already passed the National Anthem Ordinance and the National Flag and National Emblem (Amendment) Ordinance. We will introduce corresponding amendments to the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance, with a view to fulfilling the constitutional responsibility of the HKSAR.

Strengthening the Rule of Law

13. The rule of law is a core value and the cornerstone of Hong Kong's success. Hong Kong's rule of law has rock solid foundation: our mature legal system is renowned for being transparent, trustworthy and fair; the Department of Justice (DoJ) initiates criminal prosecutions without any interference; our courts exercise judicial power independently free from any interference; and a robust legal aid system is in place to ensure that all Hong Kong residents are equal before the law. These essential elements are protected under the Basic Law. Since our return to the Motherland, Hong Kong's laws and judicial independence have been held in high regard.

14. To consolidate and promote Hong Kong as a city upholding the rule of law requires community-wide participation and people's self-awareness of safeguarding the authority of the rule of law. To enhance the community's proper understanding and practice of the rule of law, the Secretary for Justice has personally steered the 10-year initiative Vision 2030 for Rule of Law. A rule of law database with objective data will be set up to assist in assessing the rule of law and facilitate research and capacity building. A booklet entitled Vision 2030's Empowerment has also been published recently in simple language to instil law-abiding awareness in our secondary and primary school students.

15. Fair trial and due process are essential elements of the rule of law. In this respect the Judiciary plays a pivotal role. In discharging their

responsibilities, judges look only at the letter and the spirit of the law without any interference. This notwithstanding, independent judicial power does not preclude a party from lodging a review of a court ruling or a complaint against the conduct of individual judges. In this regard, the Judiciary should also keep abreast of the times. Since taking office in January this year, the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Andrew Cheung Kui-ning, has refined the system for handling public complaints and proactively addressed the backlog of cases. I have asked relevant departments to fully assist the Judiciary in tackling the problem of courtroom shortage. Apart from the facilities currently under conversion and the re-opening of the de-commissioned Tsuen Wan Law Courts Building, an additional mega courtroom and supporting facilities will be set up at Wanchai Tower to handle cases involving a large number of defendants before the commissioning of the new District Court building at the end of 2027. The improvement works will commence in the first half of next year.

Strengthening Civil Service Training

16. As the backbone of the HKSAR Government, the civil service plays a vital role in implementing the principle of "One Country, Two Systems". All serving civil servants have either taken an oath or signed a declaration to uphold the Basic Law and swear allegiance to the HKSAR. To raise their self-awareness of safeguarding national security in discharging their duties, we must enhance civil servants' understanding of the Constitution and the Basic Law, reinforce their sense of national identity and deepen their capability for broad and strategic thinking. We have included the National Security Law in induction training for public officers, and are making continuous efforts to enhance serving officers' understanding of the constitutional order of the HKSAR. With the establishment of the Civil Service College in its interim accommodation at the end of this year and with its Head assuming office next year, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) will put in place a more systematic training framework and arrange for more middle and senior-level civil servants to take part in national studies programmes or thematic visits in the Mainland. The CSB will press ahead at full steam with the construction of the Civil Service College in Kwun Tong to further strengthen civil service training, and endeavour to rigorously uphold the loyalty and integrity of civil servants.

Strengthening Executive-Legislature Relationship

17. Ensuring "patriots administering Hong Kong" is cardinal to improving the HKSAR's electoral system. It is also conducive to enhancing the effective governance of the HKSAR. Assuming the dual role as head of the HKSAR and the HKSAR Government, the Chief Executive takes full responsibility for the implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle and the Basic Law in Hong Kong, with the HKSAR adhering to the executive-led structure under the core leadership of the Chief Executive, who is directly accountable to the Central People's Government. I believe that in actual operation, there is no conflict between an executive-led system and the system of mutual co-operation with checks and balances between the executive authorities and the legislature. Nonetheless, the politics in the LegCo from some time in the past had become so extreme that tactics such as "filibustering" and

“mutual destruction” had seriously damaged the otherwise constructive and interactive relationship between the Government and the legislature, impeding the legislative and funding allocation work that will drive Hong Kong’s economic development and improve people’s livelihood. Since those Members who opposed for the sake of opposing left the LegCo in November last year, the current legislative session has seen fruitful outcomes. Having duly exercised its constitutional powers and functions, a total of 46 bills are expected to be enacted and funding of more than \$320 billion to be approved.

18. The legislative session of the Seventh LegCo Term will commence on 1 January next year. Under the improved electoral system, 90 Members from various sectors who fulfil the criterion of “patriots administering Hong Kong” will be vested with the function of overseeing the work of the Government. To strengthen the executive-‘legislature relationship, I will announce along with the Policy Address today 40 legislative proposals compiled by the HKSAR Government for early discussion at the community level, so that the LegCo can better perform its role in conveying public opinions. Many of these proposals have taken on board the views raised by incumbent Members in the past, including introducing mandatory reporting for child abuse prevention, streamlining the statutory procedures for land development, and strengthening regulation over the service quality of residential care homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities. All Secretaries of Departments and Directors of Bureaux will also enhance communication with Members both inside and outside the Chamber, with a view to achieving good administration and governance.

(To be continued.)