

# CE's speech in delivering "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address" to LegCo (2)

## III. New Paradigm for a New Future

### Introduction

19. To cater for local population growth and to meet the needs of economic development, the Government has put in enormous efforts in town planning over the past half-century, including developing new towns in Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin, Tai Po and Tuen Mun in the early years, as well as New Development Areas (NDAs) in Kwu Tung North/Fanling North and Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen in recent years. Though such planning developments have yielded significant achievements, there are also inadequacies in attaining "home-job balance" and self-sufficiency for instance. Furthermore, the excessive politicisation in the councils and the deliberate opposition and resistance orchestrated by "anti-government" radicals in recent years made it extremely difficult for us to make any move for our town planning work, leading to serious impediments on social and economic development and causing acute problems in people's livelihood. With the implementation of the National Security Law and improvement to our electoral system, chaos has ended and social order has been restored. We are now embracing a new era where we can focus on economic development. The HKSAR Government should be visionary and resolute in mapping out the future of Hong Kong in a proactive manner.

### Planning for the Future

20. To this end, I propose to develop the northern part of Hong Kong into a metropolitan area ideal for people to live, work and travel, and we should create more land resources for residential use and the development of industries. With an area of 300 square kilometres, the proposed metropolis covers from the west to the east the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Boundary Control Points Economic Belt, as well as the deeper hinterlands. It is well-positioned to share the fruits of not only complementarity between the respective strengths of Hong Kong and Shenzhen but also their integrated development, and will in turn facilitate Hong Kong to better integrate into the overall development of our country. This Northern Metropolis will be developed as an international I&T 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. The two metropolises located in the north and south of Hong Kong will provide massive land and enhance the spatial layout of Hong Kong. These two metropolises, spearheading their respective economic engines and complementing each other, will drive the future development of Hong Kong.

## The Northern Metropolis

### Planning Background

21. We will concurrently release the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy (the Development Strategy) today to give a detailed account of the planning background, general principles, objectives and action agenda of the Northern Metropolis for discussions and expression of views from different sectors of the community. Under the framework of "One Country, Two Systems", the Development Strategy is the first strategic action agenda devised by the HKSAR Government with a spatial concept and strategic mindset going beyond the administrative boundary of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. Formulated on the basis of the Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030 (the Hong Kong 2030+), the Development Strategy has taken full account of our country's support for Hong Kong as underlined in the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 (the 14th Five-Year Plan), its aspirations for Hong Kong in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), and the enormous opportunities brought about by the Plan for Comprehensive Deepening Reform and Opening Up of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Co-operation Zone for Hong Kong. Now that Hong Kong is back on the right track of "One Country, Two Systems", this groundbreaking and visionary plan, which maps out new action directions and approaches for the long-term development prospects of Hong Kong, bears particular significance.

### Spatial Layout

22. The Northern Metropolis covers two district administration areas including Yuen Long District and North District, with a total land area of about 300 square kilometres. Metropolis does not refer to a region with a statutory status or regime and an administrative boundary. On the contrary, it is a large-scale urban space which is formed by interactions among various factors including geographic characteristics, economic functions, ecological environment, transport connections and development policies. In the metropolis, the multi-functional land uses with highly concentrated residential and working population and enterprises can drive the economic development in its neighbouring areas. It is lively and attractive with radiate effect, and its people enjoy enriched lives in a unique spatial context with iconic nature, human civilisation and building landscapes.

23. The Northern Metropolis encompasses the mature new towns in Tin Shui Wai, Yuen Long and Fanling/Sheung Shui and their neighbouring rural areas, as well as six NDAs and Development Nodes in different planning and development stages, namely Kwu Tung North/Fanling North, Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen, Yuen Long South, San Tin/Lok Ma Chau, Man Kam To and the New Territories North New Town. It is the most vibrant area where urban development and major population growth of Hong Kong in the next 20 years will take place. With as many as seven land-based boundary control points, the Northern Metropolis will be the most important area in Hong Kong that facilitates our development integration with Shenzhen and connection with the GBA. Under the Development

Strategy, the proposed individual development projects together with the surrounding rural and conservation areas will be integrated in an innovative and organic manner conducive to upgrading the entire region to a metropolitan area. Such an integration can create the development capacity to meet the needs of our economy and our people's livelihood, and a quality environment for sustainable development. All these will help us better respond to the new opportunities brought about by deepened co-operation between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

### Twin Cities, Three Circles

24. In the course of reform and opening-up of our country over the past 40 years or so, there has been very close interaction between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The construction of seven land boundary control points and connected transport infrastructure from the west to the east has enabled the two cities to go beyond the Deep Bay, the Mirs Bay and the Shenzhen River to connect with each other, thereby forming a spatial framework of "Twin Cities, Three Circles".

25. The "Twin Cities" refers to Hong Kong and Shenzhen, whereas the "Three Circles" includes, from the west to the east, the Shenzhen Bay Quality Development Circle, the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Close Interaction Circle and the Mirs Bay/Yan Chau Tong Eco-recreation/tourism Circle. The concept of "Twin Cities, Three Circles" covers the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Boundary Control Points Economic Belt and the most maturely developed metropolitan core in Shenzhen, as well as the Northern Metropolis in Hong Kong where the development potential is enormous with resources for urban development being speedily pooled in. The formation of the spatial concept of "Twin Cities, Three Circles" will facilitate close collaboration between the governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen in areas such as economic development, infrastructure, I&T, people's livelihood and ecological environment. By joining hands, we will be able to achieve the synergy effect of "one plus one is greater than two".

### Transport Infrastructure-led Development

26. In my Lantau Tomorrow Vision proposal put forward in the 2018 Policy Address, the transport infrastructure-led concept won wide acceptance. The consolidation of the Northern Metropolis and its expansion in terms of development capacity will also be driven by a transportation system with railways as its backbone. The railway projects proposed in the Development Strategy include:

(i) constructing the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Railway linking up Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen and Qianhai of Shenzhen;

(ii) extending the Northern Link, which is being planned, northwards to connect to the new Huanggang Port in Shenzhen via the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park (HSITP) in the Lok Ma Chau Loop (the Loop);

(iii) exploring the extension of the East Rail Line to Luohu, Shenzhen and the provision of co-location arrangement at the boundary control point on

the Shenzhen side and provision of a new railway station for non-‘boundary crossing service between the existing Lo Wu Station and the Sheung Shui Station, with a view to unleashing the development potential around Lo Wu/Man Kam To and Sheung Shui North;

(iv) extending the Northern Link eastwards from the Kwu Tung Station to connect with the areas of Lo Wu, Man Kam To and Heung Yuen Wai, and further southwards to Fanling via Ta Kwu Ling and Queen’s Hill; and

(v) examining the feasibility of constructing an automated people mover system from Tsim Bei Tsui to Pak Nai to promote the development of the area and Lau Fau Shan.

#### Increasing Land Supply for I&T Uses

27. In recent years, Hong Kong has made considerable achievements in I&T. Under the strategy of re-‘industrialisation, the development of advanced manufacturing industries, which are based on new technologies and smart production, is also showing promising prospect. Yet, the shortage of land will impede such development. While the 87-‘hectare HSITP in the Loop now underway will provide a planned gross floor area about three times that of the Hong Kong Science Park at Pak Shek Kok, its scale is relatively humble when compared with the Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Zone (Shenzhen I&T Zone) on the northern shore of the Shenzhen River with an area of more than 300 hectares. The Development Strategy puts forward a proposal to make an optimal use of the land vacated upon relocation of the Lok Ma Chau Control Point to the new Huanggang Boundary Control Point in Shenzhen, and a portion of the adjacent fish ponds and rural land. This, together with the original land use planning in the San Tin/Lok Ma Chau Development Node, will provide about 150 hectares of additional land for I&T uses to develop the San Tin Technopole, with a view to creating a critical mass of I&T facilities with greater economy of scale.

#### Developing Industries and Creating Job Opportunities

28. The Plan to expand the Qianhai Co-‘operation Zone aims to foster a globally competitive business environment, which will bring about tremendous opportunities for Hong Kong’s professional services. The Development Strategy suggests that Hong Kong should leverage this opportunity to upgrade Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen and make it the New Territories North Modern Services Centre, and to build sizable landmark I&T facilities in Lau Fau Shan facing Qianhai on the other side of the Shenzhen Bay, to provide enormous job opportunities in the Northern Metropolis. To achieve “home-‘job balance”, the Development Strategy suggests that we should formulate clear policies and administrative guidelines and select, as far as possible, the Northern Metropolis as the location for government facilities and offices which are “non-‘location-‘bound and employment-‘driven”.

#### Building an Eco-‘environment

29. The Northern Metropolis has diverse habitats. There are wetlands on the List of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention to

the west, a vast area of fish ponds in the centre, and the proposed Robin's Nest Country Park, a marine park and the world-class Geopark to the east. The Development Strategy suggests that a proactive conservation policy should be formulated and implemented. Through the gradual resumption of several hundred hectares of private wetlands and fish ponds by the Government for enhanced management, the ecological functions of around 2000 hectares of conservation area, including the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site, will be enhanced, thus achieving better conservation of wetlands in Hong Kong while creating a quality living environment for the Northern Metropolis.

#### Increasing Land Supply for Housing

30. At present, a number of development projects planned or under planning in the Northern Metropolis are estimated to provide about 350000 residential units. An additional 600 hectares of land or so could be developed within the Northern Metropolis for residential and industry purposes, with an estimated provision of about 165000 to 186000 residential units. Upon the full development of the entire Northern Metropolis, a total of 905000 to 926000 residential units, including the existing 390000 residential units in Yuen Long District and North District, will be available to accommodate a population of about 2.5 million. The total number of jobs in the Metropolis will increase substantially from 116000 at present to about 650000, including 150000 I&T-related jobs.

#### Strengthening the Implementation Mechanism

31. To effectively implement the Development Strategy for the Northern Metropolis, the HKSAR Government must strengthen high-level steer, promote collaboration across bureaux and departments, formulate performance indicators for monitoring purposes, and work closely with the Shenzhen Municipal Government to take forward the relevant projects together. Our next step is to deliberate the details of the implementation mechanism. A possible option will be to create a Deputy Secretary of Department post in the next-term Government to steer large-scale regional developments such as the Northern Metropolis and the Lantau Tomorrow Vision.

#### Enhancing the Effectiveness of Governance

##### Reorganising the Government Structure

32. Even if there is no large-scale regional development project, I am of the view that there is still a need to reorganise the policy bureaux to complement our policy focuses and meet social expectations. I propose that the current-term Government shall consult various sectors and stakeholders in the coming months to work out a detailed reorganisation proposal for consideration and implementation by the next-term Government. After consolidating our experience in administration as well as taking account of the views of the LegCo and relevant sectors, my initial thinking on the reorganisation may take the following directions:

(i) to set up a Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau to consolidate the culture portfolio and the creative industries and tourism portfolio currently under

the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) and the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau respectively, thereby facilitating the development of Hong Kong as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange;

(ii) to split the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) to provide a more dedicated high-level steer for these two major policy areas, enabling in particular the new Transport Bureau to focus on transport infrastructure, public transport services and traffic management which are matters closely related to people's livelihood, while facilitating the development of the logistics industry, as well as consolidating and enhancing Hong Kong's status as an international transportation centre and an international aviation hub;

(iii) to explore whether there is room to rationalise the work of the Housing Bureau upon the split and the Development Bureau (DEVB), which is responsible for land development and public works, in order to expedite land supply for housing;

(iv) to expand the Innovation and Technology Bureau into the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau to change the perception that local industries are declining and highlight the role of I&T in promoting the development of re-industrialisation in Hong Kong; and

(v) to re-organise the HAB into the Youth and District Affairs Bureau to step up efforts to address district issues of daily concern to the public with a district-based approach, and to provide a one-stop platform for promoting and supporting youth development.

33. The above views are only intended to stimulate further thought. I hope that the new-term LegCo may commence discussion on the re-organisation of policy bureaux immediately upon its formation. In the next few months, I and all Secretaries of Departments and Directors of Bureaux will exchange views with stakeholders on this matter and formulate detailed proposals.

#### Strengthening the Governing Team

34. Having put in place an enhanced government structure for more effective governance, what we also need is a professional and highly efficient governing team consisting of people devoted and loyal to the country and Hong Kong, adept at policy making as well as execution, and driven by a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to serving the people of Hong Kong with assiduity. I have served for three terms of the HKSAR Government as Director of Bureau, Chief Secretary for Administration and now the Chief Executive. I fully recognise and have actually come across the difficulties in attracting talents to join this "hot kitchen". I hope that with an improved electoral system, more patriots who love Hong Kong and who have the aspirations, ability and commitment will be willing to accept the challenges and join the governing team to make contributions to Hong Kong and the country.

35. In addition, directorate civil servants including Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments, who are at the core and highest echelons of the civil service, also play a critical role in the effective implementation of

policies in the HKSAR. I have asked the Secretary for the Civil Service to review the existing selection and appointment mechanism for the senior levels of the civil service in the coming months in accordance with the principle of meritocracy, with a view to appointing the most visionary and competent officers to the most suitable positions. I will invite the Public Service Commission to participate in the related work.

#### Advocating Dedicated Positions with Specific Responsibilities

36. Concerning manpower deployment of the public sector, I have in recent years encouraged colleagues to play an "advocacy" role in certain specific areas. In this respect, the work of creating dedicated commissioner posts with specific responsibilities, such as Commissioner for Heritage, Commissioner for Sports and Commissioner for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, is bearing fruit. The dedicated commissioner posts serve to highlight the importance the Government attaches to the relevant policy areas. Also, the undesirable situation of fragmentation of responsibilities among different departments or that people have nowhere to turn to for assistance could be avoided. I have suggested to Directors of Bureaux that they may make greater use of commissioner posts to take forward the relevant work. The post of Commissioner for Children, for example, should be conducive to helping the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) promote child protection, whereas the post of Commissioner for Harbourfront should facilitate the beautification of the harbourfront by the DEVB, both within and outside the Government.

#### Enhancing Government's Capability in Information Dissemination and Public Communication

37. In this era of information explosion, an important aspect of governance is effective dissemination of government information so that the public can better and more quickly understand the policies of the government and the latest situation. I must admit this is an area that warrants the HKSAR Government's immediate improvements. Many people have told me from time to time that the contents of Government press releases are too technical and not easily communicated to the public. The old-fashioned approach in message delivery has also failed to draw the attention of the community or allay public concerns promptly. The malicious attacks on or biased reports against the Government over the past two years have highlighted that there is much room to improve our capability to communicate with the public. I have requested all Secretaries of Departments and Directors of Bureaux, with the support of the Director of Information Services and his team, to place more emphasis on information dissemination and public communication on government policies.

(To be continued.)