

CE's speech in delivering "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address" to LegCo (5)

Developing into an East-meets-West Centre for International Cultural Exchange

70. The cultural industries in Hong Kong have been given a boost of confidence by the 14th Five-Year Plan for its clear support towards Hong Kong developing into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. The Government will seize upon Hong Kong's unique creative atmosphere where Chinese and Western cultures meet to position Hong Kong as Asia's city of culture and creativity. To realise our new cultural positioning, the HKSAR Government will work on five directions, namely (1) developing world-class cultural facilities and a pluralistic cultural environment; (2) strengthening our connections with overseas arts and culture organisations; (3) enhancing cultural exchange and co-operation with the Mainland; (4) leveraging technology; and (5) nurturing talents.

71. To enhance the steer of culture affairs in the HKSAR and strive for effective co-ordination and promotion of work related to cultural and creative industries currently undertaken by different policy bureaux, the LegCo and society generally support the setting up of a dedicated Culture Bureau. We will consider the proposal seriously in the context of re-organising the government structure mentioned earlier. The overseas Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) and Mainland Offices will also play an important role in promoting the cultural industries of Hong Kong.

Developing into a Regional Intellectual Property Trading Centre

72. The 14th Five-Year Plan states for the first time the support for Hong Kong to develop into a regional intellectual property (IP) trading centre. The HKSAR Government will implement a series of initiatives to promote the development of IP trading in Hong Kong including further promoting and developing the "original grant patent" system by building up the substantive examination capability of the Intellectual Property Department (IPD), exploring with the Mainland authorities on broadening the scope of application of the Patent Co-operation Treaty to cover the "original grant patent" system, and extending other major international IP treaties to Hong Kong.

73. The HKSAR Government will also strengthen our IP regime, as well as stepping up promotion, education and external collaboration. For example, we plan to revive the Copyright Ordinance amendment exercise by consulting the public on the modernisation of the copyright regime in the light of the digital environment, with the target of introducing a bill to amend the Copyright Ordinance in the next term of the LegCo.

Continuous Investment in Infrastructure

74. The Government will continue investing in infrastructure to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness. In response to the impact of the epidemic on our economy, we will also position infrastructure investment as a major counter-cyclical measure in stimulating the economy. In this legislative session, the funding for capital works projects approved by the Finance Committee has reached a record high of \$220 billion. We expect that the annual capital works expenditure will exceed \$100 billion in the coming years.

75. The DEVB will continue to implement "Construction 2.0" and lead the construction industry to reform by advocating "innovation", "professionalisation" and "revitalisation", so as to uplift the productivity and skill level of the sector. Wider use of I&T and Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) will also be promoted to shorten construction time, reduce manpower and enhance safety in construction sites. To promote reform of the construction industry and enhance project performance, we are making active preparations for the hosting of an International Construction Leaders Summit next year to share experience and formulate strategies with various stakeholders.

Supporting Tourism

76. The tourism industry has been hard hit by the pandemic and is still in hardship. Besides providing support to the sector, we also need to get prepared for the recovery of the industry. The current-term Government has launched various tourism initiatives and measures over the past four years along the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry promulgated in 2017, including establishing the statutory Travel Industry Authority, strengthening efforts in taking forward cultural, heritage, green and creative tourism projects, completing the strategic planning for cruise industry development, and facilitating the staging of various events and C&E activities. The Government will continue to implement various measures to consolidate the position of Hong Kong as a core demonstration zone for multi-destination tourism and an international tourism hub. The relevant work includes deepening co-operation with the GBA cities, establishing the GBA tourism brand, and attracting more events and C&E activities to Hong Kong through various funding and promotion programmes.

Supporting the Development of the Agriculture and Fisheries Industry

77. We will continue to promote the sustainable development of the agriculture and fisheries industry by helping the sectors involved to adopt advanced technology and seize new opportunities. We will be more proactive in helping the industry to make good use of the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund and the Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund. The construction of Phase 1 of the Agricultural Park in Kwu Tung South, which is going to be completed by phases starting from the end of this year, will facilitate modernisation of farm management. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) is actively promoting smart greenhouse technology, and assisting the industry in improving efficiency and making

good use of production space through the development of precise and automated hydroponic production technology. On the fisheries front, the use of modern deep sea mariculture is a global trend. The AFCD will continue to perform the role of a “facilitator” in taking forward development in this aspect.

Safeguarding Hong Kong’s Business Environment

78. Hong Kong is a free, open and diversified economy and a metropolis that attracts talents, organisations and enterprises of different scales from all over the world. Last year, Hong Kong ranked third globally in foreign direct investment inflows, after the United States and the Mainland. Attaching great importance to the business environment of Hong Kong, the HKSAR Government has been maintaining communication with local and foreign chambers of commerce and addressing their concerns. The National Security Law has been promulgated and implemented for a period of time. According to our observations, the initial concerns of foreign businesses have notably subsided and they are now most concerned about the restrictions on cross-border travel. As indicated in the latest annual surveys, the number of business operations in Hong Kong with parent companies overseas or in the Mainland and the number of start-ups in Hong Kong reach an all-time high of 9,049 and 3,755 respectively this year. It can be seen that our business environment has not been undermined by the impact of the pandemic and the biased reports of Hong Kong’s situation by certain Western media. More detailed information is provided in the Report on Hong Kong’s Business Environment: A Place with Unique Advantages and Unlimited Opportunities published recently for enterprises’ reference.

Strengthening Ties with the Mainland

79. The 14th Five-Year Plan supports Hong Kong to strengthen co-operation with the Mainland in the areas of trade and I&T. In fact, the HKSAR Government has established co-operation mechanisms with not only the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area but also the Pan-Pearl River Delta region, Beijing, Shanghai, Fujian and Sichuan respectively to promote co-operation on multiple fronts. With the support of the Central Government, we have proceeded with the establishment of a new Hubei-Hong Kong high-level co-operation mechanism with the Hubei Province.

80. Unlike overseas ETOs, the Mainland offices of the HKSAR Government have to, on top of promoting trade, facilitating investment and providing support for Hong Kong businessmen, foster communication and exchanges with Mainland provinces and municipalities in various aspects, promote Hong Kong, maintain liaison with Hong Kong people studying, working and residing in the Mainland, etc. I have asked the CMAB to review the role of our Mainland offices and the effectiveness of their work in due course, and examine the need to retitle these offices so as to better reflect their extensive duties.

(To be continued.)