

CE's speech in delivering "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address" to LegCo (7)

VI. Building a Liveable City

Vision for Our City

95. During my five-year tenure as the Secretary for Development, I and my colleagues outlined our vision for a quality city, and we have been working towards its realisation since then. Under innovative policies such as Conserving Central, Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme and Energizing Kowloon East, we have adopted a place-making approach to promote urban development, urban renewal, heritage conservation, harbourfront enhancement as well as landscaping and greening, and our efforts have borne fruit. Though Hong Kong still faces various issues including a shortage of land for housing, traffic congestion and ageing buildings, these challenges should not hinder our determination to build a quality living environment for our people. At the same time, Hong Kong must put words into action in addressing the crisis of extreme weather brought by global climate change.

Striving towards Carbon Neutrality before 2050

96. As carbon dioxide is the major culprit in climate change, our country and many parts of the world have pledged to draw up timetables and roadmaps for decarbonisation. Hong Kong is no exception. As announced in my Policy Address last year, Hong Kong would strive to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. The Steering Committee on Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality chaired by me will formulate the overall strategy and oversee the co-ordination of various actions. The Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050, to be announced shortly by the Secretary for the Environment, will set out more proactive strategies and measures on reducing carbon emissions to attain carbon neutrality, and will pursue more vigorous interim decarbonisation targets to reduce Hong Kong's carbon emissions by 50% before 2035 as compared to the 2005 level. To oversee the effective implementation of all these actions, the ENB will set up the Office of Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality to strengthen co-ordination and promote deep decarbonisation. Also, a dedicated advisory committee will be formed to offer advice and promote active participation of major stakeholders including young people.

97. About two-thirds of Hong Kong's greenhouse gas emissions come from electricity generation, followed by 18% from the transport sector and 7% from waste. Our decarbonisation efforts must target these three sources, with "net-zero carbon emissions for electricity generation", zero carbon emissions from the transport sector and achieving carbon neutrality on waste management as the ultimate goals.

98. In order to achieve “net-zero carbon emissions for electricity generation” before 2050, we must first change the fuel mix of local power plants. Our interim target is to cease using coal for daily electricity generation by 2035. This is not a remote target as the share of coal has already been reduced to less than one quarter in the fuel mix for electricity generation. Power companies must continue to phase down coal-fired generation units and replace the use of coal with other alternatives such as natural gas and renewable energy for electricity generation. The Government will grapple with Hong Kong’s geographical and environmental constraints in driving the development of renewable energy, and strive to increase its share in the fuel mix for electricity generation through facilitating local projects, regional collaboration and joint ventures, etc.

99. Another strategy to achieve “net-zero carbon emissions for electricity generation” is to reduce energy demand. At present, buildings account for 90% of the electricity consumption in Hong Kong. Promoting green buildings, improving energy efficiency of buildings and stepping up efforts to lead a low-carbon lifestyle will reduce the demand for power consumption and generation, and lessen the financial burden on the public due to the increased use of clean fuels for electricity generation. Our goal is to reduce the electricity consumption of commercial buildings by 30% to 40% and that of residential buildings by 20% to 30% from the 2015 level by 2050. We hope to achieve half of the above targets by 2035.

100. The development of green transport helps improve air quality and is vital to achieving zero carbon emissions in the transport sector. The Government announced the Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles early this year to put forward various measures, including ceasing new registration of fuel-propelled and hybrid private cars in 2035 or earlier and announcing the strategies for and targets of installing charging facilities. We will proactively promote the development of electric and other new energy public transport and commercial vehicles, including working with franchised bus companies to conduct trials of hydrogen fuel cell buses, with a view to formulating a specific roadmap and timetable for the use of new energy public transport in 2025.

101. As for carbon emissions from waste, we will step up our efforts in mobilising the entire community to practise waste reduction, developing waste-to-energy facilities and supporting the circular economy in accordance with the Waste Blueprint for Hong Kong 2035 unveiled by the Government early this year.

102. Climate change represents both a challenge and an opportunity. In the next 15 to 20 years, the Government will devote about \$240 billion to take forward various measures on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Substantial resources from the private sector will also be necessary to achieve low-carbon transformation. Green economy transformation has become a world trend. As an international financial centre with a huge financial market and a robust world-class regulatory framework, Hong Kong draws in world-leading financial and professional institutions, green assessment and certification organisations, as well as international investors. With these capabilities and advantages, we are well placed to develop our city into the

regional green finance hub. By serving as a premier financing platform for green enterprises and projects, we have a significant role to play in addressing climate change.

Waste Reduction and Resources Recovery

103. The passage of the legislation on municipal solid waste (MSW) charging by the LegCo in August this year is an important milestone in Hong Kong's waste reduction work. We will embark on the preparatory work for the implementation of MSW charging, which includes strengthening support for community recycling of resources, increasing the number of collection points and enhancing service efficiency of the community recycling network. We will also make good use of smart technologies. The Government has rolled out central collection services for food waste and waste plastics on a pilot basis, and our efforts have begun to bear fruit. We will soon expand the two pilot schemes to extend their territorial coverage and service targets. To complement the upstream collection of recyclables, we will further promote the development of downstream waste-to-energy and waste-to-resources infrastructure to gradually reduce our reliance on landfills. For enhanced synergy, I have asked the Environmental Protection Department to take over the management of refuse collection points and household refuse collection services from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, so as to bring the collection, recycling, delivery and treatment of waste under the same umbrella.

Urban Renewal

104. Our current urban renewal strategy places emphasis on both redevelopment and rehabilitation. Apart from acquisition, demolition and redevelopment of aged buildings by the URA or developers, the current-term Government has allocated over \$19 billion in total to subsidise owners of aged buildings to maintain and repair their properties. However, with the rapid ageing of buildings, the number of private buildings aged 50 years or above has surged from 3,900 to 8,600 over the past decade. Coupled with dilapidation of more than 5,000 "three-nil buildings" across the territory, we must adopt more effective policy measures to expedite the pace of redevelopment and renewal.

105. We will adopt a multi-pronged approach. First, based on the recently completed Yau Mong District Study, the URA will step up urban renewal with an innovative and district-based approach for Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok, including piloting planning tools such as transfer of plot ratio and street consolidation in suitable redevelopment projects. Such tools will also be applicable to privately-led redevelopment projects and other districts where appropriate. Second, I will invite the URA to commence similar district planning studies on the old districts of Tsuen Wan and Sham Shui Po with a view to formulating renewal plans for these two districts. Third, we will explore ways to lower the compulsory sale thresholds under the Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) Ordinance to expedite redevelopment of aged buildings. During the process, the DEVB will give due consideration to factors such as minority owners' interests and building conditions, and gauge the views of stakeholders.

Invigorating Island South

106. In my Policy Address last year, I put forward the Invigorating Island South initiative. The DEVB set up the Invigorating Island South Office in February this year and formulated the first Conceptual Master Plan to gauge local views on beautifying, revitalising and greening the Wong Chuk Hang, Aberdeen and Ap Lei Chau areas. In tandem, we are taking forward several minor works projects in the areas to improve pedestrian connectivity and the waterfront, thereby enhancing the vibrancy of the district. These include a Green Link connecting MTR Wong Chuk Hang Station and Aberdeen Country Park, which will commence works next year.

107. Following the official opening of the Water World of Ocean Park, the Government and the Ocean Park Corporation are actively taking forward the future strategy for Ocean Park, including conducting a tendering exercise to identify partners for the development of the Park, commencing the technical studies for the proposed pier projects at Deep Water Bay and Tai Shue Wan next year, and exploring the feasibility of providing temporary landing facilities prior to the completion of the pier projects for better connection between the Park and other areas through the water bodies and water transport.

108. In addition, the Government is inviting a non-government partner to design, construct and operate a water sports complex for the general public at the rehabilitated Shek O Quarry Site through open tender, including providing windsurfing elite training facilities for the exclusive use of the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI). It is expected that the tender will be awarded in the first quarter of next year, with the target of bringing the water sports complex into full operation in about five years. Besides, we are studying the technical feasibility of the redevelopment and consolidation of the existing sports ground, sports centre, recreation ground and swimming pool facilities in Wong Chuk Hang, with a view to optimising the use of existing land under the "single site, multiple use" model and providing better services to the community. We will also commence an investigation and design study on the expansion of the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter next year to provide more vessel berthing area.

Harbourfront Enhancement

109. The Government has been striving to enhance the harbourfront on both sides of the Victoria Harbour. Through the collaborative efforts with the Harbourfront Commission, a total of 15 harbourfront sites will have been opened within the period from October last year to the end of this year, further extending the promenade along the Victoria Harbour to 25 kilometres. Also, the management mode of "Harbourfront Shared Space" adopted on a trial basis has been well received by the public. We will continue to implement the open management approach in more harbourfront sites for the public to freely enjoy the harbourfront space in an inclusive environment. Besides, we will adopt a completely fence-free stepped-down water edge design for the first time at the Victoria Harbour to enable visitors to sit by the sea and enjoy an unobstructed view of the beautiful Victoria Harbour.

110. Many of us have a special affection for the Victoria Harbour. With the endeavours of the Government over the past few years, the harbourfront has become a prime public space. Recently, there have been views saying that the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance should be amended. I have no objection to reviewing the ordinance which has been implemented for more than two decades, but I believe that the purpose of any amendment to the said legislation should be to improve connectivity of the harbourfront and increase public space, and not for reclamation to provide land for sale or housing development. The Secretary for Development will commence discussion on the matter in due course.

Cycle Tracks

111. Cycling has become a popular outdoor activity in recent years. The 60-kilometre cycle track connecting Tuen Mun and Ma On Shan and the 2-kilometre cycle track at the Tsuen Wan waterfront were opened in September last year and July this year respectively. They are well received by the public. Continued efforts will be made to take forward the construction works of the remaining track of about 20 kilometres between Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan, so as to complete the cycle track network connecting eastern and western New Territories. As for the urban area, the 13-kilometre GreenWay for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists in the Kai Tak Development Area will be completed in phases from 2023 onwards.

Smart City

112. Rapid progress has been made since the launch of 5G services last year, with network coverage now topping 90%, and even up to 99% in core business districts. According to a report by an international market survey institution this year, Hong Kong ranks first and second in the world in terms of 5G coverage and stability respectively, bringing vast potential for various commercial services and smart city applications. The Government will promote 5G development on various fronts, including releasing more 5G spectrum for auctioning by the end of this month to satisfy the needs of various 5G services in terms of speed, capacity and coverage. Through the Subsidy Scheme for Encouraging Early Deployment of 5G, we will subsidise more sectors to boost efficiency and productivity by adopting innovative 5G applications such as telemedicine, distance maintenance support and real-time safety monitoring in construction sites.

113. Smart Mobility is another key initiative to promote smart city development. The Transport Department will progressively implement the Free-Flow Tolling System at government tolled tunnels and the Tsing Sha Control Area from the end of next year. The system will bring convenience to motorists and improve tunnel traffic. Of the seven automated parking system projects, those in Tsuen Wan and Tai Po will be commissioned this year and next year respectively. To promote autonomous vehicles, the THB will submit a bill to the next term of the LegCo on the establishment of a new regulatory framework for autonomous vehicles to enable wider and more flexible trial and use. In addition, the Smart Traffic Fund was launched in March this year to provide funding support to projects that enhance commuting convenience for motorists, increase transport efficiency and improve driving safety.

Sports Development

Elite Sports

114. The Hong Kong, China Delegation staged a distinguished performance at the Tokyo Olympic Games, achieving the best results in Hong Kong's history and making all Hong Kong people proud. Hong Kong athletes have also done a great job in the events at the Paralympic Games with remarkable and encouraging results. The success of the Hong Kong athletes has not come about by chance. In addition to their own efforts and the support of different sectors, the Government's policy directives and allocation of resources are also indispensable.

115. To further support the development of elite sports, I announced earlier that we will expedite the construction of the new facilities building of the HKSI. With funding approval by the LegCo, we will seek to complete the works in mid-2024. We will also finance jointly with the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust the setting up of a \$300 million special fund to enhance, through research in sports science and sports medicine, the competitiveness of athletes in international sports events.

116. Furthermore, the Government will continue to provide support for retired athletes (including athletes with disabilities). This year, more than 70 retired athletes have joined the Retired Athletes Transformation Programme, which was launched in 2018. They are employed by eligible schools and sports organisations to assist in promoting sports and identifying potential sports talents. We will allocate more resources to expand the Programme. The target is to double the number of retired athletes joining the Programme within five years to provide them with more opportunities for career transformation.

Professionalisation of Sports and Development of the Sports Industry

117. In addition to the policy objectives of supporting elite sports, maintaining Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events and promoting sports in the community, we will explore ways to further promote sports development in Hong Kong through enhanced professionalism in the sports sector and development of sports as an industry. The commissioning of the Kai Tak Sports Park in 2023 and opportunities arising from the GBA will foster more diversified development in sports and provide young people as well as retired athletes with job and development opportunities. A working group chaired by the Secretary for Home Affairs will discuss with the business and sports sectors on how to further support the development of the sports industry in Hong Kong and submit a report to me in due course.

Hosting the 15th National Games in 2025

118. I am grateful for the trust and support of the Central Government in allowing Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao to host the 15th National Games in 2025. We will spare no effort to work closely with the relevant ministries of the Central Government, and the governments of Guangdong Province and the Macao SAR to organise a "simple, safe and wonderful" 15th National Games.

New Cultural Landmark

119. Our cultural sector is thrilled by the support for Hong Kong as stated in the 14th Five-Year Plan to develop into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. The flagship projects of the West Kowloon Cultural District, namely the M+ Museum, the Hong Kong Palace Museum and the Lyric Theatre Complex, as well as the East Kowloon Cultural Centre under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, and the Kai Tak Sports Park which can also stage cultural performances, will be completed successively in the coming years. With these new cultural landmarks and the five major policy directions I mentioned earlier to support cultural development, the vision of developing Hong Kong into a cultural metropolis will soon be realised. This will definitely offer a unique experience of the blend of Chinese and Western cultures and a fruitful cultural journey for locals and visitors.

(To be continued.)