

CE's speech in delivering "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address" to LegCo (2)

III. Uphold the Principle of "One Country, Two Systems" and Safeguard National Security

Fully and Faithfully Implement the Principle of "One Country, Two Systems"

17. As highlighted in the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the principle of "One Country, Two Systems" is the best institutional arrangement for the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, and we must adhere to it in the long run. The fundamental premise of "One Country, Two Systems" is to safeguard sovereignty, security and development interests of our nation. The more firmly the "One Country" principle is upheld, the greater the strength of "Two Systems".

18. Hong Kong has emerged from social disorder and the pandemic, and is now advancing from stability to prosperity. The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the National Security Law) has addressed the near-vacuum of national security laws for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). And the improved electoral system safeguards the HKSAR's governance system. Hong Kong is back on the path to progress.

19. Nevertheless, geopolitics today is complex. Some countries are undermining China and the implementation of "One Country, Two Systems" in Hong Kong for their own benefits. External forces continue to meddle in Hong Kong affairs. As Xia Baolong, Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, said in his address on National Security Education Day in April this year: "while Hong Kong may appear to be peaceful and calm, there are indeed undercurrents – the root causes for 'chaos' have not yet been eliminated, and the foundation of 'orderly governance' needs to be fortified. We must stay vigilant against the possible resurgence of street violence, be conscious of covert rebellions through 'soft resistance', and watch out for those anti-government movements overseas looping back to Hong Kong. We should pay particular attention to those anti-China and destabilising activities camouflaged in the name of human rights, freedom, democracy and livelihood". We must guard against those seeking to provoke conflict, misinform or spread rumours through different channels, and remain alert to acts of "soft resistance" in different forms that can undermine the governance of our country and the HKSAR.

20. The HKSAR Government will fully, faithfully and resolutely implement the principles of "One Country, Two Systems", "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and a high degree of autonomy. We will safeguard the constitutional order of the HKSAR as laid down by 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). We will implement the "executive-led" structure and "patriots administering Hong Kong".

Safeguard National Security

21. The Government will continue to safeguard national security and improve its relevant legal system and enforcement mechanisms.

Legislate for Article 23 of the Basic Law

22. Article 23 of the Basic Law stipulates that the HKSAR shall enact laws on its own to prohibit acts and activities that endanger national security. Article 7 of the National Security Law stipulates that the HKSAR Government shall complete, as early as possible, legislation for safeguarding national security as stipulated in the Basic Law and shall refine relevant laws. The Government is pressing ahead to draw up effective legislative options and will complete the legislative exercise in 2024 to fulfil our constitutional duty.

Legislate for Cybersecurity of Critical Infrastructure

23. To address the increasing risks of cyber-attacks globally, the Government is working to enhance the cybersecurity of our critical infrastructure, including energy, telecommunications, transportation, financial institutions, etc. We will introduce a bill into the Legislative Council (LegCo) for this purpose in 2024.

National Security Education

24. We will strengthen the promotion of national security education. Apart from school education, we will organise exhibitions and activities, particularly the National Security Education Day on 15 April each year, to raise public awareness about the importance of safeguarding national security. We will set up an exhibition gallery, prepare teaching materials and provide training for district-based tutors to promote national security education in the community.

25. The Government has introduced a bill amending the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance. When the bill is enacted by the LegCo after considerations, we will organise a publicity campaign to enhance public awareness of the importance of respecting the regional flag and emblem and ensuring their proper usage.

26. The Government will continue to enhance training for all civil servants to nurture their patriotism and sense of national security. This will help civil servants to be more conscious of the importance of safeguarding our country's sovereignty, national security and development interests, particularly in view of the complex external environment.

Patriotic Education

27. The Government endeavours to build mainstream values characterised by

patriotism with affection for our country and Hong Kong and in conformity with the principle of "One Country, Two Systems". We will roll out patriotic education to enhance national identity and appreciation of the richness and beauty of the traditional Chinese culture amongst the people of Hong Kong, laying a good foundation for our national unity and solidarity. We will also integrate patriotic education into our education system. The Constitution and Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee, led by the Chief Secretary for Administration, will extend its scope to cover patriotic education. The Committee will establish a Working Group on Patriotic Education, co-ordinating the work of government departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in taking forward national education and dovetailing with the Patriotic Education Law of the People's Republic of China, with a view to enhancing education on our country's history, culture and current affairs on different fronts, thereby promoting patriotism and ensuring its continuity from generation to generation.

Establish the Chinese Culture Promotion Office

28. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will establish a Chinese Culture Promotion Office, which will be tasked to plan and implement programmes to promote Chinese culture and history, and the Chinese Culture Festival will be organised starting from next year.

Set up Two Museums about Our Country and the War of Resistance

29. The Government will set up a museum to showcase the development and achievements of our country, covering areas such as its history, politics, economic development and culture. Before the commissioning of the new museum, the LCSD will set up exhibition galleries in existing museums to display the relevant contents and deepen public understanding of our country and national affairs. In 2024, we will convert the existing Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence into the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence. It will focus on the history of the War of Resistance to cultivate a stronger sense of national esteem and patriotism. We will also collaborate with the Shenzhen Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau to organise exhibitions introducing the joint efforts by Hong Kong and Shenzhen during the War of Resistance.

Education for Students

30. In July, President Xi Jinping replied to the students of Hong Kong's Pui Kiu Middle School, noting that patriotism is the core of the spirit of the Chinese nation. He encouraged students to gain a deeper understanding of global trends, delve into the history and culture of our country and national affairs, strengthen their affection for and sense of belonging to our country, and make contributions to building an even better Hong Kong and advancing national rejuvenation.

31. To help students cultivate the spirit underscored in President Xi's message, the Government will take forward the following measures starting from this school year:

(i) strengthen training for teachers—We will organise Mainland study tours for teachers, provide in-school enhancement programmes on national security education as well as teaching resources on our country's development and history with regular updates. The Education Bureau (EDB) will also conduct regular focus inspections on the implementation of national education, with plans to inspect at least 50 schools every year. The EDB will share experiences and promote the good practices observed in the focus inspections to enhance the quality and effectiveness of national education;

(ii) enhance national affairs education—The EDB will publish a Humanities Curriculum Framework for primary schools, which will be implemented starting from the 2025/26 school year. It will also strengthen training for Constitution and Basic Law Student Ambassadors and their national history learning experiences, organise more Chinese culture immersion activities, and enrich the contents of the Values Education Curriculum Framework so as to enhance students' learning about the Chinese culture, our country's history and geography, and issues on national security; and

(iii) offer diversified learning experiences—The EDB will launch the "Love Our Home, Treasure Our Country 2.0" series of inter-school national-education activities to enrich students' cognitive, affective and practical learning, and to promote exchanges and development among schools.

IV. Strive to Improve Governance

32. Since taking office, the current-term Government has strived to improve governance systems, capability and efficacy. We are also working to strengthen our leadership and execution capabilities.

33. In the last Policy Address, I set 110 indicators for specific tasks, including key performance indicators (KPIs). The performance of departments has generally met my expectations. The indicators have enabled me to monitor work progress and outcomes more effectively. More importantly, they have helped cultivate a result-oriented culture within the Government. For this Policy Address, to sustain my governing belief of engaging in pragmatic efforts and delivering results, I have set a total of 150 indicators, of which 73 are new. The remaining 77 indicators, introduced last year, are still on-going and valid.

Enhance Governance Systems

Interaction and Exchange between the Executive and the Legislature

34. In line with the executive-led structure and the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong", the Government will continue to collaborate closely with the LegCo through the Chief Executive's Interactive Exchange Question and Answer Sessions, the LegCo Ante Chamber Exchange Sessions and face-to-face communication, etc. for better policy formulation. We will explore means to take these exchanges to a higher level, optimising the contribution of "patriots administering Hong Kong".

Liaison Mechanism with NPC Deputies and CPPCC Members

35. The HKSAR deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) and the HKSAR members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) are members of the country's major institutions. Excelling themselves in different sectors, they are a key force dedicated to the country and Hong Kong. The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau will take forward the regular exchange mechanism to enhance communication and collaboration with NPC deputies and CPPCC members so as to rally patriots with affection for the country and our city and to build a better Hong Kong together.

Improve Governance at the District Level

36. We will fully implement the improved district governance structure and ensure its effective and efficient operation at the community level. With the participation of patriots with dedication to serve, we would be able to better connect with the people and take their views into account in building the community. The Government will ensure that the seventh-term District Council elections are conducted in a fair, just, safe, clean and orderly manner. I call on all of you to cast your votes on 10 December. The new District Councils will begin operation in January. With the Care Teams established in all 18 districts, the governance structure at the district level is largely in place.

Establish a Framework on the Financing of Major Development Projects

37. The Government is taking forward a number of major development projects, including the Northern Metropolis and the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands. The projects will bring about substantial economic and social benefits, but they also require significant funding. The Government will establish the Committee on the Financing of Major Development Projects, led by the Financial Secretary, and the Office for the Financing of Major Development Projects to advise on feasible investment and financing options, taking advantage of market capital and efficiency. The two bodies will assess the feasibility of bringing in private investors for these projects, and thoroughly evaluate their financial viability to ensure the Government's fiscal sustainability.

Invest in the GBA

38. The Hong Kong Investment Corporation Limited is considering using the GBA Investment Fund, under its management, to set up a joint investment fund with the Guangdong Provincial Government and other institutions or corporations to invest in the GBA projects with social and economic benefits.

Enhance Governance Capability and Governance Efficacy

Advance Development of Digital Government

39. We will press ahead with the digitalisation of government services, using artificial intelligence (AI) and opening up more government data to accelerate development of digital economy. The Digital Economy Development Committee, chaired by the Financial Secretary, is conducting studies on

digital infrastructure, cross-boundary data flow, digital transformation of enterprises and human resources support. The Committee will put forward its recommendations early next year.

40. The Government will set up the Digital Policy Office by merging the existing Office of the Government Chief Information Officer and the Efficiency Office. Led by the Commissioner for Digital Policy, the new office will be responsible for formulating policies on digital government, data governance and information technology. It will consolidate information technology-related resources within the Government, promote the opening up of data and co-ordinate with departments to offer more digital services.

41. Before the end of this year, the Government will publish administrative guidelines to facilitate data flow and ensure data security to drive digital-based development. From 2024, we will launch over a hundred of digital government initiatives to promote digital government and the smart city. These projects include: issuing and verifying certain licences and certificates electronically by using blockchain technology; enhancing security in public cargo areas by employing AI technology; providing automated parking systems in newly completed government car parks and short-term tenancy car parks; providing electronic payment options for all government fees within one year; developing smart search-and-rescue mobile applications; and enhancing the 1823 enquiry service through AI chatbot.

42. The HKSAR Government will collaborate with the Guangdong Provincial Government to develop the "Digital Bay Area". Efforts include promoting the "Cross-boundary Public Services" initiative, under which Hong Kong residents can log into the Guangdong Government Service Network with "iAM Smart", while Guangdong and Hong Kong residents can use the self-help kiosks rather than having to access government services in person.

Strengthen the Civil Service Management System

43. A capable and efficient civil service is the key to good-quality government services. In September, when Hong Kong was hit by Super Typhoon Saola, followed by torrential rain, all government departments, including the non-emergency departments, came together and assisted in bringing the community back to normal soon after. I am grateful to all of them for their dedication and hard work.

44. The Government will continue to strengthen our management system, as follows:

(i) advance the performance-based management system...The streamlined mechanism for management-initiated retirement of officers with persistent sub-standard performance became effective in September. Regarding the disciplinary mechanism, we will enhance training for departments on investigating and handling disciplinary cases. Meanwhile, we will give due recognition to civil servants with outstanding performances and dedication to the community. Aside from the Chief Executive's Award for Exemplary Performance Scheme, the Government will publicise the civil servants' good work and dedication to serve. This will help boost staff morale and

performance, while attracting talented people to join the Government;

(ii) update the Civil Service Code—In accordance with the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong", civil servants must be well aware of the need to safeguard sovereignty, national security and development interests. They should be dedicated to their duties, care about the public, embrace collaboration and teamwork, and be committed and responsible. The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) submitted the first draft of the updated Civil Service Code last year. And at my request, it is reviewing the draft taking into account more comprehensive information. The CSB aims to issue the updated Code in the first quarter of next year or earlier for consultation with staff; and

(iii) introduce the Civil Service Staff Exchange Programme with the GBA—The HKSAR Government will introduce an exchange programme with civil servants from other GBA cities by the end of the year to dovetail with the development of the GBA.

Scale up Capability in Coping with Extreme Weather

45. With global climate change intensifying, it is likely that we will experience extreme weather more often. We will enhance our handling capabilities in respect of early warning, emergency preparedness, response and recovery to minimise the impact on society, with protecting people's safety as our priority.

46. Our preparedness and emergency response to Super Typhoon and the torrential rain in September generally met expectations, but in respect of early-warning arrangements, we were limited by technological constraints. There is, in short, room for improvement in enhancing the early-alert dissemination, including the content, transparency and frequency of the alerts. In dealing with the aftermath, the Government has strengthened its co-ordination and teamwork, resulting in improvement on staff mobilisation and the short time it took to bring society back to normal. Where we can improve is in publicity and education to strengthen awareness of personal safety and safe conducts under inclement weather, and the handling of airport arrivals under typhoon and suspension of public transportation service, etc.

47. To strengthen Hong Kong's capability in coping with extreme weather conditions, the Government will adopt a more pre-emptive and strategic approach, as follows:

(i) requesting departments and public bodies concerned, such as the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), to conduct a comprehensive review of their contingency plans, guided by bottom-line thinking and the need to minimise loss caused to society;

(ii) exploring ways to use big data, AI and other technology to improve our risk assessment capabilities on aspects of more uncertainties, such as meteorological forecast and alerts, flooding and landslide hazards, transport and traffic, etc.;

(iii) conducting systematic investigations and studies on major landslide incidents triggered by extreme rainstorms and devising focused measures of landslide mitigation for more natural slopes; and

(iv) taking forward expeditiously the \$8 billion drainage improvement works projects, covering Wong Tai Sin, Hong Kong Island East and other areas hit by severe floods in the past. The Drainage Services Department will complete its "Strategic Planning Study on Flood Management against Sea Level Rise and Extreme Rainfall" next year and develop a forward-looking strategy.

Enhance the Capability of Co-ordinated Emergency Management across the GBA

48. The Mainland has strong emergency-response capability, especially in terms of installation of heavy-duty equipment. A collaborative and complementary emergency-response mechanism will create synergy and benefit us all in the GBA. To that end, Hong Kong together with other GBA cities will formulate, negotiate and implement a new "Greater Bay Area Emergency Response and Rescue Operational Plan", establishing a systematic emergency-response mechanism that is mutually complementary and in the spirit of joint prevention and collaboration. This will strengthen the region's ability to prevent, mitigate and relieve natural disasters and other major public emergencies.

Cross-boundary Ambulance Service

49. The Government is discussing with the governments of other GBA cities on the provision of cross-boundary ambulance service so as to enable direct point-to-point hospital transfer of patients for better support.

(To be continued.)