

# HKSAR Government warmly welcomes substantial conclusion of consultations for further liberalisation of trade in services under CEPA

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, today (July 1) welcomed the substantial conclusion of the consultations between the Ministry of Commerce and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government for further liberalisation of trade in services under the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), and looked forward to finalising the text for the new agreement as soon as possible by the two sides and formally signing and implementing the agreement after completion of respective internal approval procedures. Details of the measures will be then announced.

After months of consultations, the two sides have largely reached consensus on new measures to further liberalise the Mainland's trade in services with Hong Kong. The new liberalisation measures target service sectors that Hong Kong enjoys competitive advantages and expand the Mainland's liberalisation to Hong Kong, giving Hong Kong enterprises and professionals more preferential treatment to explore the Mainland market, and at the same time enabling them to make contribution to the country's development of new quality productive forces and solid progress in promoting high-quality development.

Mr Lee said, "I am very grateful to the Central Government for its strong support to the HKSAR. I also thank the Ministry of Commerce and the relevant central ministries for the positive response to the HKSAR Government's proposals for liberalisation of trade in services. In the past 21 years, CEPA reinforced Hong Kong's role as a bridge connecting the Mainland and the rest of the world and enhanced Hong Kong's competitiveness. I pledged in my 2023 Policy Address to actively seek to enrich the contents of CEPA and I am pleased to have achieved concrete outcomes in this respect. The new amendments to the CEPA Agreement on Trade in Services will further deepen economic and trade co-operation between the Mainland and Hong Kong, and provide the trade with greater room for development, allowing them to better tap into the vast business opportunities brought about by the rapid development of the country as well as the national and international dual circulation strategy, which carries great significance."

The Mainland and Hong Kong signed the Agreement on Trade in Services under the CEPA framework in November 2015 to basically achieve liberalisation of trade in services between the two places. Subsequently, the two sides signed in November 2019 the Agreement Concerning Amendment to the CEPA

Agreement on Trade in Services to further liberalise the Mainland's trade in services with Hong Kong. Under the current framework of the CEPA Agreement on Trade in Services, the Mainland fully or partially opens up 153 service sectors to Hong Kong's service industry, enabling Hong Kong enterprises and professionals to enjoy preferential treatment in developing their business in the Mainland. The subject consultations aim to modify the Agreement on Trade in Services to further enhance and deepen the Mainland's level of liberalisation of trade in services with Hong Kong.