

Opening keynote address by SITI at Economist Impact – Technology for Change Asia (English only) (with photo)

Following is the opening keynote address by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, at the Economist Impact – Technology for Change Asia today (February 27):

Tom (Deputy Editor of The Economist, Mr Tom Standage), Dr Pang (Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Dr Pang Yiu-kai), distinguished speakers and guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I am delighted to join you all today at the fourth annual Technology for Change Asia, organised by Economist Impact. For those speakers and guests coming from abroad, a very warm welcome to Hong Kong. I also thank Economist Impact for its commitment to staging this event in Hong Kong. This represents a big vote of confidence in Hong Kong's future as a tech hub for the region.

Tech for Change Asia is the place to be for aspiring talent to acquire the most updated information and ideas from tech giants and connect with business leaders. And we have a strong line-up of tech pioneers to share their valuable insights over the next two days here in Asia's world city.

Known for its unique blend of Eastern and Western cultures, and its agility and adaptability in the business and economic spheres, Hong Kong is well established as a leading international financial centre. Now, as we enter a new era of technological revolution and industrial transformation, with artificial intelligence (AI) in particular charting the way, Hong Kong is striving to become an international innovation and technology (I&T) hub. Allow me to highlight a few key initiatives for achieving this vision.

Back in December 2022, the Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) Government promulgated the Hong Kong I&T Development Blueprint. This Blueprint is important because it sets a clear course for our I&T development over the next five to 10 years. With a strong emphasis on top-level design and forward-looking strategic planning, the Blueprint underscores four broad development directions and eight major strategies. These directions and strategies focus on enhancing our I&T ecosystem, promoting a digital economy and smart city development, as well as consolidating our role as a bridge to connect Mainland China, the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the world.

The Blueprint demonstrates our unwavering determination for Hong Kong to become an international I&T hub, as set out under our country's 14th Five-year Plan. It also serves as a guiding light for industry stakeholders to keep abreast of government strategies.

Starting from this year, for example, we will be launching more than 100 digital government initiatives. These will include providing an electronic payment option for all government services, and facilitating the wider adoption of e-payment options by businesses to support the development of digital economy.

We will also set up the Digital Policy Office within this year. Its task will be to formulate policies on digital government, data governance and information technology (IT). Specifically, the new office will consolidate IT-related resources within the Government, and promote the further opening up of data to offer more digital services to enhance the way we live and work.

From a broader perspective, a digital economy is a key enabler of high-quality development for Hong Kong. To this end, the Digital Economy Development Committee was formed in June 2022 to offer expert views and advice to the Government in order to accelerate the progress of the digital economy development in Hong Kong.

Turning to our role as a bridge connecting Mainland China, the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the digital world. Here we have distinct advantages, thanks to the "one country, two systems" policy, strong support of our motherland and the fast-developing Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Within the GBA, we are working closely with the Guangdong Provincial Government to develop the Digital Bay Area. This will create new impetus for prosperity and deeper integration of the GBA. For example, last year we launched the Cross-boundary Public Services initiative. This initiative enables residents and enterprises in Hong Kong and Mainland cities of the GBA to access respective public services online anytime. Previously, to do this they would have had to travel across the boundary in person. Just last week, we set up the very first Hong Kong Cross-boundary Public Services self-service kiosk in Guangzhou.

Also, last December, we, together with the Cyberspace Administration of China, announced a facilitation measure and its pilot arrangement relating to a GBA Standard Contract (Standard Contract for the Cross-boundary Flow of Personal Information Within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Mainland, Hong Kong)). This facilitates and streamlines the arrangements on cross-boundary flow of personal information from Mainland cities in the GBA to Hong Kong. For those familiar with cross-boundary data issues, you would appreciate that the facilitation measure represents a policy breakthrough to significantly lower the compliance costs and procedures for cross-boundary business transactions.

As highlighted by the agenda of Tech for Change Asia, the future is all about AI. The trend of AI technology including generative AI has brought gigantic opportunities as well as challenges worldwide. No doubt, AI technology can enhance work productivity and enterprise efficiency with limitless potential for application. But AI also triggers concerns and debate over information security, privacy protection, ethics and intellectual

property rights, to name just a few.

With AI and data science being among the key strategic industries under the I&T Blueprint, the Hong Kong SAR Government adopts an all-round strategy to develop the AI ecosystem, ranging from policies, guidelines and regulations to talent training, research support, and more. Our holistic strategy is dynamic and must be agile to keep pace with fast-moving AI developments.

As announced in "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address", our I&T flagship, Cyberport, is preparing to set up an AI Supercomputing Centre in phases from this year onwards. This strategic digital infrastructure will support the strong local demand for high-performance computing power, enhance Hong Kong's R&D (research and development) capabilities, and promote industrial development. The new venture will likely bring great benefits to AI and technological advancement in Hong Kong.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have provided a few updates on Hong Kong's I&T development. And there is more to come. No doubt, our Financial Secretary, when he presents his 2024-25 Budget tomorrow, will give more details on relevant areas such as building a resilient digital economy, a smarter city, and a welcoming environment for I&T development.

In the meantime, I am sure that we are all looking forward to hearing the ideas and visions of the heavyweight speakers at this conference. Once again, congratulations to Economist Impact on bringing this amazing event to Hong Kong. I wish each and every one of you a very enjoyable and rewarding Technology for Change Asia and a wonderful experience in Hong Kong. Thank you.

