

Policy Address: Striving Ahead with Renewed Perseverance

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, delivered her annual Policy Address today (November 25), with measures to support Hong Kong to strive ahead with renewed perseverance, following last year's social unrest and amid the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic.

"In the past year or so, Hong Kong has experienced multiple blows which are unprecedented: the social unrest arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and other anti-government acts; the shrinking economy and rising unemployment rate caused by the COVID-19 epidemic; and the acts that endangered national security due to interference by external forces," Mrs Lam said.

The Chief Executive said recent events had seriously undermined Hong Kong's social stability, impeded its economic development and tarnished the city's international image.

"The Policy Address that I deliver today seeks to restore Hong Kong's constitutional order, consolidate and enhance Hong Kong's strengths and diversify its economic development, and build on our past efforts to continue to improve people's well-being, with a view to resolving our immediate and long-term social problems," Mrs Lam said.

"One of our urgent priorities is to restore the HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region)'s constitutional order and political system from chaos."

The Chief Executive noted that the National Security Law (NSL), promulgated on June 30, has been remarkably effective in restoring stability in Hong Kong and said that the Government would spare no effort in fulfilling Hong Kong's responsibility in exercising jurisdiction over criminal cases under the NSL to effectively prevent, suppress and punish acts and activities that endanger national security.

"I must emphasise that, as expressly provided in Article 4 of the NSL, the principle of respecting and protecting human rights will be upheld and the legitimate rights of Hong Kong people to exercise their freedom of speech, press, assembly, demonstration and procession, etc, will not be compromised in safeguarding national security," Mrs Lam said.

The Chief Executive outlined ways that the Government would strengthen publicity and education to enhance Hong Kong people's understanding of national security and law-abiding awareness.

Initiatives include making use of the annual Constitution Day and National Security Education Day to conduct public education on a larger

scale, and the 10-year initiative "Vision 2030 for Rule of Law" to be implemented by the Department of Justice to enhance the community's proper understanding and practice of the rule of law.

To enhance electoral arrangements, Mrs Lam said, "Taking into account the proposals put forward by the EAC (Electoral Affairs Commission) last month and the community's views, the CMAB (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau) will introduce bills to revise the relevant legislation in due course so as to enhance the electoral system and arrangements."

The Chief Executive said that the Central Government had illustrated its unwavering determination in upholding the "One Country, Two Systems" principle.

"To ensure that the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle is fully and accurately implemented, we must adhere to the Constitution and the Basic Law," Mrs Lam said.

To support Hong Kong society during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has rolled out relief measures totalling about \$310 billion under this financial year's Budget and the three rounds of the Anti-epidemic Fund.

"With the anticipation that the weak economy will persist for quite a long time and the consequent reduction in government revenue, it will be hard to continue to increase government expenditure," Mrs Lam said.

"However, to avoid impeding the development of Hong Kong, we will continue to invest in infrastructure, develop our land resources and meet the economic and livelihood needs."

With the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) seen as offering multiple opportunities for the development of various sectors, Mrs Lam said that during meetings with leaders from Guangdong Province and Shenzhen municipality in early November, they had agreed to press ahead with work in areas such as cross-boundary infrastructure development and clearance facilitation, joint development of an international I&T hub, co-operation in modern service industries, education, nurturing of talents and youth exchanges as well as joint development of a quality living circle.

Specific co-operation projects include:

- * supporting Hong Kong's insurance industry in establishing after-sales service centres in the Mainland cities of the GBA under the framework of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA);
- * implementing as soon as possible the arrangement of using Hong Kong-registered drugs and medical devices used in Hong Kong public hospitals at The University of Hong Kong – Shenzhen Hospital on a trial basis subject to the approval of the Guangdong Province, and extending the policy to cover more designated healthcare institutions, drugs and medical devices in a timely manner;

- * allowing traditional proprietary Chinese medicine products for external use registered in Hong Kong to be registered and sold in the GBA through a streamlined approval process;
- * pressing ahead with the "Quota-free scheme for Hong Kong private cars travelling to Guangdong via the HZMB (Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge)" after the commissioning of the Tuen Mun – Chek Lap Kok Tunnel;
- * rationalising the Hong Kong-Shenzhen land boundary control points by adjusting the functions and extending the operating hours of some of these land boundary control points so as to progressively implement the "East in East out, West in West out" planning strategy for cross-boundary goods traffic;
- * supporting and assisting various universities in Hong Kong in their plans to provide education services in the GBA;
- * providing support to the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme and the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Greater Bay Area launched by the HKSAR Government;
- * establishing the Pan-Greater Bay Area Inward Investment Liaison Group to enable Invest Hong Kong and its counterparts in other cities in the GBA to develop holistic and joint inward investment propositions with a view to enhancing synergy; and
- * jointly promoting the development of the equine industry in the GBA through collaboration with the Hong Kong Jockey Club and its racecourse in Conghua, Guangzhou.

"Benefiting from its proximity to the Mainland and the Central Government's long-standing support under the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, Hong Kong's economic development will be given new impetus," Mrs Lam said.

Mrs Lam expressed gratitude to the Central Government for its support in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that the Universal Community Testing Programme had provided voluntary virus testing services for more than 1.7 million people.

The Chief Executive also paid tribute to the Hong Kong community for its unity and spirit of mutual help in working towards the common goal of fighting the coronavirus.

"The HKSAR Government would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to each and every one who has joined the fight against the epidemic," Mrs Lam said.