

Speech by CE at cocktail reception in celebration of 25th anniversary of Hong Kong International Airport (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the cocktail reception in celebration of the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong International Airport today (July 10):

Deputy Commissioner Pan Yundong (Deputy Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Mr Jack So (Chairman of the Airport Authority Hong Kong), Mr Fred Lam (Chief Executive Officer of the Airport Authority Hong Kong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank each working staff, each member of the Hong Kong International Airport, including of course, the Board (of the Airport Authority Hong Kong), for everything that you have done for Hong Kong.

We are very proud to have our airport at Chek Lap Kok running at this high level. We all experienced the good and happy steps when we go through the airport. It is the place where we start our happiness when we go out to travel, to do our business and sightseeing. It is also the place where we feel warm again when we come back, because we're home again, sweet home, warm home. So this is the place that you have created happiness, togetherness and warmth for Hong Kong. That would not be possible without the commitment, devotion and the excellent work of each one of the members of the whole Hong Kong airport family.

And I thank of course, Mr Jack So, for doing all these as the Chairman. I saw on the short video earlier, he was much younger six years ago. And I am seeing more lines on his forehead. And I thank for some of the hairs that he has lost because that is a reflection of what he has done for Hong Kong. So I sincerely thank each member of the Board, and of course each one who has really made Hong Kong Airport the leader airport in the world. In 2022, I see that the Hong Kong International Airport is rated number one in popularity and efficiency.

So I am very delighted to join you all tonight to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our magnificent Hong Kong International Airport.

We often say that Hong Kong's most important resource is its people – our visionary and highly skilled talents. This can perhaps be best showcased in our beloved airport.

The Hong Kong International Airport is consistently rated as one of the best and busiest airports anywhere. It is also an engineering marvel that continues to grow and evolve as our skyward gateway to the world.

Twenty-five years into its existence, the Hong Kong International Airport is in its prime. After the airport's momentous relocation from Kai Tak to Chek Lap Kok, the number of passengers flying into and out of Hong Kong rocketed from 28.6 million in 1998, to 71.5 million in 2019, just before the pandemic. Cargo traffic, as you have heard, has been equally impressive, with the Airport continuing its winning streak as the world's busiest cargo airport again in 2022.

So, while Hong Kong may have parted with that landing at Kai Tak that gave many pilots, and passengers, a hair-raising experience, we have gained a world-class airport that has firmly established Hong Kong as the region's premier international aviation hub.

Of course, the Airport has seen some turbulent times along the way. The unprecedented impact of the serious violence and sabotage in 2019, as well as that of the pandemic in the past three years or so, has swept our airport like violent headwind. Once more, our intrepid people have enabled the Airport to rise again and emerge stronger.

Now that normal travel with the Mainland and the world has resumed, my team and I have been actively going to the Mainland and overseas to tell them the good stories of Hong Kong. I, for one, just flew back to Hong Kong from Guiyang last Friday, and will be using our airport when I visit ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries later this month.

But what touched me more was to see the teary hugs of friends and family reunited after the challenges of the past few years, and the smiling faces of holidaymakers and business travellers saying their hello again to Hong Kong.

With passenger numbers expected to return to pre-pandemic levels by next year, I am pleased to say that the Hong Kong International Airport is back with a very promising future!

That future is premised on the unique "one country, two systems" principle, which has been ensuring Hong Kong's continued success since our return to the motherland 26 years ago. Under the auspices of "one country, two systems", Hong Kong is bestowed with the unparalleled advantage of having the strong support of national strategies, while maintaining excellent connectivity with the world.

We will continue and enhance our status as an international aviation hub under the National 14th Five-Year Plan. We are committed to bringing fresh impetus to the Airport to stay ahead of the competition with other regional airports. When we talk about competition, I think you saw at the earlier performance by the very united staff of the Hong Kong airport. What impressed me is that this is the muscle of our competitiveness. And I think you agree with me in that perception.

We see that impetus emerging in the form of the Three-Runway System and SKYCITY, two mega projects that will significantly boost handling capacities and give rise to a dynamic "Airport City". Both projects are being taken forward at full steam. I am confident that they will help establish Hong Kong as a go-to destination for both business and travel.

We are also looking for further integration with our neighbouring cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). Whether through co-operation with Zhuhai Airport for synergised aviation development, or with Dongguan for air cargo business, we are determined to work with our neighbouring cities to build an international aviation hub in the region, and make the GBA our home market.

Achieving our goals requires not only sustained financial support, but also continuous manpower development for the aviation industry. We recently injected 200 million dollars into the Maritime and Aviation Training Fund, to support training of local aviation talents. We also aim to attract the best and brightest professionals from near and far, through multiple talent admission and labour importation schemes.

Among them is the Labour Importation Scheme for the Transport Sector, under which the aviation industry is set to welcome more than six thousand imported workers to help fill frontline positions through streamlined procedures. With more hands on deck, our grand vision for airport development will materialise, and the Airport's reputation as an international aviation hub will go from strength to strength.

Ladies and gentlemen, I congratulate the Hong Kong International Airport on its silver jubilee, and I commend, compliment and praise the Airport Authority Hong Kong and all of you who have helped our airport soar to new heights.

I wish you all an enjoyable evening and blue skies ahead! Thank you very much.

