

Speech by CE at Global University Presidents & Leaders Summit 2024 (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Global University Presidents & Leaders Summit 2024 today (December 2):

Honourable Director Zheng Yanxiong (Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Deputy Commissioner Fang Jianming (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), Professor Priscilla Leung (Founding President of the Hong Kong Association for External Friendship), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I think none of you realised that Priscilla was so versatile that she could speak so many languages and so correctly. And I realised that it was the AI (artificial intelligence) that has been helping her so much. So next time I will be as versatile as Priscilla and I probably can send just my AI representative.

A warm welcome to Hong Kong, and the Global University Presidents & Leaders Summit.

I'm pleased to address this Summit and you, our distinguished guests: more than 50 renowned university leaders, academic experts and elite students from over 20 countries and regions, I welcome you to Hong Kong to share your insights. You are here to work towards a brighter, more interconnected future for us all.

Hong Kong attaches great importance to attracting professional talent and strategic companies to help us build a flourishing future. We are working just as hard to nurture home-grown talent. And Hong Kong is privileged to count five universities among the world's top 100, including three among Asia's top 10.

Our unique advantages spring from "one country, two systems". Thanks to this unique principle, we enjoy unwavering support from our country, together with global connectivity.

A world city, and Asia's global city, Hong Kong attracts students from more than 100 countries. Over half of the academic staff in our institutions comes from outside Hong Kong.

And we are building on that solid foundation. The Hong Kong SAR Government endeavours to develop Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub.

As stated in my annual Policy Address this year, we are promoting our

"Study in Hong Kong" brand, as well as hosting more international education exhibitions and high-profile conferences such as this.

Our universities also encourage exchange and collaboration agreements with their counterparts around the world. That includes educational institutions in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Indeed, we have expanded our Belt and Road Scholarship schemes for non-local students. For local students, we are launching a Hong Kong Future Talents Scholarship Scheme for Advanced Studies.

And we have far-reaching plans for our post-secondary institutions. They include setting aside more than 80 hectares of land in the Northern Metropolis, a new area of growth near our boundary with Shenzhen, for a new Northern Metropolis University Town. We encourage our institutions to explore more innovative programmes and research and exchange collaborations with prestigious universities from Mainland China and overseas.

Hong Kong is among 11 cities, including Macao and nine in Guangdong Province, that make up the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, a fast-integrating region counting more than 86 million people and a collective GDP, last year, of about US\$1.9 trillion, which is comparable to the ninth or 10th biggest economy in the world.

Four Hong Kong universities have already built campuses in the Greater Bay Area. And we encourage multi-lateral and cross-disciplinary partnerships with other cities in the Greater Bay Area. Together, I'm confident that we will boost academic and research development, knowledge transfer and industrialisation and commercialisation, propelling the Greater Bay Area's rise as an international innovation and technology hub.

The world, to be sure, is becoming more and more complicated, worryingly so. But it is precisely in challenging times such as these that co-operation, rather than isolation, is imperative – and at every level, within every sector, institution and interest of societies and peoples everywhere.

This welcome Summit, a gathering of exceptional and exceptionally innovative minds from all over the world, is a worthy working model for these complex times. For all times.

Together, engaged in building trust, sharing insights and shaping local, regional and global agendas, we can begin to make a difference, in education and all that education entails.

I am grateful to the Hong Kong Association for External Friendship for hosting this two-day Summit. My thanks, as well, to the support of the University Grants Committee and nine Hong Kong universities. My thanks of course to Priscilla and her AI.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you a rewarding Summit and an enjoyable stay in Hong Kong, the East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. This inspiring Summit, and each and every one of you, makes that brilliantly clear.

Do take some time out of your busy schedule here to enjoy all that Hong Kong has to offer. Autumn is the season to go on hikes in our many country parks, located just a stone's throw away from the city. At night, enjoy the wine and dine scenes in our renowned restaurants and some of Asia's, and the world's, top bars all around town.

Have a wonderful time in Hong Kong. Enjoy the Summit. Thank you.

