

Speech by CE at Historic Launch of the First Volume of the English Edition of Hong Kong Chronicles (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Historic Launch of the First Volume of the English Edition of Hong Kong Chronicles today (July 27):

Commissioner Liu Guangyuan (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Deputy Director Lu Xinning (Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR), Deputy Head Li Jiangzhou (Deputy Head of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR), Mr Bernard Chan (Executive Committee Chairman of the Hong Kong Chronicles Institute), consuls general, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Government House on this historic occasion – the launch of the first English-language volume of the Hong Kong Chronicles.

The wonderful story of Hong Kong Chronicles begins with the wise men behind it. It begins, of course, with Our Hong Kong Foundation, led by Mr Tung Chee Hwa, the first Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR, and Mr Bernard Chan, Executive Committee Chairman of the Hong Kong Chronicles Institute.

The Institute was set up, just three years ago, by Our Hong Kong Foundation. Moving with textbook purpose and commitment, the Institute quickly found essential support. That includes generous funding from the Hong Kong Jockey Club, as well as from individual companies and non-profit organisations.

The great support comes also from a dedicated editorial staff, together with hundreds of scholars, experts and community leaders. To date, they have researched and written two Chinese-language volumes of the Hong Kong Chronicles, namely "Overview & Chronology" and "Hong Kong's Participation in National Reform and Opening-Up". With the guiding editorial principle of recounting historical facts without interpretation, their goal is to produce a comprehensive, systematic and objective record of Hong Kong's heritage and history.

The English version of "Overview & Chronology" counts some 360 000 words and nearly 800 pages. It is a direct and faithful translation of the Chinese volume. For that daunting, detailed effort, my thanks go to the Institute's team of in-house translators and editors. They worked under the expert

guidance of a high-profile Translation Committee, chaired by historian and the University of Hong Kong's Honorary Professor Elizabeth Sinn.

They're just getting started, ladies and gentlemen. The Chinese edition of Hong Kong Chronicles will run to 68 books in 54 bound volumes, each of which is expected to be published, and in your hands, by 2027. The English edition, also in 54 volumes, will be on bookshelves by 2032. I'm told the full series will contain about 25 million words, taking readers from the beginnings of Hong Kong, some 7 000 years ago, to the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong SAR, in 2017.

And now, five years later, as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the SAR's establishment, the publication of this first volume, in English, is a fresh opportunity to tell the success story of Hong Kong.

As put by President Xi Jinping in his important speech delivered on July 1st, and I quote, "Proactively integrating itself into the country's overall development and carving out its role in national strategies, Hong Kong has maintained its strengths in its high degree of openness and in aligning with international rules. In doing so, the region has been playing an important role in raising China's opening up to a higher level with wider coverage and scope."

The President acknowledged that the favourable conditions and distinctive advantages of Hong Kong's close connection with the world market are cherished by both the people of Hong Kong and the Central Government. Hong Kong's story is one of national and international connectivity. And our history and culture, as well as our people, institutions and circumstances, all add vibrant colours to our Hong Kong story.

In addition to knowing the story of Hong Kong, reading the Hong Kong Chronicles will also enhance our understanding, and appreciation of the nation we are all so proud to be part of. That includes not only the history we share, but the future we can look forward to. That future, ladies and gentlemen, offers wide-ranging opportunities to take part in, and to help in, our nation's progress and development.

That means boosting our traditional strengths – as an international financial, shipping and trading centre, and as a regional centre for legal and dispute-resolution services. It also means developing our prowess in other areas as well. That includes rising as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, an up-and-coming area accorded significance in the National 14th Five-Year Plan.

That makes great good sense, given our integrated arts and cultural offerings, world-class facilities that just keep on coming. M+, our brand new global museum of contemporary visual culture, for example, opened just over eight months ago. Earlier this month, the Hong Kong Palace Museum came to brilliant life. This latest addition to Hong Kong's cultural landscape is now showcasing more than 900 works of art from the prestigious Palace Museum in Beijing, as well as a number of pieces on loan from the Louvre, in Paris. The

Louvre's involvement in the opening only underlines Hong Kong's standing as an East-meets-West centre for our nation – and the world.

Our literary tradition offers much as well. You can see, and feel, that here today. You could also experience it at this year's Hong Kong Book Fair, the 32nd edition. The week-long festival dedicated to literature and the joy of reading ended yesterday. The first two Chinese-language volumes of Hong Kong Chronicles were exhibited at the Book Fair. I'm sure that subsequent editions of the Chronicles, in English and Chinese, will be featured at this important literary event in the years to come.

After all, the history of Hong Kong, and of our nation, is replete with remarkable stories. As Hong Kong Chronicles will tell us, we lived them, we learned from them, we grew from them. Ultimately, they rewarded us as a community. And I can promise you, ladies and gentlemen, that my team and I will make our best endeavours to tell the world the good stories of Hong Kong.

The future of Hong Kong, and our nation, will bring with it more stories, more challenges. We will learn from them, grow from them, and flourish with them. There will be a lot of exciting stories ahead of us and I cannot wait to enjoy them with you since we are, as I put it in my campaign slogan, "Starting a New Chapter for Hong Kong Together".

My thanks, once again, to the Hong Kong Chronicles Institute – to each and every one of you involved in bringing your professionalism, and your passion, to this extraordinarily ambitious project. Today, you have started a new chapter not only for the Chronicles, but also for Hong Kong.

Thank you, and happy reading.

