

Speech by CE at Hong Kong Laureate Forum launching ceremony (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the Hong Kong Laureate Forum launching ceremony today (May 14):

Commissioner Xie Feng (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), the Honourable Andrew Leung (President of the Legislative Council), Professor Timothy Tong (Chairman, Council of Hong Kong Laureate Forum, Professor Timothy W Tong), members of the Council of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum, distinguished Shaw laureates, consuls-general, scientists, students, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am delighted to welcome you all to Government House. Today, we come together, from so many disciplines and professions and aspirations, with one happy purpose: to celebrate the founding of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum.

On this auspicious occasion, I'm pleased to welcome four Shaw laureates, each of whom has made a profound impact on our lives through transformative research. They're here from the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany, to pledge their personal support for the Hong Kong Laureate Forum. For that, I am much encouraged and extremely grateful.

I am also grateful, as we all are, for Hong Kong's "One Country, Two Systems" principle, which creates opportunities available to no other economy. As Chief Executive, my goal is to make use of this singular advantage to develop Hong Kong into an international innovation and technology hub.

To that end, innovation and technology has topped my Government's policy agenda since I took office in July 2017. To date, we have committed HK\$100 billion, or about US\$12.5 billion, to drive innovation and technology development in Hong Kong through a variety of policies and programmes. They include the establishment of two research clusters at the Hong Kong Science Park, one focused on health technology, the other on artificial intelligence and robotics, where our local universities and renowned overseas institutions will do collaborative research. At the same time, we are strengthening R&D through direct government funding and matching grants for scientific research in our universities as well as tax incentives for local enterprises to invest in R&D. We have launched talent nurturing and admission schemes to ensure we have a sustainable pool of researchers to work in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's leading efforts in R&D are timely and essential to the aspiration for developing an international innovation and technology hub in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Comprising nine prosperous

cities in Guangdong Province, together with the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao, this city cluster has a total population of 71 million and a collective GDP amounting to US\$1.6 trillion, all in an area of 56 000 square kilometres. I would call that a global powerhouse economy in the making. The Greater Bay Area's Outline Development Plan released by the Central Government in February this year emphasises co-operation and complementarity, taking full advantage of the varying strengths of each city. The Plan also reaffirms one of the key targets of the Greater Bay Area, which is to develop an international innovation and technology hub. With the support of the Central Government, we will work with other cities of the Greater Bay Area to enhance basic research capability and cross-boundary co-operation, better integrate industries, academia and research, develop platforms for innovation and promote commercial application of technological achievements.

However, if Hong Kong is to realise the compelling promise of innovation and technology, we must ensure a sustainable flow of talent. And that, ladies and gentlemen, means providing and promoting science and technology education in our schools at every level, from primary and secondary through to our post-secondary institutions and technical colleges.

I believe, as well, that the surest way to build an interest and enthusiasm for science among our younger generation is by creating opportunities for direct exchange and inspiring dialogue with some of the brightest minds in science. Having attended the 2017 and 2018 Shaw Prize ceremonies, presenting awards to eight Shaw laureates, I came to realise that the answer was right here in Hong Kong, Asia's world city. That by linking the Shaw Prize and its laureates to a youth-centred, science-driven, Hong Kong-based programme, we could make an impactful difference.

After all, the Shaw Prize is dedicated to recognising and rewarding outstanding international contributions in three scientific disciplines: astronomy, life science and medicine, and the mathematical sciences. Established less than two decades ago, the Shaw Prize has become a world-renowned award. Of the nearly 80 Shaw laureates since the first awards in 2004, 12 are Nobel Prize winners, five are Fields Medalists and two are Abel Prize recipients.

With the support of the Shaw Prize Foundation, I wrote to each and every Shaw laureate in January this year. I told them of our plans for an annual Hong Kong Laureate Forum and invited them to take part in the first Forum, scheduled for November 2021. I'm delighted that, to date, more than two-thirds have indicated their interest in participating, and four of them are with us today. It is their commitment that has brought us together today to launch the Hong Kong Laureate Forum.

Apart from the Shaw laureates, I'm grateful as well to the Lee Shau Kee Foundation, which has very generously agreed to support the Forum as its principal sponsor. My thanks, too, to the Council of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum led by Professor Timothy Tong. The Council's Board has been entrusted with the critical responsibility of organising the Forum on an ongoing basis, beginning in 2021.

In short, this visionary venture could only have come together through cross-sector collaboration on both a local and global basis. The results of that extraordinary connectivity are clearly visible in our esteemed audience today. They are academics and scientists, council chairmen and university presidents, senior members of research institutions and science and technology organisations, Executive Council and Legislative Council representatives, as well as consuls general and their colleagues from all over the world. There are, let me add, nearly 60 young and ambitious scientists among us. More than a few are potential participants in the inaugural Forum in 2021. We all look eagerly forward to that.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's join hands to make the Hong Kong Laureate Forum a shining example of furthering the understanding of science and its contribution to humanity. Thank you very much.

