

Speech by CE at Innovation and Technology Scholarship Award Presentation Ceremony 2020 & 2021 (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the Innovation and Technology Scholarship Award Presentation Ceremony 2020 & 2021 today (June 21):

Bernard (Chairman of the Awardee Selection Committee of the Innovation and Technology Scholarship Award, Mr Bernard Chan), Andy (Executive Director of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, Mr Andy Ho), Diana (Group General Manager and Chief Executive, Hong Kong, the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, Ms Diana Cesar), students, parents, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am very pleased to attend today's ceremony to commend 50 outstanding students, who are the recipients of the 2020 and 2021 Innovation and Technology Scholarship Award. My heartfelt congratulations to all of them.

I know that they come from five Hong Kong universities, and they are pursuing a great variety of degrees related to STEM as well as environmental management, physiotherapy, fashion and textiles. Whatever their future endeavours, I am confident that they will enjoy rewarding careers and lives, while helping Hong Kong take its place as an international hub for innovation and technology (I&T).

As I am sure we all agree, talent is crucially important to our achieving the objective of developing an international innovation and technology hub. And we are blessed with a good pool of local talents, including young men and women here today. Another proof is that in March this year, at the International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva, Hong Kong captured a record 136 awards. At least 49 of the award-winning projects originated at our local universities. They included a Gold Medal with Congratulations of the Jury, awarded to a University of Hong Kong team for developing the world's first nasal spray vaccine for COVID-19. The vaccine is now undergoing clinical trials. A team from the Chinese University of Hong Kong was also awarded a Gold Medal with Congratulations of the Jury, for developing a virus-free, anti-cancer gene therapy.

Hong Kong's research excellence has recently received a significant recognition through UGC's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2020. Embracing international best practices, the RAE 2020 is a criterion-referenced assessment evaluating the research outputs of our eight publicly-funded universities. The overall results are extremely encouraging: 70 per cent of

the research submissions were judged as internationally excellent or above, with 25 per cent being world-leading and 45 per cent internationally excellent. I should add the assessment was undertaken by over 360 scholars, around 70 per cent of them are non-local academics coming from 20 countries/regions around the world.

The HKSAR Government is determined to take advantage of our talent pool and develop Hong Kong into an innovation and technology hub. In the past four years, we have committed some HK\$110 billion for a wide range of I&T programmes and initiatives, covering facility development, talent nurturing and retention, R&D funding, venture capital, etc. Amongst these initiatives, the two InnoHK research clusters in the Hong Kong Science Park present outsized promise. Health@InnoHK focuses on healthcare technology, including personalised medicine, molecular diagnostics, bioengineering, chemical biology, vaccine development, medical instrumentation and more. AIR@InnoHK targets artificial intelligence and robotics, zeroing in on such areas as big-data analytics, machine learning and medical, mobile and construction robotics. The first batch of some 20 R&D centres involving prominent international universities and research institutes, as well as our local universities, have begun operation. The rest will open later in the year. The R&D centres in the two research clusters are now recruiting postgraduates and specialists for a range of innovative R&D projects.

Our aspiration for an international I&T hub demands a critical mass of talent. To boost our I&T talent pool, we have just formally launched the Global STEM Professorship Scheme, announced in my 2020 Policy Address. The Scheme supports our universities in recruiting international scholars for I&T-related teaching and research. Feedback from some universities has been very positive. In addition, the STEM Internship Scheme has been regularised, under which allowance will be provided for undergraduates and postgraduates taking STEM programmes to enrol in short-term internships. Through this scheme, we want to encourage STEM students to experience I&T-related work during their studies, and encourage their interest in pursuing I&T careers after graduation.

The Innovation and Technology Fund has been providing funding support for our universities, R&D centres, companies, start-ups and entrepreneurs. Indeed, since its establishment in 1999, the Fund has committed more than HK\$23 billion to well over 20 000 projects. Recent projects include the electronic wristband used in monitoring home quarantine during the pandemic, as well as the anti-virus coating applied at schools, elderly homes and businesses.

Hong Kong's strengths in innovation and technology as well as our recent efforts have been recognised by our country. The nation's 14th Five-Year Plan expressly supports Hong Kong's emergence as an international I&T hub. It also promotes the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and, for the first time, includes the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Loop as a major co-operation platform in the Greater Bay Area.

The Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park, which is three

times the size of the current Science Park, is well under way. The Park will allow Hong Kong to play a critical role in the Greater Bay Area's rise as a world-class technology and innovation research hub. Before the completion of the Park, we are about to sign on a new partnership with Shenzhen on the basis of "one zone, two parks". Under this initiative, our own Hong Kong Science Park will lease and manage select areas of the Shenzhen I&T Zone, and attract talents and companies from the Mainland and overseas to this Zone.

Finally, it just leaves me to congratulate all the awardees this afternoon. And I'm sure that you will enjoy and benefit from the many initiatives and the boundless opportunities in the innovation and technology area that we have prepared for our young people. What we have to do now is to give our young people support and encouragement, and this is exactly what the Innovation and Technology Scholarship Award is all about for the past decade. For that, my gratitude goes to the Award's organiser, the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups. I am grateful, as well, to the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and the Innovation and Technology Commission, the Award's joint sponsors, for their invaluable contributions to realising an innovative and flourishing future for Hong Kong.

Once again, my warmest congratulations to the 50 inspiring young men and women we are honouring today. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours. Thank you very much.

