

Speech by CE at MTR 45th Anniversary Cocktail Reception (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the MTR 45th Anniversary Cocktail Reception today (October 28):

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), Dr Rex Auyeung (Chairman of MTR Corporation), Dr Jacob Kam (Chief Executive Officer of MTR Corporation), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It gives me great pleasure to join you today, in celebration of the 45th anniversary of the MTR Corporation.

Just look around our beautiful city, and you would know how this is a true milestone. Building a mass transit railway system in a city packed with people and skyscrapers, surrounding a deep harbour. And with towns scattered amid hilly countryside and mountainous terrain, alongside vast pieces of land dedicated as country parks and natural conservation areas. It is a remarkable feat.

And yet, here we are, 45 years later, proud to call the MTR one of the world's top transit systems. One that delivers reliable, efficient and safe journeys for the people of Hong Kong, and beyond.

According to last year's Urban Mobility Readiness Index, Hong Kong's public transport system tops the world, number one. That's thanks to our extensive transport infrastructure, as well as a wide range of high-quality and affordable transport modes – with the MTR playing a major part.

Earlier this year, two different international media outlets included Hong Kong among their rankings of the world's best "metro" and "public transport" systems, respectively. One of them reported that "transit planners flock to Hong Kong from across the globe to discover how its Mass Transit Railway delivers world-class service and reliability to the territory's 7.4 million citizens". And another added that "92 per cent of Hongkongers praised their city's transit system".

That's as reaffirming as it is encouraging, ladies and gentlemen – as I'm sure it is to everybody in the MTR Corporation, too.

Today, the MTR railway network handles the daily commutes and travelling of more than 5 million passenger trips in our city. It also connects us to our country, via the Hong Kong Section of the high-speed rail. That strengthens the people-to-people bonds, and business ties, between Hong Kong and a great many cities across the Mainland.

More than that, the MTR Corporation is now an international entity, with its service spanning across the Mainland, Australia, the United Kingdom and Sweden. Its network carries over 10 million passengers worldwide every weekday.

And while we're certainly not just getting going, not after 45 years, we've got a lot more in the works – plans built around "infrastructure-led" and "capacity-creating" principles, with railway forming the backbone of our public transport system.

Last year, the Government published the Hong Kong Major Transport Infrastructure Development Blueprint, which presents a planning framework for Hong Kong's transport infrastructure future, designed to meet transport and logistics demand up to 2046 and beyond.

That includes two railway projects to help drive the full potential of the Northern Metropolis, our new engine of economic development. The Hung Shui Kiu Station and the Northern Link Main Line will begin construction this year and next year for tentative completion in 2030 and 2034, respectively.

And, as I noted in my Policy Address two weeks ago, the MTR Corporation will begin detailed planning and design for the Northern Link Spur Line early next year. This vital, cross-boundary railway will connect San Tin Technopole and the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology (I&T) Park in the Loop, the area set to become an international I&T powerhouse – all the way to the new Huanggang Port in Shenzhen. That will certainly fast-track Hong Kong's integration with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

The Government has been working closely with the MTR Corporation to take forward the planning and design of these projects. And we will continue to co-ordinate their construction and project commissioning.

The Government is also committed to realising three smart and green mass transit systems – in East Kowloon, Kai Tak and the Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen New Development Area. We're working to compress the implementation programmes, enabling the public to enjoy their social and economic benefits as quickly as possible.

And we're pressing ahead, too, with the planning of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link (Hung Shui Kiu-Qianhai).

Add it up, and it's a hugely ambitious undertaking. On completion of our railway construction projects, our railway network is expected to increase from about 270 kilometres today, to nearly 390km.

The long-term profits and the long-term benefits are equally huge. They include the capacity to drive territory-wide developments, deepen cross-boundary integration, expand commuting options, improve traffic conditions, reduce journey time and realise long-term, far-reaching, socio-economic benefits for Hong Kong. For us all.

My congratulations, once again, to the MTR Corporation on your milestone 45th anniversary. My presence here is to reiterate once again how I

personally feel proud of our MTR. I am sure each one of you shares this pride. I look forward to your continued success in the next 45 years, and more.

Thank you.

