

Speech by CE at reception in celebration of 26th anniversary of establishment of HKSAR

Following is the translation of the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the reception in celebration of the 26th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre this morning (July 1):

Distinguished guests, fellow citizens,

Today, I join you all in high spirits to celebrate the 26th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China. Today also marks the first anniversary of the current-term Government.

On July 1 last year, President Xi Jinping visited Hong Kong and delivered an important speech, in which he made it clear that "one country, two systems" has been tested repeatedly in practice, so there is no reason for us to change such a good policy, and we must adhere to it in the long run.

President Xi also put forward "four musts" and "four proposals", which now serve as the basis of the governance blueprint for me and the HKSAR Government. With these central ideas in mind, I have built a pragmatic team that adopts a result-oriented approach to unite the community and build a better Hong Kong.

Over the past year, the HKSAR Government led Hong Kong out of the darkness of the epidemic. We strived to instil confidence and hope during the difficult times and have never backed down along our path of combatting the epidemic. Finally, Hong Kong has fully resumed normal travel with the Mainland and reconnected to the world. We are now driving down the fast lane of recovery at full speed.

I still recall the day of our resumption of normal travel with the Mainland, when family and friends hugged each other in joyful tears. The heart-warming scenes have not only inspired us to treasure more the love between people, but also enabled us to feel the warmth of our home, Hong Kong.

Over the past year, Hong Kong emerged from the shadow of economic contraction and returned to positive economic growth. A growth rate of 2.7 per cent was recorded in the first quarter of this year, reversing the declining trend in the past four consecutive quarters. The median monthly household income for the first quarter also showed an increase of 2.1 per cent.

In the first five months of this year, Hong Kong received more than 10 million visitors. The tourism industry and consumption spur our economic recovery. Despite the sluggish trends in our import and export figures, as well as uncertainties in the external environment and geopolitical situations, Hong Kong is still blessed with enormous opportunities bestowed by such national strategies as the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development and the Belt and Road Initiative. We expect a positive economic growth of around 3.5 per cent to 5.5 per cent this year.

In addition, our policies on competing for talents and enterprises as proposed in my Policy Address are gradually delivering results. Responses to various talent admission schemes have been overwhelming. Nearly 50 000 applications have been approved in just five months. It is likely for us to outperform the annual target of attracting 35 000 talents this year.

The dedicated Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises has already met with over 150 enterprises, some of which have established their foothold in Hong Kong. In the first five months of this year, Invest Hong Kong has assisted over 180 Mainland and overseas enterprises in establishing or expanding their operations in Hong Kong, up over 30 per cent from the same time last year.

I always respond actively to aspirations from the people of Hong Kong. I endeavour to help those in need to get on the housing ladder early. The Government is enhancing the speed, quantity and efficiency of housing and land supply. Waiting time for public rental housing has been capped, and has been shortened from 6.1 years to 5.3 years. With the introduction of Light Public Housing, the waiting time can be further shortened to 4.5 years.

Development blueprints for our youth, innovation and technology, primary healthcare and other areas have been announced and are being actively implemented. The Policy Address has set out measures to meet people's needs in the short, medium and long term, covering various areas such as land, infrastructure, education, culture, sports, social inclusiveness, environmental protection and so on. We will spare no effort in taking forward and implementing our work as planned.

Today is the launch day of the "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles" scheme. The launch of the scheme means that Hong Kong people can drive to the Mainland for sight-seeing, visiting families and business in an even more relaxed and free manner, drawing people from both sides closer together.

I have full confidence in Hong Kong, yet we must stay alert. While society is largely stable, we know that we are intentionally targeted and oppressed by some countries which have misjudged the peaceful development of our motherland. Destructive forces using "soft resistance" means are still lurking in our city. We must stay vigilant and be proactive in safeguarding national security, and should fully and faithfully implement the principle of

"one country, two systems".

In the coming year, my team and I will continue to actively visit the Mainland and overseas, leading strong delegations representing different sectors to tell the world the good stories of Hong Kong and create more opportunities for our city.

Hong Kong will continue to proactively and actively integrate into the overall development of the country by participating in and promoting the development of the Greater Bay Area and the Belt and Road Initiative. We will move full steam ahead with the development of the Northern Metropolis and the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands, as well as proactively attracting strategic enterprises to Hong Kong. We will capitalise on the city's distinctive advantages of enjoying strong support of the motherland and being closely connected to the world. We will promote high-quality development and contribute to building China into a great modern country and to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Distinguished guests, fellow citizens, there is a Chinese saying that those who work will succeed, and those who walk will arrive at their destination. The Government will continue to stay committed to engaging in pragmatic efforts and delivering results. We will strive to gain trust through action, narrow gaps with results, and build mutual trust through achievements, in a bid to unite all sectors of the community. Together, let us build a better Hong Kong.

Thank you.