

Speech by CE at the reception to celebrate 70th anniversary of founding of the People's Republic of China and International Women's Day 2019 (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the reception to celebrate the 70th anniversary of founding of the People's Republic of China and International Women's Day 2019 today (March 8):

I am very pleased to join you all at this meaningful reception. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Over the past decades, we have witnessed our country's remarkable achievements in economic and social development. People's livelihoods as well as women's status have been significantly improved. Today, China is the world's second largest economy with significant influence in the international community, of which Chinese people have every reason to be very proud.

Today we also celebrate the annual International Women's Day. Since being elected, I have been fully aware of my responsibility that goes with being the first female Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR. In this regard, I am pleased to say that we are making some good progress in putting in place the initiatives announced in my Policy Address last October. These include, among others, the proposal to enhance maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks so that mothers will have more time to spend with and take care of their newborn babies. The additional four weeks' statutory maternity leave pay would be borne by the Government in full. We plan to introduce the legislative amendments to the Legislative Council by the end of this year.

The statutory paternity leave has also been increased from 3 days to 5 days, which came into effect on January 18 this year. Moreover, legislative amendments to prohibit direct and indirect discrimination on the ground of breastfeeding have been introduced to the Legislative Council. We are also working in full force to implement the various measures to enhance child care services, including improvement of manning ratios, formulation of service planning ratio, strengthening of training and increase in subsidy level.

In view of the challenges such as ageing population and keen competition for talent around the world, it is imperative that women are empowered and enabled to fully utilise their talent and develop their potentials, unhindered by traditional stereotypes or other barriers. My Government will do all we can towards that target, and look forward to your continued support.

I wish you all a very enjoyable evening. Thank you very much.

