

Speech by CS at Hong Kong Laureate Forum 2023 Inspiring Breakfast Gathering (English only) (with photo/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at the Hong Kong Laureate Forum 2023 Inspiring Breakfast Gathering today (November 16):

Professor Timothy Tong (Chairman of the Council of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum), Dr Rita Fan (member of the Council of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum), esteemed Shaw laureates, young scientists, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to say thank you for Dr Fan's kind words on me. Thank you.

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to join you all at this meaningful gathering of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum. And thank you, Rita, once again, for your introduction.

It is well-known that Hong Kong's success has always relied on the hard work, resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of the local population.

But no less important, Hong Kong has been drawing talent from around the world. Their new skills, ideas and perspectives have helped transform Hong Kong from a fishing village into an international city, where we enjoy economic vibrancy and cultural richness.

After some three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hong Kong has resumed full normality, and full connectivity with Mainland China and the rest of the world, since early this year.

It's the top priority of the Hong Kong Government to inject new impetus into Hong Kong's economic growth and boost its competitiveness. One of our key tasks is to proactively attract top-notch talent from around the world to our city.

To this end, our Government rolled out a series of new measures last December. Alongside enhancements to the various existing talent admission schemes, we introduced a new one called the Top Talent Pass Scheme to target high-income professionals and graduates from the world's top 100 universities.

Overall, talent in the innovation and technology sectors are surely among our targets.

Also, we launched an online portal called Hong Kong Talent Engage. Talent can, at their fingertips, learn about Hong Kong's competitive advantages, apply for the talent admission schemes that suit them, and look for jobs that interest them.

The results of our proactive approach, I am pleased to say, have been very encouraging.

Over a period of just 10 months, our various talent admission schemes have attracted over 180 000 applications, with over 110 000 of them approved so far. Some 70 000 talents have obtained their entry visas and made their move to Hong Kong. We have already out-performed our annual target of drawing at least 35 000 talents to Hong Kong. This is the target set for me by the Chief Executive.

And all those actual figures I have mentioned represent the many incoming talents' vote of confidence in our city.

In particular, I wish to highlight our Top Talent Pass Scheme, which has proven to be a top pick among talent. Of the some 110 000 applications approved under our various schemes, around 40 per cent came from this new initiative.

And over 70 per cent of the successful applicants under this scheme are aged 40 or below. They have a global vision, good education background, and solid work experience in sectors such as financial services and innovation and technology. Surely, they could complement our local workforce in driving Hong Kong's economic development.

For one thing, what makes our new scheme so attractive is that there is no need to secure employment offers before applications. Applicants are most welcome to first come to Hong Kong, tasting the city's lifestyle and exploring the many opportunities ahead.

But faced with the intense global competition for high-skilled professionals, we are in no way complacent.

That's why the Chief Executive, in his second Policy Address delivered last month, announced a package of further measures to attract and retain talent.

That includes expanding the coverage of universities under the Top Talent Pass Scheme to enrich Hong Kong's talent pool.

The package also includes the opening of the physical Hong Kong Talent Engage office last month.

Offering one-stop support, this office not just attracts talent, but also facilitates the settlement of those interested to come to Hong Kong or having newly arrived here – together with their family members, of course. Our colleagues stand ready to offer useful advice on accommodation,

education, networking, job searching, and more.

For some of the young scientists here, you may also be interested to learn that our city offers various scholarships, as well as subsidised postgraduate research places, for non-local students.

Atop all these, the Chief Executive's latest Policy Address announced that, for a two-year pilot starting this month, full-time non-local postgraduate students are exempted from the restriction on taking up part-time jobs.

That means students can look for jobs during their studies, thereby enhancing their experience and understanding of working in Hong Kong and, accordingly, increasing their incentive to stay upon graduation.

What's more, under our Government's immigration arrangements – as enhanced last year – for non-local graduates, the limit of stay has been increased from one year to two years to facilitate the graduates' stay in Hong Kong for work as professionals.

All in all, flexibility is the key when it comes to attracting non-local talent, including the many young scientists here of course, to pursue developments in Hong Kong.

And of course, having the right policy to attract people to come is one thing. Maintaining a good living environment to retain them needs a lot more work.

As you will experience for the rest of the day and the remaining time of your stay here, Hong Kong has a lot more to offer.

Some 40 per cent of our city's land is designated as country parks and areas with habitat protection. Indeed, you could go from a busy shopping centre to a green hiking trail in just half an hour. We have beautiful beaches, coastlines and outlying islands too.

What also comes under the spotlight is the West Kowloon Cultural District, where I am sure you will be impressed, later today, with the East-meets-West arts and culture.

And there is always good food as mentioned by Dr Fan – coming with a great variety of choices – everywhere in Hong Kong, like the seafood dinner you will experience this evening.

Meanwhile, enjoy what is on offer at this breakfast gathering. I am sure the exchanges ahead will be as inspiring as those throughout this week-long forum.

On that note, I wish this gathering, and the Hong Kong Laureate Forum, every success. Thank you so much.

