

Speech by CS at Installation Ceremony of Rotary International District 3450 (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the Installation Ceremony of Rotary International District 3450 today (July 14):

Dr Ho (District Governor 2018-19 of Rotary International District 3450, Dr Ho Yu-cheung), Mr Fung (District Governor 2017-18 of Rotary International District 3450, Mr Fung Hing-wang), Ms Hui (District Installation Organising Committee Chair of Rotary International District 3450, Ms Angela Hui), distinguished guests, Rotarians, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It gives me great pleasure to join you all at the Installation Ceremony of Rotary International District 3450. First of all, I would like to extend my warmest congratulation to Dr Ho on his election as the next District Governor. My heartfelt appreciation also goes to Mr Fung for his sterling contribution and outstanding leadership throughout his tenure.

Since the establishment of their first club in 1905, "Service above Self" has been the primary motto of all Rotarians. After more than 110 years of development, the Rotary has grown from a four-member club to an international service organisation of over 35 000 member clubs and 1.2 million Rotarians across 200 countries and regions worldwide.

Rotary International District 3450 is one of the leading districts in the Rotary family. It represents more than 90 Rotary clubs in Hong Kong, Macao, Mongolia and Guangdong. For decades, Rotary clubs in District 3450 have devoted their passion, energy and intelligence to improving the livelihood of millions of people in these regions through a wide spectrum of projects covering areas such as poverty alleviation, education and youth service, health and medical care, and social inclusion.

The spirit of Rotary resonates well with the HKSAR Government's vision of building a caring and inclusive society in Hong Kong. Poverty alleviation and support for the disadvantaged are among the top priorities on our policy agenda. The recurrent government expenditure on social welfare is expected to reach \$79.8 billion in 2018-19, or 55 per cent higher than five years ago. The amount constitutes 19.6 per cent of Government's total recurrent expenditure, second only to education.

According to the latest figures, our recurrent cash policies lifted 360 000 persons out of poverty in 2016 or a reduction of poverty rate by 5.2 percentage points, from 19.9 per cent to 14.7 per cent. In addition, non-recurrent cash benefits such as provision of rates waiver and additional social security payments further reduced the poverty rate to 13.7 per cent,

while means-tested in-kind benefits comprising mainly public rental housing lifted an additional 287 300 persons out of poverty and further reduced the poverty rate by 3.3 per cent to 10.4 per cent.

Nurturing our next generation is another steadfast commitment of the current-term Government. We are committed to creating more opportunities and providing more support for them to unleash their potential. In doing so, young people will see hope and opportunities for upward mobility.

To improve education quality, the current-term Government has pledged to boost recurrent education expenditure by \$5 billion, of which \$3.6 billion has been approved by the Legislative Council. An additional recurrent expenditure of \$2 billion has further been allocated for enhancing the professional development of teachers, strengthening support to kindergartens and promoting integrated education and life-wide learning. We also provide an average of more than 70 000 annual places for our youth to participate in exchange and internship programmes on the Mainland including the Bay Area and overseas to broaden their horizon and exposure to work culture in different places.

We have also launched two collaboration projects, namely the "Future Stars" Programme and "Life Buddies" Mentoring Scheme to encourage businesses and members of the public to become mentors to give inspiration and advice to the younger generation. We have also launched the Youth Hostel Scheme and Space Sharing Scheme for Youth to support young people in pursuing their career and even starting their own businesses.

In addition, three new high-level commissions, namely the Commission on Children, Youth Development Commission and Human Resources Planning Commission, have been set up under my chairmanship to oversee holistically key development stages of our next generation, from childhood and youth development to career planning, with a view to helping our young people to chart their way forward and realise fully their potential. I have also set up a steering committee to enhance collaboration within the Government on strengthening support to encourage and facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities into society. We have set aside \$500 million for this good cause.

However, to enhance the livelihood of our people, Government's efforts alone are not enough. We need the support of all sectors of the community like Rotary International District 3450 to help create a better place for all. Indeed, I am most delighted to learn that, with Dr Ho at the helm, Rotary is formulating a youth hostel scheme to provide affordable rental units for young people.

On this encouraging note, I would like to express my warmest appreciation to Rotary International District 3450 for your enduring support for creating a caring, compassionate, cohesive and harmonious Hong Kong. I wish the District 3450 under the leadership of Dr Ho another fruitful year ahead and all of you an enjoyable evening. Thank you.