

# Speech by FS at Rotary Club of Kowloon 75th Anniversary Gala Dinner (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Rotary Club of Kowloon Annual Ball "Empowering Youth, Building the Future" and the Rotary Club's celebration of its 75th anniversary today (May 12):

President Ganz (President of Rotary Club of Kowloon, Mr Martin Ganz), President-Elect Brauner (President-Elect of Rotary Club of Kowloon, Mr Jens-Peter Pe Brauner), past Presidents of the Rotary Club of Kowloon, District Governor Lee (District Governor of Rotary District 3450, Mr Norman Lee), Incoming District Governor Li (Incoming District Governor of Rotary District 3450, Mr Andy Li), fellow Rotarians, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. I am delighted to be here for the Annual Ball of the Rotary Club of Kowloon. I am, after all, a proud ex-Rotarian, and this is my mother club. Tonight, we are here, as well, to mark the Club's 75th anniversary. Now that's a milestone worth celebrating!

I have fond memories of my time at the Club and the great fellowship it gave me. I had the honour of serving as a President of the Club and am well aware of its commitment to Hong Kong and the dedication of its members. Of each and every one of you.

The Rotary Club is a welcome force for good, empowering individuals and communities in Hong Kong and around the world. We are part of a global family of more than 34 000 Rotary Clubs. They make a difference in nearly every country in the world, united by their dedication to the Rotary motto: Service Above Self.

If tonight's occasion looks back on a memorable past, it also looks, with a clear focus, at the future. That's made abundantly evident in this evening's theme: "Empowering Youth, Building the Future". Yes, the next generation is shaping our city and its communities, and helping to remake the world.

I had the privilege recently of meeting a number of young people, and hearing some of their cheering stories. Let me share a few of them with you now.

At this year's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, I met an entrepreneur from Hong Kong, a young lady passionate about contributing to the global transition to carbon neutrality. She had founded a company in Science Park helping to restore coral reefs in our oceans, using 3D printing to build underwater racks. Her approach, I'm pleased to say, is working – and working well. Her company has already expanded into the Middle East.

In March, during a visit to the Vocational Training Council, I had the pleasure of learning from students majoring in fashion design, art tech and makeup. It was a hands-on tutorial led by talented young Hong Kong men and women. Alongside their creativity and fashion flair, they demonstrated extraordinary technical skills and attention to detail. I came away confident that our creative industries are in excellent hands.

Not long ago, I challenged myself to learn skateboarding, with the help of an elite young skateboarder named Chun. Several young "seniors" – somewhere between 9 and 12 years old – also had a hand in my "board" education.

Despite their young age, they were already skilful skateboarders. One had even won an award at an international boarding competition. They told me they did have fallen, and got injured, especially at the beginning. But they stayed with it; never gave up. And that had made all the difference.

At the "Happy Hong Kong" Gourmet Marketplace, I met six university students who got their first taste of business selling Hong Kong-style egg waffles. These young entrepreneurs were particularly eager. I'm told they tested their waffles more than 1 000 times before feeling confident enough to sell them. When you've tasted success – when you've got something that finally works – you don't count the broken eggs along the way.

Every one of these young people I was fortunate to meet had much in common. They were energetic and passionate, totally committed to being the best they could be, whatever it was they were doing, making, creating and becoming. Hong Kong is full of bright, ambitious and promising young people. They are our future, which is why we will continue to believe in, and invest in, our youth and their dreams. As President Xi has reminded us, "Hong Kong will prosper only when its young people thrive."

The Government's Youth Development Blueprint, released last December, reflects our youth approach. We're determined to inspire, support and embrace them, while enabling them to shape their own future.

Economically, we want to create an environment that encourages the development of our youth's potential. Hong Kong has enjoyed significant success in the financial services sector. It contributes about 21 per cent of our GDP (Gross Domestic Product), yet employs only about seven to eight per cent of our workforce. I recognise the need to diversify Hong Kong's industry structure. We need to provide more quality career opportunities for our young people. That's why we are focusing on innovation and technology (I&T), confident that it will boost opportunities in the years to come.

We're seeing promising progress in our start-ups. Last year, the number of I&T start-ups in Hong Kong reached 4 000. That's up more than 50 per cent over 2018.

In my Budget this year, as in previous years, I allocated resources to

support youth development. We have, for example, set aside funding to support vocational education, the creative industries, urban sports and more. We want to expand the choices available to our youth, to give them wide-ranging opportunities to flourish.

Our future is closely linked with the Greater Bay Area, which is why we launched funding schemes in support of youth internships, exchanges and entrepreneurship in the Greater Bay Area. We also work with non-profit organisations and Mainland authorities to help our youth overcome the challenges of adjusting to a new environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, the 75th anniversary of the Rotary Club of Kowloon is not just a celebration of past achievements but a call to action for the future. I am very much grateful to you, to all Rotarians, for your tireless efforts for Hong Kong, and our youth. Let us continue to work together with a clear purpose and passion: to nurture, inspire, and empower our young people.

Once again, my congratulations on your 75th anniversary. I'm confident that the Club's future – your future – will be filled with accomplishments, that you will continue to make meaningful contributions to our community, to building a prosperous, caring and inclusive Hong Kong. I wish all of you a happy, healthy and fulfilling life.

Thank you.

