

Speech by S for IT at Award Presentation Ceremony of Jockey Club Age-friendly City Partnership Scheme (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, at the Award Presentation Ceremony of Jockey Club Age-friendly City (AFC) Partnership Scheme today (June 5):

Mr Cheung (Executive Director of Charities and Community of the Hong Kong Jockey Club, Mr Cheung Leong), Dr Lam (Chairman of the Elderly Commission, Dr Lam Ching-choi), Mr Tsang (Vice-chairman of the Hong Kong Policy Research Institute, Mr Jasper Tsang), K C (Adjunct Professor of Finance of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Professor K C Chan), distinguished guests, award winners, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning everyone. Welcome to the inaugural award presentation ceremony of the Jockey Club Age-friendly City Partnership Scheme. It is indeed an honour and also a great pleasure to join you here today. First of all, I would like to thank the Hong Kong Jockey Club for organising this first-of-its-kind territory-wide scheme, bringing together companies and organisations from the public and private sectors to make Hong Kong an age-friendly and inclusive city.

All the award winners today are exemplary in adopting age-friendly practices, and offering products or services to address the growing challenges of an ageing population. I am excited to see the many innovative solutions and technology applications used to help improve the well-being of Hong Kong's senior residents. This perfectly aligns with the Government's policy objective to enhance the quality of living for our senior folks, through promoting digital inclusion and developing innovation and technology (I&T).

I&T is high on the agenda for the current term of government, and we have devoted a significant amount of resources to support Hong Kong's I&T development over the past two-plus years. Yet, I&T is not only just about driving economic growth. Another key policy objective in developing I&T is to drive social improvement, which is reflected in the first Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong disseminated in December 2017. Addressing the challenges arising from ageing population, we focus on using innovative technology solutions and applications to provide better care for the elderly as well as promote healthy ageing in the community. Let me share with you what we have been doing on this front.

Gerontechnology, which combines gerontology with technology, is a key strategic tool to meet the needs of an ageing population. It enables us to

turn social challenges into opportunities to better serve the elderly service users and reduce the burden on care providers. To promote adoption of gerontechnology, the Social Welfare Department launched the \$1 billion Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care in December 2018. Under this new initiative, the Government provides subsidies to elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure, rent and trial use innovative technology products and services.

In addition, the Government has been providing funding support to R&D centres, designated local public and academic research institutes, and private companies through various schemes under the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), to conduct research and development projects and promote technology solutions and applications in gerontechnology. So far, the ITF has supported over 80 projects relating to gerontechnology, involving total funding of over \$269 million. For instance, three R&D centres, the Logistics and Supply Chain MultiTech R&D Centre, the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel and the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute have collaborated with the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals to develop a vest with a radio-frequency identification tracking system, worn by elderly persons with brain degenerative problems, which would then assist the staff of elderly care centres to take care of them more efficiently.

In addition to gerontech products and solutions, bridging the digital divide is another key issue in addressing the needs of our ageing population. Over the years, the Government has implemented various digital inclusion initiatives to help the elderly acquire digital skills to expand their social horizons and integrate with the younger generations. These included mobile apps catering for the needs of elderly, and running outreach services to teach the elderly in using smart devices and Internet services. Since 2018, we have stepped up our efforts in promoting active ageing and linking the digitally transformed world to the elderly. We will set up a dedicated online platform with a variety of learning resources to enable the elderly to learn at their own pace, anytime and anywhere, thereby inspiring the elderly to embrace smart living.

Access to the Internet is a fundamental factor to smart living. In the 2019-20 Budget, it was announced that some \$200 million from the Lotteries Fund would be allocated for launching a four-year pilot scheme to provide free Wi-Fi service to all social service units operated by subvented organisations under the Social Welfare Department, including elderly care centres.

Today's theme, "Smart Ageing City and Beyond: Driving Innovation in the Silver Hair Market", echoes government efforts in I&T and digital inclusion. With the advancement in healthcare and longer average life expectancy, the standard of living of a growing number of elderly population has become more important than ever. The Government will continue the efforts to spearhead I&T development to enable our "silver hair" residents to age gracefully and to live a healthy, joyous and fruitful life. We encourage cross-sector, cross-discipline and cross-generation collaborations to build an all-inclusive smart city.

The Jockey Club Age-friendly City Partnership Scheme is a prime example of successful collaboration to encourage companies and organisations in different sectors to adopt age-friendly initiatives and practices. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Hong Kong Jockey Club once again for putting in a substantial amount of resources to address the needs of Hong Kong's ageing population and for being a staunch supporter of the Government's initiatives in enhancing the well-being of the elderly.

Last but not least, I would like to congratulate all the award winners. You have all done well and done good. I also wish the Jockey Club AFC Partnership Scheme a continuing resounding success in the future.

Thank you very much.