



Ambition and Scope for Hong Kong's future

A vision for new Government structure and the creation of a massive border town has been unveiled.

Development of Hong Kong's northern metropolis, a structural reorganisation of government and the all-important relationship between the Executive and the Legislature were major topics outlined at the first meeting of the seventh-term Legislative Council (LegCo).

The newly-elected council heard from Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, who said that her team looked forward to "working fully with the lawmakers" in order to "lay a solid foundation for the long-term healthy development of democracy in Hong Kong".

In the address, Mrs Lam outlined more than 40 government proposals which will be presented to the LegCo in what will be a heavy legislative workload this year. Among the ideas is legislation to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law

to prohibit acts of treason, secession, sedition or subversion. Another proposal is the cancellation of the Mandatory Provident Fund's 'offsetting arrangement', which should be implemented before 2025 to protect the rights of laborers.

Housing

Members heard that the Northern Metropolis plan, unveiled in the 2021 Policy Address, has won extensive support in Hong Kong as it gives hope to solving the acute housing shortage. "I have urged the relevant policy bureaux to lose no time in following up on many key aspects of the development strategy", Mrs Lam told her audience. With an area of 300 square kilometres, the proposed metropolis covers the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Boundary Control Points Economic Belt, as well as the deeper hinterlands to provide over 900 000 homes, accommodating some 2.5million residents.

Continued on page 2



Above: Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, addresses the new LegCo.

Year-long celebration to mark 25th anniversary

Hong Kong's new era of Stability, Prosperity and Opportunity will be marked in style.

The plans were announced by Hong Kong's Chief Secretary for Administration, John Lee, who explained how the 25th anniversary would be celebrated under the theme: A New Era – Stability • Prosperity • Opportunity. "This not only represents

Hong Kong's exemplary achievements over the past 25 years, but also underscores the eager anticipation for and confidence in a brighter future", he told the audience.



Continued on page 2

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...



Continuing the fight against Coronavirus
– Page 3



Optimism for Economy at Financial Forum
– Page 6



STEM students' global success
– Page 11

●●● Election

Huge poll runs smoothly amid pandemic

More than 1.3 million votes were cast in Hong Kong's largest public election since the improved electoral system was introduced, as the new Legislative Council (LegCo) poll was completed smoothly just before Christmas.

The counting of ballot papers took some 11 hours after polling ended to create the seventh, and largest, LegCo of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). All 90 seats were successfully filled, a mix of geographical constituencies and functional ones representing various trades and professions such as tourism, legal, and catering.

"The election was conducted in an open, fair and honest manner", said the Chairman of the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC), Justice Barnabas Fung Wah. The EAC is undertaking a detailed review of various electoral arrangements and a report will be submitted to the Chief Executive.

Overcoming the challenge of the coronavirus epidemic, the Government arranged sufficient polling and counting

staff as well as law enforcement to ensure that the election could be held in a smooth, open and efficient manner. The Electronic Poll Register system was used for the first time on this scale to issue ballot papers at polling stations in this election. Various enhancement measures were also implemented to provide convenience to voters, including arranging a special queue for elderly people, pregnant women and people with disabilities and increasing significantly the number of ballot paper issuing desks.

Working together

Speaking after the count, Chief Executive Mrs Carrie Lam said that this was "an important election" and that the Government was "confident that the seventh-term LegCo can effectively enhance the governance efficiency of the HKSAR and open a new chapter on good administration and governance."

A total of 153 candidates, with different backgrounds and political



views, stood for the 90 seats with none uncontested, for the first time. Candidates canvassed for voters' support via manifestos and various election forums and electioneering activities.

Mrs Lam said she looked forward to co-operating with the LegCo to promote together Hong Kong's economic development and its integration into the overall development of the nation as well as improvements to people's livelihoods, to build a better Hong Kong and contribute to the country.

Above: Chairman of the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC), Justice Barnabas Fung Wah (second right), and Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Erick Tsang (second left), at the central counting station. Also present were EAC members Arthur Luk, SC (first right) and Professor Daniel Shek (first left).

Continued from page 1

Year-long celebration to mark 25th anniversary

Mr Lee outlined the Government's plans for 100-plus special events to allow the widest possible participation in the commemorations. Efforts will be made, he said, to reach out to the elderly and underprivileged families while global promotion and outreach will be enhanced. London ETO will also organise celebration activities for the audience in the UK, Baltic and Nordic countries and Russia.

Several large-scale exhibitions will be staged alongside a series of arts and cultural events. We are also promised international forums and conferences,

including the Symposium on the Third Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Among funding already in place, Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has reserved HK\$630 million to sponsor a number of celebration programmes covering arts and culture, sports, caring for the community and 'green living'.

As part of the festivities, there's a specially-created logo, a theme song composed by Alan Cheung and a dedicated website (see below).



Above: Chief Secretary for Administration, John Lee, unveiled a series of signature events to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Continued from page 1

Ambition and Scope for Hong Kong's future

Re-structure

The LegCo were updated on three months of planning and discussions to reorganise the structure of the HKSAR government, with the number of policy bureaux expected to increase from 13 to 15. The changes include the establishment of a Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, split of the Transport and Housing Bureau, and reorganization of the Food and Health Bureau as a medical and health bureau, which will continue the work to respond to COVID-19 while working on a number of major policy initiatives.



●●● Covid-19

Continuing the fight against Coronavirus



Travel permission for Hong Kong residents has been simplified with the launch of a Health Code System as part of a joint prevention and control mechanism against Covid-19 and its variants.

Residents create an online account and familiarise themselves with its functions in advance, with a view to facilitating a smoother operation when quarantine-free travel resumes.

This should eliminate travel by the high-risk while protecting the anti-epidemic work in the Mainland.

Supporting the initiative is the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app for residents to make online health declarations. The app also covers regulated premises such as catering outlets, gyms, nightclubs and hotels.

The Food and Health Bureau says that the steps have been taken in light of COVID-19 mutant strains spreading extremely fast globally as it strives to attain the goal of zero infection.

Above Left: Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Alfred Sit (centre), together with the Government Chief Information Officer, Victor Lam (left), and Deputy Government Chief Information Officer, Tony Wong (right), launching the Hong Kong Health Code and "LeaveHomeSafe" app.



Above: Residents can upload their visit records to the Hong Kong Health Code system through the "LeaveHomeSafe" app.

Third-shot Covid jabs underway



Vaccination availability in Hong Kong has been increased as an extra precaution against new Covid-19 variants including Omicron.

Initially, the Government put in place arrangements for those in certain groups to receive a third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, on a priority basis. Starting from 1st January, the vaccination programme has been expanded to cover residents who have received two

doses of the BioNTech vaccine or the Sinovac vaccine within six months. In addition, a second dose of BioNTech is now available for those aged 12 to 17 due to the threat posed by mutant virus strains. The Government is also working to encouraging the unvaccinated to 'get jabbed' as early as possible.

Above: Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam (centre), Secretary for the Civil Service, Patrick Nip (left), and Secretary for Food & Health Prof Sophia Chan (right) announce expansion of vaccination programme.

Travel restrictions reflect new virus variants

Covid-19 variants have necessitated tighter controls by the Hong Kong government to protect both its residents and the economy. This has seen a tightening of social distancing measures, banning evening dining in restaurants, and closing venues such as bars and gyms.

Entry rules to Hong Kong have been updated to reflect the risks and there remains a total flight ban from several places including Australia, Canada, France, India, the UK and the USA. From 5th February, permitted inbound travellers face a 14-day compulsory quarantine followed by seven days of self-monitoring. The global situation will be regularly reviewed and the rules updated.

Using tech in the battle against Covid-19

Hong Kong has emerged stronger and more robust from the fight against Covid-19 thanks to technology solutions devised on its doorstep.



Microbiologists at the University of Hong Kong have successfully isolated the Omicron variant from clinical specimens, just five days after it was reported from South Africa in late November. Isolating the variant is the first step in an urgent endeavour to develop and produce vaccines against Omicron, described as a 'variant of concern' by the World Health Organisation.

Meanwhile a team, led by Professor Mingxin Huang at the same university, has developed an anti-pathogen stainless steel that can kill nearly all COVID-19 and other microbes by adding copper to the mix.

The chemically-altered alloy could help to prevent the spread of viruses by providing a safer alternative metal for frequently-touched surfaces such as lift buttons, doorknobs and handrails.

Above: Sample of the anti-COVID-19 high-copper stainless steel.

●●● Business

“Seize GBA opportunities” businesses encouraged

A special, day-long event on opportunities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) was held concurrently in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. Guiding foreign business representatives on a virtual tour of the region, it was themed ‘A New Journey with Greater Opportunities’.

Hundreds of political heavyweights, business leaders, and global policymakers took part in a high-end seminar showcasing the business outlook in the 11-city Bay Area cluster.

In a keynote speech, Chief Executive Mrs Carrie Lam said companies in Hong Kong, which have a head start, will stand to reap opportunities from the GBA. Mrs Lam said its expansion is more than a regional development project, it is a platform that would bring Hong Kong closer with Mainland cities, and enhance its international trade and cooperation.



Above: Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, speaks at A New Journey with Greater Opportunities – Virtual Tour to the Greater Bay Area for Foreign Businesses in Hong Kong.

●●● Business

Realising ‘new opportunities’ in Asia

Strengthening the long-standing relationship UK businesses have with Hong Kong was the key objective of a day-long webinar co-organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong’s Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, addressed the ‘Discovering and Realising New Opportunities in Asia’ online seminar and concluded, “the best of Hong Kong is yet to come; its future is grounded in a very solid foundation. I welcome you to come and discover and realise the many new opportunities.”

The event also examined Hong Kong’s unique role as a multi-faceted hub which UK businesses can leverage to capture new opportunities in the dynamic Asian market, in particular the Greater Bay Area, spotlighting on topical issues in finance, business expansion in Asia and healthcare.



Above: Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam (left) fielding questions from participants during the question-and-answer session.

●●● Law

Legal luminaries gather

International legal experts gathered at Hong Kong’s annual Legal Week to share insights and enrich legal and dispute resolution practitioners from around the world.

Inaugurated in 2019, the gathering is a flagship event of the Department of Justice, reinforcing the city as the leading international legal, deal-making and dispute resolution centre in the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

Attracting over 80 judges (both in person and online), the event began with the 4th UNCITRAL Asia Pacific Judicial Summit, jointly organised by the Department of Justice and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.



Right: Speaking at the opening, Justice Secretary Teresa Cheng, SC, (pictured above) pointed out that the scope of the UNCITRAL Asia Pacific Judicial Summit had been expanded in 2021 to cover more topics beyond arbitration such as insolvency and public-private partnership.

●●● Industry

Hub for Start-ups and Scale-ups

An array of business opportunities for the fintech industry in Hong Kong and across the GBA were explored during a global conference which saw key policy announcements to set the global fintech agenda.

A hybrid FinTech Week attracted over 20 000 attendees and more than four million online views from 87 economies, featuring over 300 speakers, 400 exhibitors and 39 international delegations and representatives.

The five-day event championed ‘Scaling FinTech Future Together’, a celebration of Hong Kong as an attractive hub for start-ups and scale-ups in the region, and a showcase of exciting fintech collaboration. It was led by the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and Invest Hong Kong, co-organised by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Securities and Futures Commission, and the Insurance Authority.



Above Right: Financial Secretary, Paul Chan, at FinTech Week’s opening ceremony. Right: Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Christopher Hui (first left), moderated a panel session: ‘Fintech Innovations for Cross-Border Banking and Insurance Services in the Greater Bay Area’.

●●● Law

Resolution hub boost



Hong Kong’s role as an international legal and dispute resolution hub has been further advanced with the establishment of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre which was formally announced at the 59th Annual Session of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO).

Regional arbitration centres, under the auspices of the AALCO, are international institutions which promote global commercial arbitration in the Asian-African regions.

The immediate past Secretary-General of AALCO, Professor Kennedy Gastorn, said: “The decision by China and AALCO to establish the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre is of great significance. It will help expand the influence of AALCO, enhance regional co-operation, build Hong Kong into a centre for international legal and dispute resolution in the Asia-Pacific region, and promote the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region’s development.”

Above: Major milestone: Premier Li Keqiang announces regional arbitration centre in Hong Kong with the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organisation.

●●● Technology

Leading Smart Centre Status Conferred

Hong Kong has been rated in the world’s top-five Smart Centres according to the latest published Index which examines the ability of global commercial centres to harness technology and science.

The measure, updated half-yearly, is produced by London-based think-tank Z/ Yen Group. Placing Hong Kong fifth this time underscores the city’s ability to combine an innovative, cultural centre with a high-performing university sector across STEM subjects while supported by well-developed regulatory, commercial and financial services sectors.

The Smart Centres Index focuses on financial and commercial centres across the world in relation to their approach to, and delivery of, innovation and technology – including science, energy systems, machine learning, and fintech, along with other applications.

●●● Culture

Arts District's Centrepiece Opens



Left: From left: Chief Executive Officer of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA), Betty Fung; Vice Chairman of the Board of the WKCDA, Ronald Arculli; Chief Secretary for Administration, John Lee; Secretary General of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Wang Songmiao; Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam; Chairman of the Board of the WKCDA, Henry Tang; Chairman of the M+ Board, Victor Lo; the then Secretary for Home Affairs, Caspar Tsui; and Director of M+, Suhanya Raffel, at the ribbon-cutting.

The world's largest museum dedicated exclusively to Asia's modern and contemporary visual arts has opened in the West Kowloon Cultural District of Hong Kong.

M+ (or Museum Plus) is housed in a purpose-built iconic building of grand proportions, designed by famed Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron. It comprises a large podium surmounted by a box-shaped slender tower and includes 183 000 square feet of exhibition area, divided into thirty-three galleries, three cinemas, a media library, a learning hub, and a roof garden overlooking Victoria Harbour; while the tower contains offices, a research centre, and three restaurants. A mass of 5 664 LED tubes light to

transform one area into one of the world's largest multimedia screens.

Among inaugural exhibitions is Asian Field by Antony Gormley, featuring tens of thousands of clay figurines created by the British sculptor together with 300 villagers from Guangdong.

The new building is part of a wider, cultural area as Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, explained at the opening ceremony. "The District started in 2019 with the performing arts venue Freespace and the Xiqu Centre for Chinese opera. With the grand opening of M+, Hong Kong will be on a par with cities such as London and New York, with a sizeable and significant contemporary arts museum."



Above: Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam (right) touring the Hong Kong: Here and Beyond exhibition with Director of M+, Suhanya Raffel.

●●● BODW

Top designs and innovations revealed

Asia's premier event on design, innovation and brands attracted an exciting line-up of key panel sessions, drawing on the theme 'Global Design Reset', with some hybrid sessions taking place due to Covid restrictions.

Organised by Hong Kong Design Centre, Business of Design Week showcased the need for fresh thinking, decisive leadership and collaborative creativity. Over 80 renowned brand leaders, design masters and entrepreneurs from various sectors around the globe, came together to inform and inspire audiences as the world moves collectively into a post-pandemic future.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, said she was honoured that the government was the event's lead sponsor through the CreateSmart Initiative. "We are highly committed to developing the creative industries as our new economic drivers; with a new HK\$1 billion injection into the CreateSmart Initiative," she told the audience.



Above: Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, delivered a video speech at the opening ceremony of Business of Design Week 2021.

●●● Leadership

Global Talent-Ranking Boost

When it comes to talent ranking, Hong Kong has been confirmed as leader in Asia and eleventh worldwide, up three places from last year – that's according to the latest global figures from the IMD World Competitiveness Centre.

The rankings underlie the city's strengths in organisational leadership and quality of life that drive high levels of talent motivation.

The annual survey of 64 economies, by the International Institute for Management Development, assessed the extent to which the domestic talent pool is developed and retained, while tapping into the overseas pipeline to satisfy the demand for talent and bolster competitiveness.



●●● Finance

Optimism for Economy at Financial Forum



Above: Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, addressed the 15th Asian Financial Forum by video.

The global economic outlook, climate risks and Green investment trends were among topics explored during this year's two-day Asian Financial Forum.

A purely online event this time, the 15th Forum was jointly organised by the Government and the Trade Development Council under the theme of 'Navigating the Next Normal towards a Sustainable Future'.

The meeting heard an upbeat opening, by video, from Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, who acknowledged that it provided the "opportunity to exchange views on the global economy in an ever-changing world, no less as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic". Mrs Lam remarked on the current world of uncertainties, "marked by extreme weather, pandemic outbreaks, geopolitical tensions and diverging fiscal and monetary policies worldwide". Chief amongst these, climate change.

Among keynote speakers, Mark Carney, the UN's Special Envoy on Climate Action and Finance, shared insights on how to build a sustainable financial system as a way of mitigating the liability and transitional threats posed by climate change. Jean-Claude Trichet, former President of the European Central Bank, used the forum to speak on how efforts should be stepped-up to address key issues relating to monetary stability during times of uncertainty.

Hong Kong's Financial Secretary, Paul Chan, spoke of the tremendous opportunities for the city's financial market created by Mainland China's continued development, "encompassing the strengthening of our status as a global offshore renminbi business hub as well as an international asset management and risk management business centre".

This year, over 700 'matchmaking' meetings between investors and project owners took place during the event, while the virtual platform has seen more than 63 000 views from 80 countries and regions.

●●● Sport

Medals galore at National Games

Athletes returned to Hong Kong with an impressive medal haul of ten Golds, a Silver and six Bronzes from a grand, multi-sport gala in Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi Province in Mainland China.

Twenty-three members of the Hong Kong delegation at the Eleventh National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the Eighth National Special Olympic Games competed in athletics, swimming and table tennis.

Among the victors, it was Gold for Lee Ming-yip and Tong Chi-ming in the table tennis Men's Doubles TT7 race. In the pool, Wong Hon-yin and Cheong Sui-kei each participated in five swimming events and won five Gold and four Gold plus a Silver, respectively.

Extending his heartfelt congratulations to the medal winners, the then Secretary for Home Affairs, Caspar Tsui, expressed hope that Hong Kong athletes would continue to perform at their best. He said: "Hong Kong athletes excelled in the competitions and their achievements fully demonstrate that their hard training has paid off."



Above: Table Tennis players Tong Chi-ming (left) and Lee Ming-yip bag Gold in the Men's Doubles TT7 event. (Photo: Hong Kong Paralympic Committee & Sports Association for the Physically Disabled)

●●● Environment

Three-prongs to Climate Action Plan

Zero-carbon emissions is a core target of Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 which sets out the vision of a 'Liveable City and Sustainable Development'.

In response to the Paris Agreement, the government announced its target of reducing Hong Kong's carbon intensity by 65 per cent, to 70 per cent by 2030, using 2005 as the base. The Chief Executive announced that the Plan would pursue "more vigorous interim decarbonisation targets" to reduce Hong Kong's carbon

emissions by 50 per cent before 2035, compared to the 2005 level.

Launching the updated strategy, Environment Secretary, Wong Kam-sing, said: "The new plan outlines the four major decarbonisation strategies and measures, namely: net-zero electricity generation, energy saving and green buildings, green transport and waste reduction." He admitted that this will require a long-term commitment from everyone in "unwavering efforts".



Above: Secretary for the Environment, Wong Kam-sing, unveils Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050.

●●● Health

Tackling doctor shortage – overseas medics to be encouraged



Legislation has been passed to welcome more non-locally trained doctors to practise in Hong Kong with special registration. The move aims to address a long-standing shortage of medics in the city.

Provisions in the "Doctor Registration (Amendment) Bill 2021" aim to open up new channels via 'special registration' to attract trained doctors to return to practise in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's Hospital Authority (HA) has welcomed the new measures saying they are "crucial to the sustainability of public healthcare services", and has promised to collaborate with the government to promote the registration programme. Regarding the necessary training, the HA says it will "dovetail with, and support the corresponding specialist training needs."

"The HA has proceeded with the two 10-year hospital development programmes to provide more hardware facilities for public healthcare. As such, the demand for doctors in public hospitals will increase correspondingly. The recruitment into the public

healthcare sector of more qualified non-locally trained doctors under special registration can help tackle the rising service demands," said a spokesman.

The HA will continue to give priority to recruiting all suitable medical graduates from local universities and will continue to implement various human resources measures, including the recruitment of full-time and part-time healthcare staff; increase promotion and training opportunities for doctors; and continue the Special Retired and Re-hire Scheme, to increase and retain doctors' manpower to alleviate the workload of frontline staff.

"Facing challenges of an ageing population and increasing service demands, the HA will continue to promote public-private partnership programmes and primary care development in Hong Kong to ensure quality healthcare services for the people of Hong Kong," the spokesperson added.

Above: Secretary for Food and Health Prof. Sophia Chan (middle), the then Director of Health, Dr. Constance Chan (left), and Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Health) Shirley Kwan (right).

Training opportunities Towards an enhanced Civil Service

Marking a milestone in training and development for Hong Kong's officials, a new Civil Service College has been established. Its aim is to strengthen training on the relationship between the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the central authorities under the principle of 'one country, two systems', the Constitution, the Basic Law and the National Security Law.



Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, noted that enhancements in civil service training aims to reinforce civil servants' self-awareness of safeguarding national security, assist civil servants to better understand the country and its development, provide them with more training opportunities on positive values and attitude, and cultivate the civil service as a team which is innovative and effective in communication.

Above: Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam (centre) officiating at the ceremony.

●●● Sport

Racing to new World Record

Record-breaking Hong Kong swimmer Siobhan Haughey took Gold in the Women's 200m Short Course Freestyle Championships and set a new world-best time of 1-minute 50.31-seconds.



Her success follows two silver medals at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and she becomes the first Hong Kong athlete to break a swimming world record. Siobhan was congratulated by the then Secretary for Home Affairs, Caspar Tsui, who said: "She has performed brilliantly again in the international competition: We are proud of her. Her victory has been very encouraging to Hong Kong athletes."

Above: Siobhan Haughey (centre) wins a gold medal in the Women's 200m Short Course Freestyle Championships. (Photo: Hong Kong China Swimming Association)

●●● Sport

Visit from star-studded athletes

There was a warm welcome for 29 athletes and three coaches from Mainland China who visited Hong Kong as part of an Olympians Variety Show to meet both the public and fellow competitors.

A dozen disciplines were represented by the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Mainland Olympians delegation who used the three-day visit to give demonstrations of their prowess on the track and in the pool.

The trip was a useful one to exchange both skills and views, enabling participants to learn about the experiences of Olympic athletes. The three public events were also broadcast live on local television.

A spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region said that the Government is extremely grateful to the Chinese Olympic Committee for sending the delegation to visit Hong Kong and meet members of the public in Hong Kong.



Above: The then Secretary for Home Affairs, Caspar Tsui (first left) waves goodbye to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Mainland Olympians Delegation.

●●● Centenary

Historic clock chimes again

A famous landmark is chiming again after the sound of Tsim Sha Tsui clock's tower bell was restored, a century after it first struck on the Kowloon-Canton railway.

The then Secretary for Home Affairs, Caspar Tsui, officiated at the ceremony to celebrate the restoration which sees the 1915 clock tower brought back to life. It fell silent in 1950 but has been revitalised thanks to digital technology linked to the clock of the Hong Kong Observatory.

The ancient timepiece, adjacent to Victoria Harbour, is all that remains of the former railway terminal.

Made from red brick and granite, the 44-metre structure will sound the hours between 8am and midnight.



Left: The then Secretary for Home Affairs, Caspar Tsui (right) officiates at the ceremony to celebrate the centenary of the chiming of the Tsim Sha Tsui Clock Tower Bell.

●●● Economy

Annual Business Update

The Hong Kong Association held the 7th Annual Hong Kong Business Update seminar virtually on 14 January.

The Director-General of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, Gilford Law, joined representatives from the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, China-Britain Business Council etc. to provide an up-to-date picture of the current business scene in Hong Kong and prospects for the year ahead.

Mr Law shared the latest economic figures and developments in Hong Kong with the participants. He said: "that while same as other parts of the world, Hong Kong is facing the continuing challenges of COVID, with its existing advantages and fresh opportunities, the best is yet to come for Hong Kong".

More than 70 people from the UK business community participated in the webinar.



Above right: Gilford Law, HKETO Director-General, attending the virtual Annual Hong Kong Business Update seminar.

●●● Democracy

White Paper reveals democratic future

A comprehensive review of the origin and development of democracy in Hong Kong is outlined in a White Paper unveiled by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China.

Titled 'Hong Kong: Democratic Progress Under the Framework of One Country, Two Systems', the document points out that the Chinese Government has worked hard to establish democracy in the Special Administrative Region since its formation. The Central Government emphasises in the white paper that it would continue to develop and improve democracy in Hong Kong in line with the actual situation and in accordance with the Constitution, the Basic Law, and the relevant decisions of the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee.

The publication has been greatly welcomed by Mrs Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, who remarked

how the document gives a detailed and systematic historical account of Hong Kong's democratic development and its direction for the future. "It must conform to the constitutional order as enshrined in the Constitution and the Basic Law, and adhere to the principle of 'One Country, Two Systems', while taking account of the actual situation of Hong Kong", she said.

Hong Kong's Chief Secretary for Administration, John Lee, also welcomed and expressed support for the paper, saying that it is of "profound importance". He remarked that it "clearly tells the world that the country is committed to developing democracy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region."

The publication of the document follows the first general election of the Legislative Council under the improved electoral system and serves to address



Hong Kong's democratic development and the commitment that Hong Kong is governed by Hong Kong patriots.

Central Government emphasises in the document that it will continue to develop and improve democracy in Hong Kong, in accordance with the Constitution, the Basic Law, and the relevant decisions of the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee; and it will work with all social groups, sectors and stakeholders towards the ultimate goal of election by universal suffrage of the Chief Executive and all members of the Legislative Council.

●●● Education

STEM students' global success



Above: Hong Kong's victors at sixth International Olympiad of Metropolises.

Eight Hong Kong students put in a stellar performance at the sixth International Olympiad of Metropolises, a global competition covering informatics, mathematics, physics and chemistry.

The young team came away with four gold and two silver medals: the best haul ever by Hong Kong entrants.

Cheng Yat-long from Raimondi College and Lam Chung-wang from St Paul's College each won a physics Gold, while Yeung Man-tsung from Pui Ching Middle School and Xie Lingrui from La Salle College took home informatics Gold and Silver.

Chu Cheuk-hei from St Paul's and Timothy Yau from Ying Wa College bagged Gold and Silver in maths, and Chan Yat-long from Po Leung Kuk Centenary Li Shiu Chung Memorial College won Bronze in chemistry.

Hong Kong's Secretary for Education, Kevin Yeung, congratulated the team on its outstanding performance saying "it's testimony to the hard work and high ability of our students in STEM subjects."

●●● Economy

Optimistic outlook for Hong Kong economy



Above: George Leung, Chief Executive Officer, Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce. (Photo: HKGCC)

Several sources are predicting the Hong Kong economy to keep growing during 2022 although the speed of expansion is dependent on the effects of Omicron, the rate of inflation and geopolitical concerns.

Financial Secretary, Paul Chang, expects Hong Kong to end up with about 6.4 per cent growth for 2021, which he refers to as a year of 'recovery' since it follows two years of recession.

This improved economic performance is driven by strong exports, an improvement in local consumption sentiment under the government's Covid voucher programme, and an increased vaccination rate amid a fairly stable epidemic situation.

Mr Chan has highlighted the surge of omicron cases, inflation and U.S.-China relations as key risk factors to watch. If the external environment doesn't deteriorate significantly and the local epidemic situation can be maintained in a stable manner, Hong Kong's economy can continue in a growth trajectory in 2022, he said. Still, the breadth, depth and speed of recovery are full of uncertainties, the financial secretary said.

Meanwhile, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (HKGCC) also sees reasons for optimism for Hong Kong businesses in the year ahead. In its economic forecast for 2022, the Chamber forecast real GDP growth of 2.8%.

Chamber view

While many other economies around the world have continued to swing in and out of lockdown situations, restricting business operations at short notice, Hong Kong has avoided this upheaval for much of the past year. "With virtually no local Covid cases for many months and a peaceful local environment, our economy has been able to recover. Assuming this situation continues, we expect Hong Kong to see moderate growth.", says Chamber's Chief Executive Officer, George Leung.

"The stable environment has also helped the jobs situation, and we anticipate the city's unemployment rate will continue to drop to 3.7% by the end of the year", he continues. "This is good news for citizens and also for local businesses that depend on consumer spending and sentiment."

●●● Trade

Strengthening UAE relations

Establishing its first overseas Economic and Trade Office in the Middle East, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has opened an operation in Dubai. From there it looks forward to fostering closer trade and business ties with trading partners in the region.

Addressing the opening ceremony by video, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, noted how the new office would assist businesses and investors throughout the region to take advantage of Hong Kong's unique opportunities, including the city's long-standing strengths in financial services, trade and transport.



Above: From left: Deputy Director of the Dubai Office of the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rashid Abdulla Al Qaseer; Consul General of the PRC in Dubai, Li Xuhang; Minister of State for Foreign Trade of the UAE, Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the PRC to the United Arab Emirates, Ni Jian; Director-General of the Hong Kong ETO in Dubai, Damian Lee; the Assistant Director-General of the Dubai Department of Economic Development, Khalid Ibrahim Al Kassim, officiating at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

●●● Chinese New Year

Reveal your inner tiger

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Year of the Tiger began without traditional Chinese celebrations by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London (HKETO).

Instead of the planned function at Banqueting House, HKETO Director-General, Gifford Law, sent a video greeting in place of the planned reception. "I hope that the tiger in each one of us will reveal our intelligence and determination to ride out the Covid storm", he said.

Mr Law also made reference to 2022 being a very special year, marking the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. He promised a series of celebration events under the theme of 'A New Era – Stability, Prosperity, Opportunity'.

All concerned hope, very much, that things will return to normal by next January to allow an in-person celebration in London.



Above: HKETO Director-General, Gifford Law, expressed his New Year greeting by video.

••• Film

Hong Kong strong at London film festival



A strong line-up of ten Hong Kong films featured at London East Asia Film Festival thanks to support from the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London (HKETO), along with backing from Create Hong Kong and the Hong Kong International Film Festival Society (HKIFFS).

Seven films were part of HKIFFS' Hong Kong New Talents Programme, which aims to introduce and promote new generation of filmmakers to international audiences.

For the first time at the prestigious event, a Hong Kong movie, *Raging Fire*, was selected as the opening film, in tribute to its late director Benny Chan, alongside a programme highlighting the work of emerging directors.

Speaking at the festival's opening gala, HKETO Director-General, Gilford Law, highlighted that Hong Kong is an international hub for cultural and creative industries.

He acknowledged how, within just three years, new venues including Tai Kwun, Xiqu Centre, the refurbished and expanded Hong Kong Museum of Arts and M+ Museum have opened to provide the much-needed space for the sector to grow and flourish.

Above: HKETO Director-General, Gilford Law, (left), and Festival Director, Ms Hyejung Jeon (right), at the screening. (Photo: VenUe Photography)



Above: HKETO Director-General, Gilford Law, speaking at the opening gala screening of *Raging Fire*. (Photo: VenUe Photography)

••• Culture

Online Festival of Cultural Exchange

Cultural exchange between Hong Kong and the UK has been further supported by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London (HKETO) which sponsored an immersive theatrical performance by artists from Britain and Hong Kong.

HOME X offered an interactive theatrical experience combining gaming technology, virtual reality, live music and dance. Audiences entered a virtual world as an avatar that interacts with strangely familiar but altered surroundings.

HKETO Director-General, Gilford Law, said it was a pleasure to support this new digital and cultural collaboration: "HOME X is the perfect example of what SPARK Festival is about: creating connections across cultures."

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

15 February 2022

Chinese New Year webinar, Sweden.


23 February 2022

Pan-Nordic Chinese New Year reception (online).

FOR HONG KONG EVENT DETAILS

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