



Policy Address helps Hong Kong 'strive ahead'

In her second annual policy address, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam announced over 240 new initiatives covering areas such as housing, the economy and improving people's livelihoods, to help Hong Kong 'strive ahead'.

Delivering her policy address to the Legislative Council in October, Mrs Lam recognised the critical importance of more land for Hong Kong people, announcing that 70% of homes built on the Government's newly-developed land will be for public housing. The Government will also look into creating homes for up to 1.1 million people by reclaiming 1,700 hectares of land off East Lantau, she said.

More diverse economy

In an unstable international trade environment, Hong Kong must develop an increasingly diversified economy, said Mrs Lam, announcing measures including an additional HK\$2 billion for the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation to help it find suitable land for advanced manufacturing facilities. Research will also be boosted by a further HK\$20 billion for the Research Endowment Fund, set up in 2009 to strengthen research capabilities of Hong Kong universities.

To enhance local film production and expand markets, Mrs Lam announced a one-off injection of HK\$1 billion into the



Film Development Fund, while an injection of \$200 million into the Maritime and Aviation Training Fund will enhance the training and nurturing of industry talent of the maritime sector.

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Above right: Mrs Lam delivers her 2018 Policy Address to the Legislative Council in October.

Chief Secretary visits UK



Above: Mr Cheung (left), with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Jeremy Wright at the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Co-operation between Hong Kong and the UK.

Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, Chief Secretary for Administration, visited London in September 2018.

While in the capital, Mr Cheung met Matt Hancock, UK Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (right), briefing him on improvements to healthcare services in Hong Kong. He also met Jeremy Wright, UK Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote cultural exchanges between the two places. During a visit to the British Museum, Mr Cheung said Hong Kong would continue to forge closer partnerships with world-class cultural institutions and thanked the museum for providing invaluable ancient treasures for exhibition in Hong Kong.



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Policy Address helps Hong Kong 'strive ahead'

Maternity leave

Statutory maternity leave for government employees will be extended from 10 to 14 weeks with immediate effect, said Mrs Lam. Paternity leave in the private sector will be extended from three to five days as soon as possible, she added.

On the environment, Mrs Lam said her Government would take the lead in reducing use of single-use plastic tableware and also support individuals and NGOs who want to install renewable energy facilities. She will also introduce a policy to ban the sale and use of e-cigarettes.

Mrs Lam restated her Government's commitment to safeguarding Hong Kong's judicial independence. The rule of law is the most important core value of Hong Kong and independence of the Judiciary is the key, she said. "While the road ahead may not be all smooth and easy, I strongly believe that it will lead to a broad runway for Hong Kong to take off again."



Above: People line up at the Central Government Offices to collect copies of the 2018 Policy Address.

Full details of the 2018 policy address can be found at policyaddress.gov.hk/2018.

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Chief Secretary visits UK

Hong Kong a 'Star player'

Addressing the 35th Hong Kong Dinner organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council in London, Mr Cheung told the 400-strong audience that 'one country, two systems' and Hong Kong's independent judiciary were as robust and effective as ever. Hong Kong will remain a 'star player' in Asia by exploring new areas of economic growth and taking advantage of the Belt and Road initiative and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, said Mr Cheung at a luncheon hosted by the Hong Kong Association.

Speaking at Asia House's roundtable discussion, Mr Cheung said the Hong Kong Government was committed to developing innovation and technology through, for example, an additional HK\$50 billion of Government funding to support this sector.

Young people

While in London, Mr Cheung visited a social enterprise providing training and job placements for young people, stressing that the Hong Kong Government is striving to address young people's concerns about education, careers, and home ownership. He also visited the National Citizen Service to learn more about youth enhancement in the UK. Mr Cheung also attended a roundtable discussion on youth skills organised by the Hong Kong Vocational Training Council and the British Council and met Rajesh Agrawal, Deputy Mayor of London for Business, to discuss youth development and social inclusion.

Speaking at an event organised by the Hong Kong Hospital Authority, Mr Cheung briefed UK medical students on the Government's commitment to improving healthcare services, and encouraged them to consider working in Hong Kong after graduation.



Above: Mr Cheung addresses the Hong Kong Dinner organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council in London.



Above: Rajesh Agrawal (second right), Deputy Mayor of London for Business, meets Mr Cheung (second left), along with Priscilla To (first right), Director-General of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, and Shirley Lam (first left), Special Representative for Hong Kong Economic and Trade Affairs to the European Union.

Right: Mr Cheung (left) at a meeting with Mel Stride (right), Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General, to discuss fintech and other financial developments. Also pictured is Andrew Heyn, British Consul General to Hong Kong and Macao.



●●● Infrastructure

Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge opens

The 55km Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, 15 times longer than San Francisco's Golden Gate and the world's longest fixed sea crossing, opened in October 2018. The bridge and tunnel system includes a six lane expressway and a 7km tunnel section to allow giant container vessels to pass overhead.

The opening of the new link means that Hong Kong, Macao and Zhuhai are now within an hour's travel of each other and will boost the development of the prosperous Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, with its combined population of 67 million.

Designed to last 120 years and including four new artificial islands, the bridge crosses the Pearl River Estuary and spans the Lingding and Jiuzhou channels, with link roads and boundary crossing facilities in Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macao.

Customs arrangements have been formalised in a three-way agreement with the governments of Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao, to increase the efficiency of customs clearance.

The opening ceremony, officiated by President Xi Jinping, was attended by Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

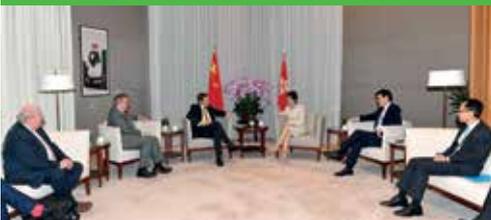


Above top: Begun in 2009, the new Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge includes four artificial islands.

Above: Giant new passenger and cargo facilities have been designed to reduce journey times.

●●● Politics

Foreign Affairs Committee meeting



Tom Tugendhat, Chairman of the UK Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, met Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam during his visit to Hong Kong in September 2018.

Mrs Lam stressed Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy under 'one country, two systems' and its judicial independence, with UK judges among those sitting on the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal. She also highlighted Hong Kong's key role in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area into an "international innovation and technology hub".

Above: Mrs Lam (fourth left) meets Tom Tugendhat (third left), Chairman of the UK Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons.

●●● Infrastructure

Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link

Trains are now running on the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL), which connects Hong Kong to the 25,000km high-speed rail network in Mainland China.

With a top speed of 200km-per-hour, the Hong Kong section slashes journey times between Hong Kong and Shenzhen to 14 minutes. Guangzhou South can be reached from Hong Kong in just 47 minutes, while cities such as Changsha, Guilin and Xiamen are now only around four hours away. Beijing can be reached in just 8 ½ hours instead of the 24 hours it takes on a standard intercity train.

Speaking at the opening of XRL in September 2018, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam said the new rail link would link up three rapidly-developing cities – Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong – in order to promote economic development and enhance social and cultural exchanges. The Hong Kong terminus is at the new West Kowloon Station (see page 7).



Above: Mrs Lam (first left) sits next to Ma Xingrui, Governor of Guangdong Province, as the new high speed train link takes them from Hong Kong to Guangzhou Station in Mainland China.



Above: Mrs Carrie Lam delivers a speech at West Kowloon Station to mark the opening of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong High Speed Rail.

● ● ● Business

Fourth easiest place to do business



Hong Kong is the fourth easiest place in the world to do business, moving up from fifth last year, according to the World Bank's Doing Business 2019 Report, published in October 2018.

The report compares the ease of doing business in 190 economies using ten indicators. Hong Kong ranked first for ease of paying taxes and dealing with construction permits, for example, and fifth for starting a business. The score of Hong Kong improved from 83.44 last year to 84.22 this year.

● ● ● Fintech

UK-Hong Kong fintech agreement – one year on

Representatives from government, finance and investment sectors attended a special seminar in London to mark the first anniversary of the UK-Hong Kong Fintech Bridge, an agreement which promotes fintech co-operation between the two places at government, regulator and industry level.

At the seminar, there was a panel session discussing the challenges that fintech entrepreneurs face when expanding in Hong Kong and the UK, and how the agreement can help. "The UK-Hong Kong Fintech Bridge is already developing trade between our two expanding fintech markets," said John Glen MP, UK Economic Secretary to the Treasury, speaking at the event in October 2018.

The event was organised by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London (HKETO), in partnership with the UK Department for International Trade and Invest Hong Kong. The UK HK Fintech Awards 2019, an annual competition, opens for entries in January.

Right:
Priscilla To,
Director-General,
HKETO, addresses
the fintech
anniversary event.



Above: A panel discussion at an event to celebrate the first anniversary of the Hong Kong-UK FinTech Bridge agreement.

● ● ● Business

World's freest economy

Hong Kong has the world's freest economy, according to the Economic Freedom of the World 2018 Annual Report, issued by the Fraser Institute, a Canadian think tank.

Hong Kong has topped the rankings every year since they were first published in 1980. This year's report surveyed 162 economies. Of the five categories assessed, Hong Kong ranked first for 'freedom to trade internationally' and 'regulation', and fourth for 'size of government'. It also ranked within the Top 20 for 'legal system and property rights' and 'sound money'.

● ● ● Business

Springboard for start-ups

Hong Kong is the perfect springboard for start-ups looking to do business in Mainland China and Asia, said Priscilla To, Director-General, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London (HKETO), speaking at an innovation and technology seminar in London in December.

The seminar focused on new initiatives to support the growth of Hong Kong's innovation and technology sectors and start-ups, including a HK\$10 billion fund to support non-profit-making research centres or laboratories working on AI and robotics technologies. "Hong Kong's technology start-up scene is blossoming," said Ms To, noting that the number of start-ups in Hong Kong increased by 16 per cent to around 2,300 in 2017. Also speaking at the event, Dr Claudia Xu (pictured), Chief Commercial Officer of Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTP) said: "Large numbers of facilitation measures and grants are available for start-ups at the HKSTP."

The event was co-organised by HKSTP and HKETO. It was supported by InvestHK, Hong Kong Trade Development Council, the Department of International Trade and TechUK.



Business

Nordic Innovation House opens

The latest Nordic Innovation House has opened in Hong Kong. The move builds on the success of similar Nordic Innovation Houses in Silicon Valley and New York and is a place where entrepreneurs from Nordic countries can meet, work and support each other as they move into Hong Kong and the wider region. “Our doors are wide open and welcoming to entrepreneurs and start-ups from Nordic countries,” said Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam, speaking at the opening.

Nordic Innovation House Hong Kong is a collaboration between Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland and is situated in PMQ, the former Police Married Quarters, which has been transformed into an arts, design and cultural centre.



Above: Mrs Lam tours the Nordic Innovation House Hong Kong.



Above: Mrs Lam (third left) at the ribbon cutting ceremony of Nordic Innovation House (NIH) Hong Kong. Pictured with: Christian Bergensträhle (first left), Community Director of the NIH Hong Kong; Anne Berner (third right), Finnish Minister of Transport, Communication and Nordic Cooperation; Anne Linde (second left), Swedish Minister for EU Affairs and Trade; and Dagfin Høybråten (second right), Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Business

Brighton business seminar

Priscilla To, Director-General, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, urges companies to use Hong Kong as their gateway to Asia, during a seminar in Brighton, UK, in November.

As an international financial and trading centre, a global offshore Renminbi business hub, an international asset management centre, and with a vibrant professional services sector, Hong Kong is in a unique position to help international companies take advantage of opportunities created by the Greater Bay Area project and the Belt and Road Initiative, she said.



Finance

Stockholm infrastructure and finance seminar



Priscilla To, Director-General, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London (fourth left), at a seminar in Stockholm on infrastructure and finance, organised in October 2018 by the Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce in Sweden. At the seminar Ms To stressed the opportunities Hong Kong offers for development in infrastructure, finance, innovation and technology development through its place in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Trade

WTO commends Hong Kong free trade

World Trade Organisation members commended Hong Kong, China (HKC) for its free and open trade regime at a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, in November.

Hong Kong’s liberal approach to trade and investment has enabled it to obtain high rankings in major world indicators of competitiveness, economic freedom and ease of doing business, said Ambassador Eloi Laourou of Benin, Chairperson of the WTO Trade Policy Review Body. The review examined HKC’s trade and investment regimes, as well as its measures affecting business operations, such as competition policy and the protection of intellectual property rights. “We are encouraged by WTO members’ commendation of our free and open trade policies,” said Salina Yan, Director-General of Trade and Industry, who led the HKC delegation.

Business

30 years of Norway-Hong Kong co-operation



Left: Priscilla To, Director-General, HKETO, speaking at an event to mark the 30th anniversary party of the Norway-Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce.

Hong Kong offers enormous business opportunities to Norwegian companies in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area development, given the area’s huge economic scale, its advanced manufacturing base, and the many leading innovation and technology enterprises it houses, said Priscilla To, Director-General, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, speaking at the 30th anniversary party of the Norway-Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce in Oslo. “I look forward to working even closer with the Chamber to help Norwegian businesses to explore the enormous opportunities in Hong Kong,” said Ms To.

Delivering through diversity



The Hong Kong Government is embracing diversity, said Priscilla To, Director-General, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, speaking at a conference organised by Asia House on McKinsey’s Delivering through Diversity report to explore the link between the diversity of a company’s workforce and its financial performance.

“The Government of Hong Kong is committed to providing an inclusive and diversified environment for all walks of life, regardless of their race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, cultural background and upbringing,” said Ms To, noting the Government’s transparent and open pay adjustment for civil servants, as well as promotion of family-friendly management practices. Statutory maternity leave for government employees has recently been extended from 10 to 14 weeks (see page 1).

Above: Ms To, speaking on diversity at Asia House in November.

••• Lord Mayor's Show

Hong Kong robots celebrate innovation and technology

Two five-metre-tall robots – one in retro-style and one imagining robots of the future – were the stars of the Hong Kong float at the 2018 City of London Lord Mayor's Show in November. The float celebrated Hong Kong's remarkable progress in innovation and technology in recent years.

"Hong Kong is making remarkable progress in developing into an I&T hub, particularly in the areas of smart city technology, artificial intelligence, robotics and biomedicine," said Priscilla To, Director-General, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London (HKETO), about the event.

The annual Lord Mayor's Show celebrates the swearing-in of the new Lord Mayor of London, a global ambassador for the United Kingdom's financial services sector. More than half a million people took to the streets to see the parade, which the BBC broadcast live to millions of people in Britain and globally. This was the 14th year in a row that HKETO has taken part in the show.



Above: Crowds warm to the Hong Kong robots as they pass along the Embankment by the River Thames.

Left & Far left: Five-metre-tall robots – one in retro-style and one imagining the future – celebrate Hong Kong's progress in innovation and technology.

Below left: Outside the Royal Courts of Justice.

Below: Dragon Dancers parade through the streets of London.



●●● Culture

Xiqu Centre opens

The Xiqu Centre will be the first performing arts venue to be completed in the new West Kowloon Cultural District.

The Xiqu Centre, which opens in January 2019 and is dedicated to the traditional Chinese art form of Cantonese opera, includes the Grand Theatre, the Tea House Theatre, eight professional studios and a seminar hall. The design of the centre is inspired by traditional Chinese lanterns, with a façade resembling parted stage curtains.



Above: The new Xiqu Centre is dedicated to the tradition of Cantonese opera.



Above: The Grand Theatre at the new Xiqu Centre.

●●● Architecture



West Kowloon Station, the Hong Kong terminus of the new Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (see page 3), is a new landmark in the city. Featuring a 4,000-panel glass wall and an observation deck offering panoramic views of Victoria Harbour, the station has won several awards for architecture.

It also displays original artworks by artists from Hong Kong, Mainland China and around the world.

●●● Culture

Tony Ching's stunt masterclass

Acclaimed Chinese action choreographer and film director Tony Ching gave a masterclass on stunt directing at BAFTA, London, in September 2018. Ching, who was the chief action choreographer for the Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, examined his pioneering style of cinematic martial arts for films such as *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) and *The Sorcerer and the White Snake* (2011).

Ching also introduced a rare screening of his wuxia classic *Swordsman 2* (1992) as part of the Chinese Visual Festival. The film was followed by a conversation in which Ching discussed his life and work. The events were held in partnership with Asian Film Awards Academy, financially supported by Create Hong Kong and Hong Kong Film Development Fund.



Above: Tony Ching (right) in conversation at the Chinese Visual Festival.

●●● Culture

Used to Mud?



Hong Kong dance artist Ivy Tsui and illustrator Ricky Luk gave a remarkable five-hour performance at London's Southbank Centre as part of the China Changing Festival on 6 October 2018. People visiting the centre could see the two perform *Used to Mud?*, a show which reflects on daily routines and customs and turns daily life in Hong Kong inside out. The *Used to Mud?* London tour was supported by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London.

●●● Film

London East Asia Film Festival



Film-goers had the chance to see four acclaimed Hong Kong movies as part of the 2018 London East Asia Film Festival (LEAFF).

The special Hong Kong programme at this year's LEAFF saw the European Premiere of Felix Chong's highly acclaimed action film *Project Gutenberg*, along with screenings of *Distinction* by Jevons Au, *Tomorrow is Another Day* by Chan Tai-lee, and the documentary *I've Got the Blues* by Angie Chen.



"Despite the fact that Hong Kong is only a small city with a population of about seven million, Hong Kong is one of the world's largest film production bases," said Priscilla To, Director-General, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, which sponsored the Hong Kong programme. "We are very pleased to once again bring some of the best films produced by Hong Kong directors to film lovers in London," she added.



Top right: Priscilla To speaks at the gala screening of Hong Kong film *Project Gutenberg*.
Middle: Felix Chong (right), director of *Project Gutenberg*, exchanges views with the audiences at the question-and-answer session after the screening of his film.
Bottom: Ms To (second left), pictured at the Hong Kong Night Reception of the LEAFF 2018 in London.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, 15 January 2019
 Business event and Chinese New Year reception in Bristol, UK

Wednesday, 23 January 2019
 Chinese New Year reception in Helsinki, Finland

Friday, 25 January 2019
 Screening of Hong Kong film *Men on the Dragon*, BFI Southbank in London, UK

Saturday 26 January – Saturday 2 February 2019
 Immersive Theatre: Citizens of Nowhere? Duddell's restaurant, London, UK

Tuesday, 29 January 2019
 Chinese New Year reception in Stockholm, Sweden

Sunday 10 February 2019
 Chinese New Year celebration, Trafalgar Square and Shaftsbury Avenue in London, UK

Tuesday, 12 February 2019
 Chinese New Year reception, Banqueting House in London, UK

Tuesday, 26 February 2019
 Chinese New Year reception in Moscow, Russia

Thursday, 28 February 2019
 Chinese New Year reception in Edinburgh, UK

FOR HONG KONG EVENT DETAILS:

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New Hong Kong identity cards

Hong Kong residents are having their identity cards replaced with new smart ones featuring enhanced security and higher-resolution photographs to support facial recognition. Holders of existing cards can get them replaced free of charge by attending one of nine Smart Identity Card Replacement Centres on designated dates. Hong Kong residents born in 1985 or 1986 are being asked to get their cards replaced between 21 January and 30 March 2019. Cards of holders born in 1968 or 1969 should be replaced between 1 April and 1 June 2019. Other dates to be announced. For enquiries please email enquiry@imm.gov.hk or visit www.smartid.gov.hk/en/index.html.

●●● Design

Business of Design Week 2019

UK designers are being invited to take part in Hong Kong Business of Design Week 2019 – an annual world-class celebration of design, innovation and brands which will have the UK as its official partner country when it takes place in December 2019.

Special roadshows in Cardiff, London, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh and Belfast are giving UK designers the chance to learn how being involved will open up business opportunities. The roadshows, which are supported by InvestHK and the UK Department for Industry and Transport, were launched at London Design Biennale 2018 at Somerset House.



Above: Priscilla To, Director-General, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, speaking at the Business of Design Week roadshow in London.



Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, 18 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3JA
 Tel +44 (0)20 7499 9821 Fax +44 (0)20 7323 2336
 Email general@hketolondon.gov.hk Website www.hketolondon.gov.hk
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