

CE's speech at National Day reception (with photos/video)

Following is the speech (English translation) by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the National Day Reception in Celebration of the 73rd Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China today (October 1):

Fellow citizens, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, I am very pleased to join the National Day reception organised by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government, for the first time in my capacity as the sixth-term Chief Executive, to celebrate with you the 73rd anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Every year when we celebrate the National Day, we see the continuous improvements of our country's development and people's livelihood. It is clearly evident that the Chinese people blazed a trail to a flourishing future with strong determination, wisdom and strength. Their tremendous efforts have made possible our country's remarkable achievements in the form of rapid economic growth, long-term stability and prosperity.

In recent years, our country's strength has reached a new level. Last year, China's gross domestic product surpassed RMB114 trillion. That accounted for more than 18 per cent of the world economy. Since 2020, our country has become the world's largest trading entity. The Renminbi (RMB) became the fourth global payment currency last year. In the fields of infrastructure and technology, the total extent of the national transportation network now exceeds 6 million kilometres. Our country has also built the world's largest 5G mobile network. At this moment, a space station combination under the country's manned space programme is orbiting 400 kilometres above the Earth. As Chinese, all these achievements make us proud!

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland. Over the last quarter century, we have attained remarkable achievements. Even though we have encountered various challenges, we have always managed to turn crises into opportunities, and emerged even stronger. Critical to our success is the implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle, which is the best institutional safeguard for the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong.

Indeed, we always have our motherland's strong backing in matters ranging from opening up opportunities to overcoming difficulties. Over the past two years, the Central Authorities promulgated and implemented the Hong Kong National Security Law, improved the SAR's

electoral system and implemented the "patriots administering Hong Kong" principle, turning Hong Kong from chaos to governance. In early 2022, Hong Kong experienced serious challenges posed by COVID-19. The Central Government gave us full support by swiftly sending expert delegations and medical support teams to Hong Kong, delivering urgent supplies via rail and water, constructing a community isolation facility in seven days, and much more, putting the epidemic situation under control. We will never forget the "Chinese speed", reflecting the caring of Chinese people for compatriots and their eagerness to protect Hong Kong.

This year, encouragement and joy was brought to us by President Xi Jinping's presence in Hong Kong at the meeting celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term SAR Government to deliver an important speech. The President's important speech on July 1 has become the SAR Government's blueprint for governance. My team and I are fully committed to live up to the mandate and achieve the proposals and directives.

The COVID-19 epidemic, which has been going on for nearly three years, still overshadows Hong Kong. The SAR Government will not adopt a "lie flat" approach in our anti-epidemic work, and will do our utmost to keep the epidemic under control. Guided by proper risk management, the Government strives to safeguard people's livelihood, provide the community with the strongest economic vibrancy, maintain Hong Kong's international competitiveness and enhance the city's impetus for growth.

Fellow citizens, ladies and gentlemen, as Hong Kong now undergoes the critical transition from stability to prosperity, I have full confidence in the future of Hong Kong, and so should you. We should be confident in our home because Hong Kong has the irreplaceably distinct advantages of enjoying the strong support of the motherland and being closely connected to the world. Hong Kong is a free, open and business-friendly international metropolis. It is the world's freest economy, an international financial, trading and shipping centre, Asia's largest asset management hub, the world's largest offshore RMB centre, the world's No. 1 in terms of air cargo throughput, and the only city in Asia with five universities in the world's top 100. Hong Kong has a world-class business environment and a low and simple tax regime. We are located at the heart of Asia. We enjoy a free flow of information, well-developed infrastructure, high level of education, and a productive and resilient workforce. Hong Kong's countless advantages give us confidence and competitiveness.

It is October now and the preparation of my Policy Address has entered the final stage. Over the last two months or so, my team and I visited various districts and met different sectors in person or online to gauge their views. We have also received invaluable views on various issues.

Although there will be challenges ahead, I strongly believe that "designs for justice prevail, and acts for people's benefit succeed". My team and I will remain true to our original

aspirations and bear in mind our mission to better serve our citizens and promote Hong Kong's progress.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us wish our country continued success and vibrancy, and the Pearl of the Orient continued gleam and contribution to the realisation of national rejuvenation. Thank you.



