

Remarks by CE at press conference on Hong Kong's First Five-Year Plan and Policy Address (with photos/video)

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, held a press conference on the First Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (2026-2030), and the Chief Executive's 2026 Policy Address today (September 16). The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki; the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan; the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC; and the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Miss Janice Tse Siu-wa also attended. Following are the remarks at the press conference:

Reporter: Given that you have presented a detailed five-year plan for Hong Kong's future development, can you share a ballpark figure for the projected economic returns from this plan? And my second question is: In the Policy Address, you proposed 11 measures to boost the birth rate. How likely is it that these measures will become permanent? And what do you think young couples will think of them?

Chief Executive: I will answer about what we do to promote fertility, and in regard to the economic projection, I will give it to the Financial Secretary to answer you. In regard to what we do to encourage people to bear a child, they will have to realistically look at their own situation. I basically want to clear as many hurdles as possible for people to bear a child. For those who have made up their mind not to bear any children, I think no matter what we try to help, the effect will not be significant. But for those who are very keen to bear a child, or for those who are thinking about it but having some apprehensions, then these, I think, are the target groups. For those who want to bear a child, but because, first of all, they have medical reasons that they can't, then we'll help them as much as possible using medical means. That is something I have introduced in the 11 measures. So we increase the services for them. And the other thing is, for those who want to bear a child, I think we can help those who have already had one child. Then it will be much easier to encourage them to have a second child. That is why I want to put the resources at the most appropriate place by emphasising the government policy of encouraging a second child. That is why I have raised the allowance from \$20,000 to \$30,000 for a second child, as well as raising the tax reduction. And also I have given them a \$20,000 stamp duty exemption if they buy a flat within three years, one year before and two years after bearing a child, and also for those who are buying our

subsidised public housing, then I will raise the mortgage rate to 95 per cent. These measures are basically aiming at people who have no hurdle to bearing a child, and we just want to help them. They want to bear a child, and we encourage them, help them.

For those in the middle, and they represent, I think, a big number, as they haven't made up their mind and have some apprehensions, we want to help them to make the decision. So I have to, first of all, assess what are the hurdles, and basically it is sometimes lacking the opportunity to take care of the child when the child is born, and so I'm adding more facilities to take care of them when, say, the parent needs to work and they need to put the child in some caring facilities. That is something that I'm doing now, and also I am, first of all, continuing that \$20,000 allowance, which in some way helped them. If you ask for further action to help them, then we will assess it every year. For those who want to have a better living condition after they have a child, so we have made them realise that we are helping them to buy a flat. So we are basically using a bonus, which is in terms of cash, and also making tax concessions so that they will know that when the child is being developed and the Government will try to help them with the tax concession, and will provide facilities for taking care of the children when they need to put their child in places where they can have confidence that the child will be taken care of. We do the best we can, and overall, we create a friendly environment. After all, the decision whether to bear a child is a very critical one for the family. But it is important, first of all, the Government tells them that we encourage them to bear a child. We will try to help with facilities and with some tax concession plus some cash bonus, and when they want to have better accommodation, we will help them to buy flats as much as we can. Basically, it's a package, and we have to be realistic to make our policy according to the local situation. With regard to the economic side, I will ask the Financial Secretary to handle your question.

Financial Secretary: Thank you for the question. Talent is the most valuable asset of any economy. Indeed, competition among different economies is determined by the quality of the talent they have. So from Hong Kong's standpoint, we have our strengths, but we are also facing two key issues. One is an ageing population; the other is economic transition. Economic transition calls for the need to develop new sectors, as pointed out by the Chief Executive – technology and innovation for example. For fast tracking this development, we might not be able to groom our own people quickly enough. So, we need to bring in talent from the Mainland and overseas. It is critical that we have people with the qualifications, experience and expertise required to support our economic development. It

is difficult to measure their very specific contribution to GDP (gross domestic product), because people will be deployed to different sectors. But indeed, in order to sustain Hong Kong's GDP growth in the coming decade, we need to do the things outlined in the Five-Year Plan and the Policy Address with adequate resources, and such resources certainly include talent. Thank you.

Reporter: Just two questions on the major indicators and also on fertility. For the major indicators of the Five-Year Plan, I'm just wondering if there are consequences of failing to meet such targets. Of the binding ones, there are so few. There are very few that are binding. Why is that the case? And why are they primarily environment-focused and not economic? Is that a sign that the Government is being overly cautious? So that's our question on indicators. For fertility, the previous baby bonus a few years back failed to achieve its target, with birth rates hitting another record low. How would you convince the public that it's wise to increase expenditure on this front if the birth rate continues to drop? Thank you.

Chief Executive: On indicators, I think the consideration is the same for all governments. When they think of what indicators said, they are binding ones because this means these are the things we must do and we must achieve them. And there are some anticipatory ones, which is something we want to tell the world that this is the target, so that everybody works to achieve the target. So it is not the Government alone. They are not the only factors. There are so many factors. So we want to play a leading role to tell them the target, which is anticipatory, and hope that everybody will join in to make their best efforts. In regard to what indicators we want to make it binding, then of course the most important ones are the things that we believe affect livelihood, which are very critical. Environmental factors are important because, definitely, everyone needs to breathe, right? So we have to ensure that these factors that will affect health so much are something that we must do well to achieve, and this is an area that we will devote all resources and action to do. Obviously, there are so many things we want to do, and we just have to focus on things and where we will go all-out to achieve the binding targets.

In regard to encouraging fertility, we do our best. We do our best because every city around the world is facing the same problem. And I think the takeaway from all these measures that we rolled out is that there are structural reasons for all these. So short-term measures can help, but there is a time limit. But we have to continue to do them and try to go to cover them as much as possible, so as to make those who want to bear a child know

that the Government supports them. We try our best. I think every government has to be realistic about their own situation, and then roll out measures that will be applicable to their own circumstances. The attitude, I think, is important for people to appreciate that, despite all the constraints and restraints, the Government is trying to do the best. So I am trying to help those who want to bear a child, whether it is because of medical reason. Or since they want to bear a child, I encourage them to have more than one. That's what I want to do. For those who always have apprehension, I would try to remove the apprehension as much as possible with the best effort. I always, when I debate internally, it's like building a very good athletic ground for people. So I build this ground so that people want to really keep fit and do exercise. They do the exercise without any hurdle. But whether he will do exercise or not, whether he will run or whether he will jump really is a choice of their own. So what I try to do is try to remove the hurdles as much as I can. But of course, the Government can only do its best, and that is what I have tried to do with the 11 measures that I rolled out.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the remarks.)

Ends/Wednesday, September 16, 2026