

D(SG) Bruno Luk's speech
Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office in Singapore's
Chinese New Year Gathering
February 22, 2019
Fullerton Bay Hotel

Your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening! Welcome you all to this Chinese New Year Gathering. Chinese New Year is always a good time for reunion and connection. I am so delighted to see such a big gathering of old friends and new acquaintances today.

Although traditionally celebration of Chinese New Year ends on the 15th day of the Lunar New Year, which was three days ago, today in fact is also a good day for celebration, as it is the eighteenth day, and number 18 in Cantonese sounds very similar to “Sat Fatt”, meaning “prosperous for sure”. Let me take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous Year of the Pig.

The Year of the Pig comes as Hong Kong records S\$10 billion surplus in end 2018. Our economy remains strong, with a forecast GDP growth of 3.2% in 2018-19 financial year. And just this past Monday (18 Feb) the Central Government of China promulgated the “Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area”, which brings immense opportunities for Hong Kong's development. The Greater Bay Area covers nine municipalities in the Guangdong province in southern China, plus the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions, with a total population of 68 million and size of economies of about USD1.5 trillion. The development plan is a national strategy personally devised, planned and driven by President Xi Jinping. It is a key development strategy in the country's reform and opening up in the new era. It is also a further step in taking forward the practice of “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong and Macao.

Under “one country, two systems”, Hong Kong enjoys unique dual advantages. On the one hand, Hong Kong is part of China; on the other hand, our economic, legal and social systems are different from those of the Mainland China. As a highly open and international city, Hong Kong can extend its international connections and experiences to the Mainland and help bring in foreign investments. Hong Kong can also join hands with Mainland enterprises to develop overseas markets and explore development opportunities. The Greater Bay Area development plan promotes coordinated economic development among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, leverages the complementary advantages of the three places, and develops an international first-class bay area for living,

working and travelling. Hong Kong will fully seize the opportunities, integrate the needs of the country with the strengths of Hong Kong and leverage the market-driven mechanism, enabling us to enjoy brighter development prospects amid its integration into the overall development of China.

On the other hand, soft power like cultural and creative industries have been a key growth driver in recent years. Our creative industries employ about 135 000 people engaged in fields such as music, performing arts, fashion, jewellery design, painting, publishing, interactive games, comics, advertising, architecture etc. We are putting a lot of efforts to establish Hong Kong's position as an international cultural metropolis, nurture and support the development of local arts groups and artists; and strengthen our cultural co-operation and exchanges with other areas of China as well as overseas countries.

We have allocated resources to improve existing cultural facilities and develop new ones. The most notable one is the West Kowloon Cultural District, situated on 40 hectares of prime land at the harbourfront. It is an important cultural infrastructure investment to create a world-class integrated arts and cultural district, blending local, traditional, international and modern elements. Two facilities have already been opened to the public, namely The M+ Pavilion (an exhibition space for contemporary arts) and the Xiqu Centre for Chinese Opera. Other major facilities, including the M+ Museum, the Art Park, the Hong Kong Palace Museum and the Lyric Theatre Complex will be completed in the coming years.

To promote cultural exchanges, we also signed memorandums of understanding on cultural co-operation with some Belt and Road countries. We also host a series of international arts and culture events the year round. Just to name a few which will be held in the coming months. We will have Hong Kong Arts Festival, which is in its 47th year, starting from yesterday to mid-March; Art Basel Hong Kong and Art Central in the last week of March; Hong Kong International Film Festival from mid March to early April; and many others coming up later in the year. Furthermore, Hong Kong first launched the Asian Cultural Co-operation Forum in 2003 to foster regional cultural co-operation, share good practices and promote culture and the arts. We will organise this biennial Forum for the eleventh time this year. We anticipate cultural ministers and senior officials of more Asian countries to come together to exchange ideas and share views on the furtherance of cultural co-operation in the region.

With over 1,000 arts groups in Hong Kong offering around 8,000 performing arts shows annually, together with a whole range of cultural events spanning from top class arts fest to street arts in the community, you will be surprised how much this vibrant city can offer in terms of arts and culture.

Here in Singapore, our office has supported a number of Hong Kong arts groups in the past years coming to perform here. Last year, we had Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra presenting a full-house performance at the Esplanade, and the musical “Shooting Star” by Spring-Time Experimental Theatre. In 2017, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of HKSAR, the Hong Kong Philharmonic performed at the Esplanade another full-house concert. We will continue to organise arts and culture events here to show you one of Hong Kong’s soft power. Later this year we plan to bring you something very special. Please stay tuned for more details.

Today I am very glad to introduce to you a group of young musicians from Hong Kong. Led by erhu player Chan Pik-sum and harmonica virtuoso Cy Leo Ho, the group yesterday staged successful open performances at Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts 2019 at the Esplanade. Tomorrow at 1pm they will present another performance in collaboration with Singapore’s Victoria Chinese Orchestra at the National Museum as a form of cultural exchange.

Pik-sum and Leo are two young artists active in creating and promoting new forms of music through cross-over performances and musical exchanges locally and internationally. Very soon, the duo with their ensemble will give us a Chinese and Western music cross-over performance, which will fully demonstrate the creative charm of our young music makers. I hope you’ll enjoy it.

Before I conclude, let me once again express my gratitude for your continuous support to the Hong Kong ETO over the years. I wish you all an enjoyable evening.

Ends