Gov't to invest in e-sports

By www.news.gov.hk
Thursday, March 1, 2018

The Government will invest in the rapidly growing e-sports industry.

At a press conference today to elaborate on initiatives in the 2018-19 Budget, Secretary for Innovation & Technology Nicholas Yang said $100 million will be spent to promote the development of e-sports.

Cyberport will develop its arcade into a local e-sports and digital entertainment node to support the industry.

Mr Yang expects the venue can soon start making changes to its arcade, as it has its own funding to start the groundwork quickly.

"As to the position of the arcade, the arcade has always had this public space. But it was more or less used for many purposes.

"So what we are doing right now is to decide that we are going to make e-sports promotion its main purpose. So it is more like a repositioning of what we want to do in the arcade, rather than probably what you expect, revamping or changing the arcade."

He added the Budget's investment in I&T does not focus only on infrastructure, but also on nurturing talent.

Mr Yang said one example is the $10 billion injection to support the establishment of two research clusters at the Science Park, one focusing on healthcare technologies and the other on artificial intelligence and robotics technologies.

"What we are trying to do is we are inviting some of the best in the other parts of the world and incentivise them to come to Hong Kong, and so-called jointly collaborate with our local universities, which are actually quite good in the various areas, to develop joint research, to develop projects that can commercialise.

"In doing so, we will be able to nurture a whole bunch of local talents."

Commissioner for Innovation & Technology Annie Choi said while developing research facilities for the two clusters, the Government is engaging with international scientific research firms to attract them to set up a presence in Hong Kong.

She added the Government hopes to launch the two clusters in the first half of 2019.

(13th NPC) Development plan for Bay Area to be unveiled

By www.thestandard.com.hk
Monday, March 5, 2018

Premier Li Keqiang said China will unveil and implement the development plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, among other moves to promote coordinated regional development of the country this year, Xinhua reported.

The country will promote in all areas mutually beneficial cooperation between the mainland, Hong Kong, and Macao, Li said today in a government work report delivered to the first session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing.

Over the past five years, exchanges and cooperation between the mainland and Hong Kong and Macao have been steadily enhanced as the construction of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge has been completed, Hong Kong and Macao have thrived and remained stable.

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is one of China's regions that are called for coordinated development. Others include the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei area and the Yangtze Economic Belt.

Mainland sets economic growth target at 6.5 pct

By news.rthk.hk
Monday, March 5, 2018

The mainland's economy is expected to grow by around 6.5 percent this year, with inflation rising by about 3 percent.

The forecasts were revealed as Premier Li Keqiang delivered his annual work report at the Great Hall of the People at the opening of the annual National People's Congress.

Last year, China’s economy grew by 6.9 percent, better than the forecasted 6.5 percent, it was also the first acceleration in growth after 2010.

The premier said the targets took into the consideration the need to secure a "decisive victory" in building a moderately prosperous society. He said GDP growth of around 6.5 percent will allow the mainland to achieve relatively full employment.

Li said while the global economy is expected to continue its recovery, the rise of protectionism as well as other geopolitical risks, bring both instability and uncertainty to the equation. He warned that China's economy will have to face "risks and challenges, some foreseeable and others not."

Faster payment system launched in September

By www.thestandard.com.hk
Wednesday, March 7, 2018

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority said a faster payment system will be launched in September this year across 20 banks and eight e-payment operators.

The de facto central bank's announcement indicates the development of the new payment scheme is nearing completion.

Both banks and stored value facilities operators can participate in the system, which supports the use of mobile phone numbers or email addresses for payments in Hong Kong dollar and renminbi anytime and anywhere.

Internal testing and cross-bank testing will be conducted in the coming months, said HKMA deputy chief executive Howard Lee Tat-chi.

The faster payment system is one of HKMA's seven initiatives to introduce a range of financial technologies in the new era of smart banking.

As of last month, HKMA's Fintech Supervisory Sandbox scheme had tested 29 new technology products. HKMA launched the scheme in September 2016 that allows banks and their partner technology firms to conduct pilot trials of their financial technology initiatives.

The Fintech Supervisory Sandbox scheme involved a limited number of participating customers without needing to achieve full compliance with HKMA's supervisory requirements.

Out of the 29 cases, 19 pilot trials have been completed, and the products have subsequently been rolled out.

The arrangement enabled banks and tech firms to gather data and users feedback which allowed lenders to make refinements to their new initiatives. The process enabled banks to expedite the launch of new technology products, and reduce the development cost. HKMA also published guidelines on the authorization of virtual banks for public consultation until March 15. It said a number of local and overseas firms have expressed interest to set up virtual banks in Hong Kong.

Some of the guidelines bar virtual banks from imposing "any minimum account balance requirement or low-balance fees on their customers."

The guidelines will also subject virtual banks to "the same set of supervisory principles and key requirements applicable to conventional banks."

The HKMA has also set up a task force for its Banking Made Easy initiative that will work with the banking industry to minimize regulatory frictions in customers' digital experience, including remote onboarding, online finance and online wealth management.

The de facto central bank is also looking at relaxing lenders' requirements for online loan applications so customers won't need to provide address and income proof.

Wealth Report ranks HK third in Asia

By www.thestandard.com.hk
Friday, March 9, 2018

Hong Kong ranked third in Asia for ultra-wealthy people in 2017, with 5,140 qualifying, behind Japan and mainland China, says a report by Knight Frank.

In The Wealth Report 2018, the global property consultancy says Asia overtook Europe as home to the second-largest population of ultra-wealthy people last year.

Japan was tops in Asia with 9,960 individuals, followed by 8,800 in the mainland.

The report also predicts that mainland China is expected to see the strongest growth in ultra-wealthy population between 2017 and 2022.

Although the SAR is not the city with the largest population of ultra-wealthy people, it has the second-highest density of ultra-wealthy in the world, with 70 individuals per 100,000 people.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong's luxury homes remain the second most expensive in the world for the sixth year in a row.

David Ji, head of research and consultancy in greater China at Knight Frank, forecast that luxury residential prices in Hong Kong will increase between 7 and 8 percent in 2018, the second strongest growth in prices this year.

Recently, a luxury house in Kowloon Tong was sold for HK$212 million, or about HK$68,200 per sellable square foot, according to the Land Registry.

The 3,241-sellable-sq-ft house at Eden Gate was built by Chinachem Group, with a 2,100-sq-ft garden and an 828-sq-ft rooftop deck.

A 1,232 ssf flat at Peninsula Heights in Kowloon Tong was sold for HK$22.8 million, or about HK$18,500 per ssf, according to Centaline Property.

The owner bought the flat at 63 Broadcast Drive for about HK$9 million in 2007.

HK remains 28th in 'most liveable city' survey

By news.rthk.hk
Tuesday, March 13, 2018

Human resources consultancy ECA International has ranked Hong Kong as 28th most liveable city in the world for Asian expatriates, but warned that the city may slip down the list as lower-ranked cities steadily improve.

Singapore has been ranked the most liveable city for Asian expats for the 16th year in a row.

Hong Kong's ranking, meanwhile, remained unchanged from last year.

ECA mainly attributed the SAR's low ranking to the city's long-term air quality and pollution issues.

Lee Quane, the firm's regional director for Asia, warned other cities in the region could soon catch up if Hong Kong doesn't take matters seriously.

"These could be locations such as Seoul; and there's not a significant gap between Taipei, which is in 65th position, and Hong Kong. So that also represents a risk to Hong Kong because as these locations become more liveable and rise in our rankings, they therefore present a threat to Hong Kong in terms of its relative attractiveness", Quane said.

HK, India sign tax pact

By www.news.gov.hk
Monday, March 19, 2018

Financial Secretary Paul Chan has signed a comprehensive agreement with India on the avoidance of double taxation, the 39th deal Hong Kong has signed with its trading partners.

He signed the pact today with Indian Ambassador to China Gautam Bambawale.

India is Hong Kong's seventh largest trading partner with bilateral trade reaching $266 billion last year.

Thirteen of Hong Kong's top 20 major trading partners are also tax agreement signatories, accounting for 73% of Hong Kong's world trade.

Mr Chan said: "Hong Kong has all along treasured its economic and trade connections with India, and I have every confidence that the signing of the (agreement) will bring trade relations between the two places to a new level."

The agreement sets out the allocation of taxing rights between the jurisdictions of Hong Kong and India, and will help investors better assess their potential tax liabilities from cross-border economic activities.

It also provides tax relief arrangements including halving the cap on India's withholding tax rate for Hong Kong residents on interest to 10%, and taxing Hong Kong airlines operating flights to India at Hong Kong's corporation tax rate.

Profits from international shipping transport earned by Hong Kong residents arising in India and subject to tax there will enjoy a 50% reduction in Indian tax.

The tax pact has also incorporated an article on exchange of information, which enables Hong Kong to fulfil its international obligations on enhancing tax transparency and combating tax evasion.

The pact will be implemented by way of an order to be made by the Chief Executive in Council under the Inland Revenue Ordinance, subject to negative vetting by the Legislative Council.

(13th NPC) Premier promises 'wider opening' of economy

By www.thestandard.com.hk

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Premier Li Keqiang on Tuesday promised China "will open even wider" to imports and investment and will fully open manufacturing industries to foreign competitors.

Beijing plans to eliminate import tariffs on drugs and slash duties on consumer goods, said Li, the country's No. 2 leader, at a nationally televised news conference Tuesday held during the annual meeting of the national legislature. He said the country will "fully open the manufacturing sector," with better protection for intellectual property.

Chinese leaders are under pressure to make their slowing, state-dominated economy more productive. They have promised to open more industries to private and foreign competition, but business groups complain they are moving too slowly.

"If there is one thing that will be different from the past, that will be that China will open even wider," said Li.

Beijing plans to "further bring down overall tariffs," with "zero tariffs for drugs, especially much-needed anti-cancer drugs," the premier said.

"We will also fully open the manufacturing sector," said Li. "There will be no mandatory requirement for technology transfers and intellectual property rights will be better protected."

Beijing faces complaints it violates its market-opening commitments by requiring automakers and other foreign companies to hand over technology to potential Chinese competitors. The government of U.S. President Donald Trump is investigating whether Beijing is acting improperly, a probe American officials have suggested might lead to trade penalties.