

**For discussion
On 23 April 2024**

**House Committee of the Legislative Council
Subcommittee on Matters relating to
the Development of the Northern Metropolis**

Post-secondary Education Development in the Northern Metropolis

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the directions and work of taking forward the post-secondary education development in the Northern Metropolis (NM).

Background

2. NM has an area of 30 000 hectares, around one-third of Hong Kong's total area. It covers Yuen Long and North Districts, encompassing existing new towns in Yuen Long, Tin Shui Wai, Fanling and Sheung Shui, etc., various New Development Areas (NDAs) at different planning and development stages, as well as their neighbouring areas. The Chief Executive (CE) mentioned in the 2022 Policy Address that NM, as one of the priorities of the current-term Government, will be the foothold for Hong Kong's future strategic development, and the new engine for Hong Kong to scale new heights. The 2023 Policy Address further pointed out that NM is to adopt an industry-driven and infrastructure-led approach as its key planning axle, and become a major hub for Hong Kong to integrate into the overall development of our country.

3. NM endeavours to be developed into a new international innovation and technology (I&T) city, integrating quality life, industry development, and culture and leisure. To develop NM is to actively respond to and capitalise on the national development strategies. The 14th Five-Year Plan supports Hong Kong to develop into an international I&T centre. It also suggests improving mechanisms to facilitate Hong Kong's and Macao's integration into the overall development of the country, and complementary and coordinated development with the Mainland for the high-quality development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). The Outline Development Plan for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area proposes the development of GBA and of a world-class city cluster, and supports the development of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen I&T Park in the Loop and the adjacent Shenzhen I&T Zone. These major national strategies generate strong growth impetus for Hong Kong, and facilitate our collaborations with other GBA cities for better development. In end October 2023, the Government put forward the Northern Metropolis Action Agenda, which outlines the development positioning of the four major zones in NM, i.e. the High-end Professional Services and Logistics Hub, the I&T Zone, the Boundary Commerce and Industry Zone, and the Blue and Green Recreation, Tourism and Conservation Circle, and the features of their future development.

4. The Northern Metropolis Action Agenda proposes a series of specific development objectives. Apart from providing land and housing, taking forward the development of I&T and other industries, improving infrastructure, conserving the ecology, developing diversified arts, culture, sports and youth facilities, the Government also plans to reserve land in the area for post-secondary education development, with a view to establishing the Northern Metropolis University Town (NMUT) to tie in with the Government's objective of building Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub.

Building an international post-secondary education hub

5. Education is the key to nurturing talent. Hong Kong has sound education infrastructure, world-renowned universities and outstanding research talents. The quality of our teaching and learning is ranked among the top in various international comparative studies. Hong Kong's post-secondary education is internationalised and highly diversified. We are acclaimed to be the only city with five universities in the world's top 100. In the 2023 Policy Address, CE set out clearly the strategic directions and objectives for enhancing the quality of education in Hong Kong, with a view to building Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub and a cradle of future talents. Our goal is to nurture a diversified pool of talents, provide students with broader international perspectives, elevate the competitiveness of Hong Kong and enhance Hong Kong's momentum of development. In tandem, we will proactively leverage on Hong Kong's strengths to contribute to the needs of the nation, support the nation's Belt and Road (B&R) Initiative, seize the opportunities brought by the development of GBA, and provide the manpower support for Hong Kong's development as the eight centres¹ as outlined in the 14th Five-Year Plan.

6. To this end, the 2023 Policy Address announced a series of specific initiatives, including doubling the non-local student quota of publicly-funded post-secondary institutions to 40% starting from the 2024/25 academic year. The post-secondary institutions may, having regard to their own conditions, progressively attract more students from abroad, particularly those from the B&R countries, to further their studies in Hong Kong and to develop Hong Kong's post-secondary education with high quality teaching and supporting facilities. In addition, the Government will endeavour to develop NMUT in NM where post-secondary institutions are encouraged to strengthen co-operation with renowned Mainland and overseas institutions, and enhance synergy through sharing resources and enhancing collaboration with the industry sector in the area, so as to attract more overseas academic and research talents to Hong Kong.

¹ Eight centres refer to the international financial centre, international innovation and technology centre, East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, international trade centre, international shipping centre, international aviation hub, centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region as well as regional intellectual property trading centre.

7. On the other hand, the Government will continue to proactively promote the parallel development of the publicly-funded and self-financing post-secondary education sectors, encouraging self-financing institutions to further identify and develop more distinct niche areas. Through offering programmes in a self-financing mode, self-financing institutions could flexibly respond to the ever-evolving manpower needs of different sectors of society, providing diversified articulation pathways for young people. In this connection, the 2023 Policy Address announced the launch of a new round of the Land Grant Scheme (LGS) and Start-up Loan Scheme (SLS), with a view to supporting self-financing institutions to develop and improve campuses in support of more teaching and learning activities.

8. At the same time, the Government is committed to promoting vocational and professional education and training (VPET) as a pathway parallel to conventional academic education through the strategy of fostering industry-institution collaboration and diversified development, providing diversified learning and employment opportunities with a view to nurturing more high-quality talent with applied skills. To further elevate the status of VPET at degree level, the 2023 Policy Address announced that the Government would press ahead with the establishment of universities of applied sciences (UAS), providing an alternative pathway to success for young people who aspire to pursue a career in professional skills sectors. We have promulgated the criteria for qualifying as UAS and announced on 21 March 2024 that the Hong Kong Metropolitan University successfully qualified as the first UAS in Hong Kong. We will also provide financial and related support to encourage institutions to offer more applied degree programmes and enhance the enrolment incentive, thereby supporting appropriate self-financing institutions to develop into UAS, and support relevant institutions to form an alliance of UAS for joint promotion.

NMUT

9. With new land, new population, excellent connectivity, development opportunities of different industries, and close connections with the Mainland, NM will provide valuable opportunities for the post-secondary education sector. We will strive to develop NMUT, where post-secondary institutions are encouraged to strengthen co-operation with renowned Mainland and overseas institutions, and enhance synergy through sharing resources and enhancing collaboration with the industry sector.

10. To support the development of NMUT, the Government will reserve more than 60 hectares of sites at Hung Shui Kiu (HSK)/Ha Tsuen (HT) NDA, Ngau Tam Mei (NTM) and New Territories North (NTN) New Town for post-secondary education development use. A location map showing the three NDAs is at [Annex](#).

HSK/HT NDA

11. HSK/HT NDA is located at the high-end professional services and logistics hub at the western side of NM, which is just a bay away from the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone and the Nanshan District in

Shenzhen. It has potential to promote and deepen high-end economic cooperation and become a modern services centre. The Government has reserved about 5 hectares of land at HSK/HT for the development of a new self-financing post-secondary institution campus, with a view to supporting the parallel development of the self-financing and publicly-funded post-secondary education sectors. The relevant site is located at the city centre area with the convergence of the three railways (i.e. Tuen Ma Line, Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link (HSK to Qianhai) which is under planning and the proposed Hong Kong Island West-Hung Shui Kiu Rail Link). The HSK station on the Tuen Ma Line will commence its construction works this year and be completed in 2030. We expect the relevant institution could leverage on the geographical and transportation advantages of this area to nurture talents. The relevant site will commence its site formation works this year and the works are expected to be completed in 2026.

12. The 2023 Policy Address announced that the Government would launch a new round of LGS this year to provide land sites at nominal premium, with a view to supporting self-financing post-secondary institutions to develop and improve campuses. The Education Bureau (EDB) will invite eligible self-financing post-secondary institutions to submit proposals for the HSK/HT site in accordance with the established mechanism. At the same time, we plan to launch a new round of SLS for interested self-financing post-secondary institutions to apply for interest-free loans, with a view to supporting the relevant campus development projects. We will announce the details in due course.

NTM

13. NTM is one of the stations of the future Northern Link and just one station away from San Tin Technopole, which is located at the I&T zone of NM. The Government plans to reserve sites in the NTM area for the use of post-secondary institutions to tie in with the I&T development of the San Tin Technopole, and focus on nurturing talent development of the area, including research and professional talents needed for I&T development, providing manpower support for the needs of industrial development.

NTN New Town

14. NTN New Town is situated at the boundary commerce and industry zone of NM, and has the advantage of covering three boundary control points (BCPs), which could potentially be developed into various BCP related economic uses and uses requiring a larger land area for operation. It can be developed into a BCP business district and a base for emerging industries, and collaborate with the development of the Luohu District in Shenzhen. The Government plans to reserve sites in NTN New Town for the use of post-secondary education and encourage institutions to collaborate closely with industries within the area to promote synergistic development; and leverage on the advantages of its close connectivity with Shenzhen to strengthen the collaboration on education for the two places. The proposed Northern Link Eastern Extension and the Northeast New Territories Line will connect the NDA in NTN to the railway network,

whereas the Northern Metropolis Highway (NTN section) will further open up the east and west connectivity of NTN. Relevant institutions will benefit from the well-developed territory-wide and cross-border transport infrastructure.

Preliminary development intentions and proposals

15. The Government wishes to explore the best direction and mode of development for NMUT through collating various views. As such, EDB conducted a briefing in June 2023 for post-secondary institutions, including the University Grants Committee-funded universities, Vocational Training Council and self-financing post-secondary institutions, to introduce the post-secondary education sites in NM and consult the institutions on their preliminary development intentions and proposals, covering the following aspects -

- (a) how to align with Hong Kong's eight centres positioning as set out in the National 14th Five-Year Plan;
- (b) how to cater to talent needs of Hong Kong and GBA;
- (c) how to promote quality enhancement and strategic development of the institutions;
- (d) potential for collaboration with I&T and/or new industries in the neighbouring areas;
- (e) potential for collaboration and synergy with the higher education sector in GBA in teaching and learning, research and industrialisation; and
- (f) usage of, or mode of collaboration, with the current campuses in Hong Kong.

16. Subsequently, EDB invited institutions which are interested in commenting on the post-secondary education development in NM to submit brief proposals and make presentations to facilitate mutual exchange. There are 19 post-secondary institutions that participated in this engagement activity and submitted proposals. After consolidating the views from the institutions, major proposals are as follows -

- (a) an institution wishes to move the whole existing campus to NM;
- (b) some institutions plan to set up satellite campuses to provide more academic and research space for developing innovative programmes, or migrating current programmes related to NM and the eight centres to the satellite campuses;
- (c) an institution plans to set up an internationalised university campus in a self-financing mode to provide more joint programmes with overseas well-known institutions for local and non-local students;
- (d) an institution plans to promote more collaborative exchanges with their Mainland campuses for synergy;

- (e) some institutions plan to promote VPET that features co-operation between industries and education and integration of science and education, supporting the industry development and strengthening collaboration with industry partners in the area, with a view to nurturing professional talent with the requisite applied knowledge and skills needed by the industries; and
- (f) multiple institutions wish to set up more shared facilities, such as animal centres, data centres, student hostels, sports facilities and libraries, etc.

Preliminary assessment and development strategy

17. The various developments of NM are closely intertwined. In considering the development options for NMUT, we must ensure alignment with the vision of NM and the strategies and positioning of the four major zones set out in paragraph 3 above. At the same time, we must fully capitalise the huge development opportunities brought by NM to the post-secondary education in Hong Kong, particularly to support the strategy of building Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub. Our preliminary idea is to gradually take forward the relevant work, having regard to the following objectives and strategies.

(a) Industry-led

18. The land of NM is planned on the basis of the industry-led principle, with different strategic positioning and development themes for each zone in the area. We hope that the post-secondary education development in NM could suitably tie in with the different positioning of individual districts, promoting diversified development in collaboration with industries and strengthening synergy. First, we will consider proactively promoting VPET development in NMUT, facilitating co-operation between industries and education and integration of science and education, and supporting institutions to strengthen connection and collaboration with industries in the area. Through incorporating enriched internship and work-based learning opportunities in programmes, institutions could nurture professional skilled talent with applied abilities to cater to the keen manpower needs of various sectors, adding impetus to the industry development in the area.

19. On the other hand, to support the development of I&T and high-end professional services, we need to provide research, academic and industry as well as high-end manpower support, including the introduction and nurturing of outstanding scientific research talents and expanding high-end training facilities, so that industries in NM can further develop.

(b) Support Hong Kong to develop into an international post-secondary education hub and a cradle of future talents

20. NM provides substantial and valuable land resources. We will seize the opportunity to enable Hong Kong's post-secondary institutions to build on their existing strengths, and enhance their quality and expand their capacity, further promote

internationalised and high-quality development, synergy and resources sharing, so as to support Hong Kong's development as an international post-secondary education hub and a cradle of future talents.

21. On internationalisation, we will encourage institutions to make full use of Hong Kong's advantage of enjoying support of the Motherland and being closely connected to the world to explore and develop more collaboration opportunities with renowned institutions on the Mainland and overseas, including jointly co-organising branded programmes, strengthening international academic and research exchanges, expanding exchange student programmes, establishing strategic partnership with academic organisations in various fields around the world, etc. Our goal is to support institutions to build internationalised campuses for attracting more Mainland and overseas talents, in particular students from B&R areas, to further their studies and conduct research in Hong Kong, and at the same time widen the international perspectives of teachers and students through providing rich internationalised and diversified cultural experiences for local students. We hope to strengthen the brand of Study in Hong Kong through the development of NMUT.

22. On high quality development, we will encourage institutions to develop more creative, cutting-edge and high-level undergraduate, research and professional programmes through exploring flexible and innovative modes, including inter-faculty, inter-discipline, inter-sectoral and cross-boundary collaboration, so as to develop niche areas for institutions and Hong Kong.

23. On synergy, we will ensure that NMUT could develop complementarily with the existing institutions and their campuses, and optimise synergy. The land resources of NMUT enable existing institutions to break through the bottleneck of academic space, enhance teaching facilities and ancillaries, so as to achieve the goal of expanding capacity and enhancing quality. To this end, some institutions wish to reprovise their existing campuses or develop satellite campuses through the lands provided by NMUT to rearrange the setting of the institutions' facilities and enhance the facilities and ancillaries. We will carefully consider all factors including the feasibility, cost efficiency, how to make good use of the existing campus facilities and public resources, etc.

24. In addition, one of the core strategies of NMUT is to promote sharing of resources in the area and strengthen synergy. We will proactively consider reserving land in the area to build some shared facilities, such as animal centres, data centres, etc. We will also support institutions to jointly develop and manage student facilities, enhancing the cost effectiveness of developing the area and benefiting more students.

(c) *Align with the nation's development strategies*

25. As mentioned in paragraph 3 above, developing NM is to actively respond to and capitalise on the national development strategies. The 14th Five-Year Plan supports Hong Kong to develop the eight centres and suggests improving mechanisms to facilitate Hong Kong's and Macao's integration into the overall development of the

country, and complementary and coordinated development with the Mainland for the high-quality development of GBA. NM has a unique geographical advantage. It could integrate with the planning of Shenzhen and become an important platform for the collaboration with other GBA cities. Hence, the development of NMUT will respond to the above positioning.

26. Firstly, we will encourage institutions to take forward collaboration with higher education of GBA at wider aspects and higher levels through NMUT. For example, the higher education institutions in Hong Kong could capitalise on the geographical advantage of NM's proximity to Shenzhen, which covers multiple BCPs, and explore using more flexible and innovative modes of operation, so as to attract more teachers, students and corporations to join the programmes, teaching and research, and other projects between the two places. The institutions could also further promote closer collaboration between their campuses in Hong Kong and GBA Mainland cities, leveraging on the complementary academic structures and facilities of the campuses in both places, and endeavour to nurture outstanding talents needed for national development. Also, institutions could establish presence at NM to deepen their collaboration with other higher education institutions on the Mainland or take up the role of "super connector" to promote the exchanges and collaborations of Mainland and overseas universities, complement mutual advantages and enhance synergy, especially keeping closer connection in areas such as scientific research collaborations, student exchanges, nurturing of talents, etc., to scale up the international development of Hong Kong's academics and research, and contribute to the development of GBA's super talent hub.

27. In addition, the planning of NMUT must fully integrate into the national development, such as providing more programmes related to STEAM and the eight centres under the 14th Five-Year Plan for the I&T industry, so as to nurture professionals equipped with knowledge of different domains to align with the talent needs of Hong Kong and GBA, and proactively contribute to invigorating the country through science and education.

(d) Industry-led, step by step

28. We will take forward the planning of NMUT in accordance with the Northern Metropolis Action Agenda and the development strategies and paces of different zones. To align with the industry-driven and infrastructure-led approach of NM, institutions will mainly take forward development in the area in a self-financing mode, adopt new approaches in programme planning, teaching and research to keep pace with the times, deepen collaboration with industries in the area, proactively support the future strategic directions and indicators of the country and Hong Kong through nurturing talents to create strong impetus for Hong Kong's development.

Way forward

29. EDB is currently comprehensively considering the proposals and collating the information submitted by the institutions. We will continue to proactively review the distribution and needs of the sites for post-secondary education use in the area in accordance with the objectives and strategies set out in paragraphs 17 to 28. We will closely communicate with institutions which are interested in the development of NM and follow up this matter with relevant bureaux/departments regarding matters related to the confirmation of land uses. Depending on the timeline of different sites available for development, EDB will be in touch with relevant institutions in a timely manner to take forward the development of NMUT in phases. When planning for post-secondary education development in NM, we will have regard to the development of Hong Kong as an international post-secondary education hub as a basis, ensuring that relevant key strategies could be aligned and implemented.

Advice sought

30. Members are invited to comment on the content of this paper.

Education Bureau
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北部都會區 Northern Metropolis

