

10/4/2018

# Industries have lot to gain from bay area plan, Lam says

## Chief executive touts benefits to city but insists Beijing support is key to turn scheme into reality

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Hong Kong's finance and research industries have a lot to gain from the deeper economic integration with the mainland and there is no need for the city to compete with manufacturing hubs such as Dongguan and Shenzhen.

That was the assessment of Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor during a "brainstorming" panel discussion on plans for the Greater Bay Area – an economic development plan to meld the city with Guangdong and Macau – held at the Boao Forum for Asia on Hainan Island.

The scheme encompasses 65 million people and is aimed at replicating the success of economic powerhouses such as the San Francisco Bay Area and the New York metropolitan area.

Lam said she hoped the plan would launch soon and enjoy Beijing's support in bringing good ideas to fruition.

"In fact, if we really want to push the Greater Bay Area ahead, and if we want to see a breakthrough, we definitely need big support from the central government," she said.

Guangdong Governor Ma Xingrui and former Hong Kong financial secretary Antony Leung Kam-chung were also on the panel.

Leung suggested border checkpoints use facial recognition technology to reduce queues and Hong Kong residents who stayed on the mainland for more than 183 days a year be given the option of paying income tax in the city, where tax rates are much lower.

Integration between Hong Kong and the mainland has

proved complex because each side has its own legal, monetary, tax and administrative systems.

Debate has also been intense over large infrastructure projects such as the high-speed rail link with the mainland and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge.

Ma said Guangdong was happy to adapt its rules to make it easier for Hong Kong people, especially young residents, to live and work over the border.

"For example, graduates from Hong Kong and Macau universities previously had to obtain an employment certificate to work in Guangdong," he said. "That was a very simple problem and we just cancelled the requirement."

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CARRIE LAM, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Guangdong's roads could also be opened to all vehicles from Hong Kong, Ma said. "Even if all vehicles from Hong Kong and Macau were visiting Guangdong, we could manage."

Leung, who is chairman of property giant Nan Fung Group, said the mainland should set up "trial international health care zones" for Hong Kong residents so they could access the city's doctors and medicines. Ma said the Guangdong authorities had discussed the idea and it was expected to become a reality.



Chief Executive Carrie Lam with Hebei Governor Xu Qin. Photo: Handout