

HK, CHONGQING AGREE TO FORGE CLOSER LINKS

John Lee and the megacity's party chief pledge to collaborate in 11 areas, including technology, finance and trade, to serve country's development

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Hong Kong and the mainland megacity of Chongqing will pursue closer collaboration in 11 areas covering economics, finance, technology, arts and travel under a new cooperation conference.

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu reached a consensus with Chongqing party secretary Yuan Jiajun on the second day of his visit to the megacity, when the two leaders held the first meeting of the conference yesterday.

Both sides agreed to pursue deeper cooperation to serve the country's development.

In his address to the Hong Kong-Chongqing Cooperation Conference, Lee said the relationship between the two cities had always been very close. Hong Kong had been an important platform for Chongqing enterprises to "go out" and get listed, he noted.

"Under the overall blueprint of the country, both Chongqing and Hong Kong play important and unique roles," Lee said.

"Strengthening cooperation will definitely achieve complementarity and mutual benefits, and it also marks Hong Kong's better integration into the overall development of the country."

Under the latest framework, both sides will pursue closer ties in 11 areas, covering trade, finance, innovation and technology, logistics, tourism, education, talent exchange, youth development, legal service, Chinese medicine development, and help for Hong Kong residents in Chongqing.

It is the first high-level government cooperation mechanism established by Hong Kong with mainland provinces and municipalities since ones with Shanghai and Beijing in 2003 and 2004 respectively.

Earlier in the day, Lee called for more robust exchanges between universities and research institutes in the two cities, following a visit to Jinfeng Laboratory in Western (Chongqing) Science City – a national-level hi-tech zone – where he met medical experts and was briefed on the use of non-invasive ultrasound-based therapy to treat tumours.

Jinfeng is positioned as a "new driving force for national-level laboratories" that focuses on medical research on smart pathology, brain science and brain diseases.

"The Hong Kong government encourages more exchanges and cooperation between the universities and research institutes of Hong Kong and Chongqing over basic research, construction of laboratories and

related scientific research facilities, and sharing of technological resources and achievements," he wrote in a Facebook post.

He also called for institutions and innovative enterprises in both places to build an international cooperation platform to facilitate the transfer and application of technological achievements.



Strengthening cooperation will definitely achieve complementarity and mutual benefits

JOHN LEE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Lee's trip caught media attention as rocket scientist Yuan, a member of the Communist Party's 24-member central Politburo, was appointed as Chongqing party secretary last December. He is among a handful of technocrats shooting up the party hierarchy.

The Communist Party chief of Chongqing is a key regional role that often sees incumbents further promoted to senior national leadership positions.

Chongqing is one of four municipalities directly under the

central government. The megacity is favourably located as the intersection of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's plan to grow global trade, and the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

By the end of 2021, 312 of the world's top 500 companies had a presence in Chongqing. And more overseas companies relating to the electronic industries are setting up a manufacturing base there, including Hewlett-Packard, Foxconn and Inventec, and Acer from Taiwan.

Hong Kong was the largest source of non-local direct investment in Chongqing, while other investors came from Singapore and South Korea, according to the latest research by the Trade Development Council.

Lee also reiterated that he hoped both places would deepen cooperation and achieve complementary and mutual benefits so as to enable the development of both places to reach new heights.

After yesterday's plenary session of the conference, Lee and his delegation attended a dinner hosted by Yuan and Chongqing mayor Hu Henghua.

Accompanying Lee on the three-day visit are Chief Secretary Eric Chan Kwok-ki, commerce and economic development minister Algernon Yau Ying-wah, innovation, technology and industry chief Professor Sun Dong, and Undersecretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Clement Woo Kin-man.

Lee is expected to return to Hong Kong today.
Additional reporting by Jeffie Lam