

The Birth of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum

On 26 September 2017, I attended the Shaw Prize Award Presentation Ceremony for the first time as Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. On that occasion, five distinguished scientists in Astronomy, Life Science and Medicine, and Mathematical Sciences were honoured. They are distinguished individuals who have achieved significant breakthrough in academic and scientific research and whose work has resulted in a positive and profound impact on mankind. As I was then drawing up a multi-pronged strategy to develop innovation and technology in Hong Kong, including the promotion of popular science education, I asked myself how we could bring together this pool of great scientific minds to help nurture the next generation of young scientists. This was the beginning of a year-long endeavour to create the Hong Kong Laureate Forum.



I presented prizes at the Shaw Prize Award Presentation Ceremony 2017. From right are Laureate in Astronomy, Professor Simon DM White; Laureate in Life Science and Medicine, Professor Ronald D Vale; Laureates in Mathematical Sciences, Professor János Kollár and Professor Claire Voisin. Another Laureate in Life Science and Medicine, Professor Ian R Gibbons, did not attend the Ceremony.

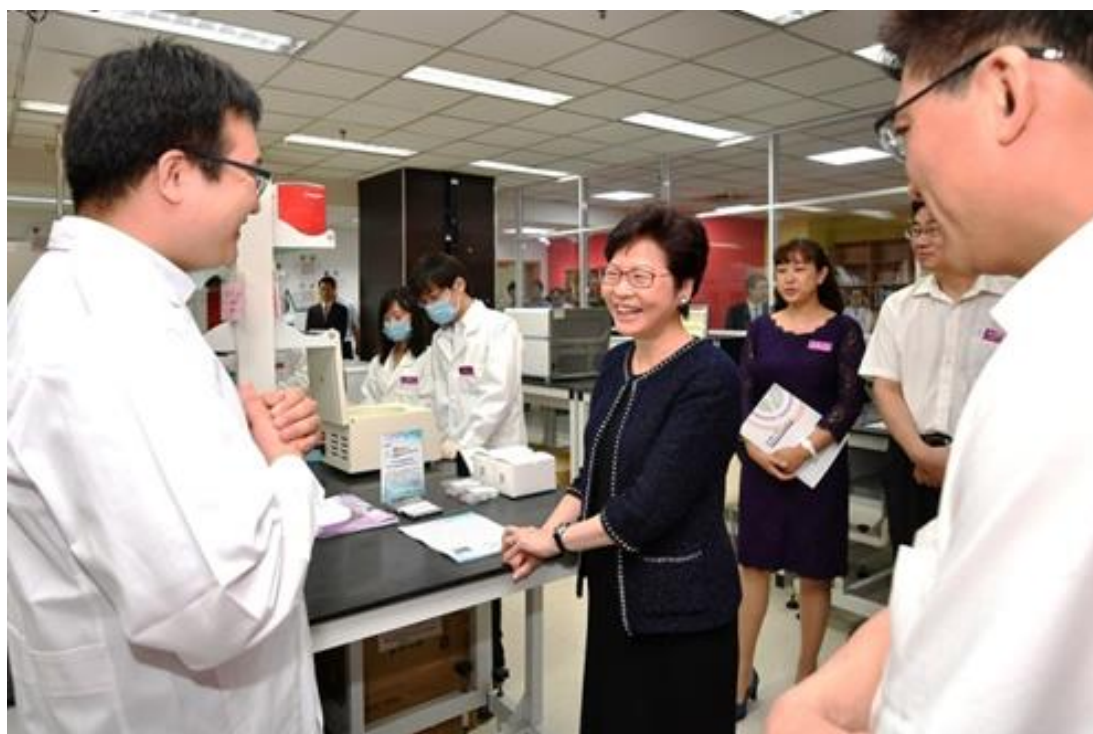
Under the vision and generosity of the late Sir Run Run Shaw and with the unfailing support of his wife the late Lady Shaw, the Shaw Prize was established in 2002 to recognize advances and outstanding contributions in three disciplines, namely, Astronomy, Life Science and Medicine, and Mathematical Sciences. In less than two decades, the Shaw Prize has become a world-renowned award for the highest achievements in mankind. Indeed, among the nearly 80 Shaw Laureates since 2004, 19 of them have been awarded other world-renowned international awards, including 12 Nobel Prize awardees, five Fields Medalists and two Abel Prize recipients. Hong Kong is blessed to have its home-grown international award and the Government fully subscribe to Shaw Prize's vision - to further societal progress, enhance quality of life and enrich humanity's spiritual civilization.



I presented prizes at the Shaw Prize Award Presentation Ceremony 2018. From right are Laureate in Astronomy, Dr Jean-Loup Puget; Laureate in Life Science and Medicine, Professor Mary-Claire King; and Laureate in Mathematical Sciences, Professor Luis A Caffarelli.

Since taking office on 1 July 2017, I have put innovation and technology (I&T) development at the top of my policy agenda. In less than two years' time, we have made some promising progress on various fronts including boosting R&D funding, pursuing additional infrastructure, creating technology clusters, etc. and committed some

HK\$100 billion for a range of initiatives. To sustain I&T development, nurturing talents and promoting popular science education have an important part to play.



With I&T development at the top of my policy agenda, I have visited many I&T facilities in Hong Kong, in the Mainland and overseas since I took office in July 2017.

I believe the best way to spark the younger generation's enthusiasm for science is to provide them with opportunities for direct exchange and dialogue with the brightest minds in science. Being Asia's world city, Hong Kong is an ideal place to organize a world-class academic exchange event to connect the current and next generations of scientific leaders. Linking this objective to the Shaw Prize immediately came to my mind.

A good place to start was to look at how similar forums around the world are planned and organized. Taking advantage of an earlier encounter in Hong Kong with the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings organizer and my official trip to Europe in June 2018, I went to Lindau, Germany to attend the 68th Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting. While in Lindau, apart from taking part in the opening ceremony and welcoming reception of the Lindau Meeting, I shared the stage with two distinguished Nobel Laureates and spoke on the topic of "Developing Stronger Science Leadership in Different Cultures – China, US/Europe and Others as Basis for Innovation". The level of enthusiasm and interest

shown by the young scientists in asking questions and presenting their views to the Laureates reinforced my belief that a similar gathering of distinguished and young scientists will be a very meaningful endeavour for Hong Kong.



I joined Nobel Laureates Professor Dr Ferid Murad (third left) and Professor Dr Kurt Wüthrich (second left) and exchanged views with young scientists at a seminar at the 68th Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting in June 2018.

While in Lindau, I also met with the Board Chairman of the Foundation Lindau Meetings Prof. Jürgen Kluge to learn more about the organization of the annual Lindau Meetings, and talked to five esteemed Shaw Laureates who were also Nobel Laureates. All of them warmly welcomed the idea of Hong Kong organizing a Laureate Forum leveraging on the Shaw Prize. I was much encouraged.



I met the Chairman of the Foundation for the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings, Professor Dr Jürgen Kluge, in Lindau.



I met Professor Dr Michael Rosbash (second left), Professor Dr Michael Young (on my right) and Professor Dr Robert Lefkowitz (fourth left), who are both Nobel and Shaw Laureates, in Lindau.



I met another two Nobel and Shaw Laureates, Professor Bruce Beutler (first right) and Professor Jules Hoffmann (first left), in Lindau.

Supported by the newly-created Policy Innovation and Coordination Office (PICO), preparation for the Hong Kong Laureate Forum began immediately after the delivery of my 2018 Policy Address. Thanks to the generosity of Lee Shau Kee Foundation which has pledged full sponsorship for the Forum, the support of the Shaw Prize Foundation, and a group of like-minded people who share my vision, we are able to take forward the initiative expeditiously. In April 2019, the Council of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum (the Council), which is responsible for the planning and organization of the Forum, was incorporated. Chaired by Professor Timothy Tong, immediate past President of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Board of the Council comprises 11 distinguished personalities and academics in Hong Kong as members. They are Mr Raymond Chan (Chairman of Shaw Prize Foundation), Dr Moses Cheng, Mrs Rita Fan, Mr Henry Fan, Dr Victor Fung, Dr Colin Lam and Mr Martin Lee (representatives of the principal sponsor), Mr Carlson Tong, Professor Tsui Lap-chee, Mr Joseph Yam and Professor Kenneth Young. To allow sufficient time for organizing a world-class academic event and recruitment of young scientists from all over the world, naturally including Hong Kong, the Council has decided to hold the inaugural Hong Kong Laureate Forum in November 2021.



Members of the Board of the Council of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum met at Government House in February 2019. The Chairman, Professor Timothy Tong, was out of town and unable to attend.

The Forum is getting off to a very good start. I wrote personally to all the Shaw Laureates in January 2019 introducing to them the Hong Kong Laureate Forum and inviting them to indicate their interest in attending the first Forum in 2021. We are thrilled by the overwhelming response. So far, over two-thirds of them have indicated interest, of whom six are also Nobel Laureates and two are Fields Medalists. I am particularly moved by the words of encouragement from some of the Laureates –

“It is indeed a wonderful idea to host such an event after nearly 20 years of establishment of the Shaw Prize. These laureate meetings will further enhance the prestige of the Shaw Prize and will contribute to promotion of science in the world.”

Professor Henryk Iwaniec (Mathematical Science, 2015)

“I have fond memories of my visit to Hong Kong in 2016 and would be delighted to attend once again to discuss science.”

Professor Adrian Bird (Life Science and Medicine, 2016)

The Hong Kong Laureate Forum will also be an international platform to encourage cross-cultural dialogue and is therefore establishing links with similar organizations. The Heidelberg Laureate Forum Foundation is our very first one. Similar to the Lindau Meetings, the Heidelberg Laureate Forum is an annual scientific event held in Heidelberg, home of Germany's oldest university, for exchanges between recipients of the most prestigious awards in mathematical and computer sciences and young scientists. When I met with the Managing Director of the Foundation Mrs Ruth Wetzlar in Hong Kong in January, she readily offered to present a Lecture at the inaugural Hong Kong Laureate Forum featuring some of the Laureates who are recipients of both the Shaw Prize and Fields Medal/Abel Prize.



I presented souvenir to Managing Director of the Heidelberg Laureate Forum Foundation, Mrs Ruth Wetzlar at a gala dinner in honour of Laureates of Mathematics and Computer Science in Hong Kong in January 2019.

Backed by enthusiasm both locally and overseas, I am pleased to announce that the Hong Kong Laureate Forum was born!

To celebrate the birth of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum, the Council will stage a launching ceremony at Government House on 14 May. Several Shaw Laureates will join the ceremony to pledge their support for the initiative. University presidents, representatives of

research institutions and major education bodies, members of Executive and Legislative Councils, local young scientists, etc. as well as the media will be invited to the launching event.

Such is the beginning of an exciting project. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Shaw Prize Foundation, the Lee Shau Kee Foundation, the chairman and members of the Council of the Hong Kong Laureate Forum and Shaw Laureates for their encouragement and support. Let's join hands to make the Hong Kong Laureate Forum a shining example of furthering the understanding of science and its contribution to humanity.