

China's 30 Years of Reform and Hong Kong's Role

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It is amazing that we are today sitting down to talk and debate this topic "Thirty Years of Reform and Hong Kong's Role" when Hong Kong's role was pointed out to us very clearly under the leadership of Chairman Deng Xiao Ping's reforms thirty years ago. Remember, even during the dark days of the Cultural Revolution the visit of Nixon and Kissinger to mainland China took place, and when shortly after that Prime Minister Zhou Enlai talked about the growing need for reform and modernisation. These were the first signs during the nineteen seventies, a drawing aside of the so-called Bamboo Curtain and signalled the end of a dynasty and the entry of fresh thought. Chairman Deng looked at China and the world and cracked the eggshell of hard line-policy by the famous admonition to his fellow, countrymen and leaders "seek truth from facts" he said and then he went on to say those famous words which have always stuck in my memory. "We will not find what we have to do written in Marx or Engels, we have to move forward." "crossing the river by feeling for stones."

He went on later to offer Taiwan a solution to its relations with the motherland. This was rejected. He then offered those same prescriptions to the solution of the Hong Kong question. Leading eventually to the Joint Declaration by China and the United Kingdom about our future.

The clock moves forward thirty years and here we are today to talk about the years of reform and the way forward. Yet still today we remember the words of Deng seek "truth from facts" and "crossing the river feeling for the stones." There is no turning back we have to move forward fearlessly towards a bright future. There is no question of turning the clock back, the way spelt out for Hong Kong leading to further and complete integration with the mainland is happening slowly but surely. What are the sign? Next year we will start constructing the bridge to Zhuhai, we will start constructing the express rail line to Guangzhou, we will start constructing the rail link between the airport of Shenzhen and Chek Lap Kok. In Hong Kong itself we will start the four year undergraduate programme of our universities and the development of west Kowloon.

We have proudly but without humility proclaimed ourselves as Asia's World City now we have to seriously and determinedly to set about living up to this reputation

we have set ourselves, to throw off the last vestiges of colonial mentality, liberate ourselves from the past take really serious steps to learn the language of the global world – English, take really serious steps to learn the common language of Hong Kong’s motherland Putonghua. Build those things which are the requisition of any city that seeks to call itself a world city – simple but essential things not to hold back, to be inspired just as Deng inspired the nation so, too, we must, be inspired by this great opportunity that lies before us.