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Progressive in Technology, Innovation & Design

Overview

In a short span of time, Hong Kong has transformed itself from a manufacturing-based economy to an international financial and services centre. People have adapted readily to the advent of digital and electronic technology, and Government and private sector initiatives have provided further impetus. In the Policy Address of October 2008 the Chief Executive announced that a dedicated Creative Industry Office is to be established, to co-ordinate the work of different departments and work closely with the trades to boost the development of creative enterprises.

Smart Card Technology

'Smart' identity (ID) cards have been enthusiastically embraced since their introduction in 2003 and every Hong Kong resident over the age of 11 years now has one. Embedded ID card information, including thumbprints, means faster travel through automated immigration kiosks, while voluntary functions and booking utilities include public libraries, sports and leisure centres and an e-Certificate for various business transactions. Other applications will soon extend to multiple Government electronic services. With seven million people, Hong Kong has one of the world's largest populations using a smart ID card.

Similarly, most residents get around town using smart card technology. The Octopus card was originally launched in 1997 to pay fares on Hong Kong's rail network. It can now be used for simple micro-payments on virtually all public transport as well as in many retail outlets, restaurants, convenience stores, supermarkets, parking and other public facilities. Octopus cards are used by over 95 per cent of the public aged 16-65.

The Government's electronic service delivery, GovHK, has come a long way since its launch in 2000. It is now a one-stop portal providing over 200 online public services from more than 50 government departments and public agencies, offering public and commercial services at a click.

Hong Kong Science Park

Using the clustering concept, Hong Kong Science Park has boosted the city's technology platform by focusing on electronics, IT, telecommunications, design, biotechnology and precision engineering. Phase I, which opened in 2002 at a cost of HK\$2.9 billion (US\$370 million), offers 81 000 square metres of lettable floor space, and boasts 90 per cent occupancy. Phase II, which was opened in 2007, will provide an additional 70 000 square metres of lettable space when it is fully completed in 2010. In total, about 157 local, Mainland and overseas companies are now in residence. These companies have created more than 2 400 new jobs, of which about 80 per cent are research and development (R&D) related.

Cyberport

Cyberport occupies a spectacular 24-hectare site at Telegraph Bay, on the southwest side of Hong Kong Island. Completed in 2004, the HK\$15.6 billion (US\$2 billion) development has become regional headquarters for many IT and related companies. Besides offices, the complex includes a five-star hotel and a retail entertainment complex, creating a synthesis of technology, business and people in a model 'linked' society of the future. Cyberport is a 15-minute drive from the central business district and a 35-minute drive from Hong Kong International Airport.

Digital Media Centre

The Digital Media Centre (DMC) is a pivotal part of Cyberport and seeks to spearhead the growth and development of the local digital entertainment industry, including new companies, individual enterprises, digital media institutes or incubated companies of the Cyberport IncuTrain Centre. DMC provides its customers with facilities and services to support production of digital films, animations, video, music, and sound mixing. Through collaboration with the digital media industry, academia and professional associations, DMC also implements industry-and education-development schemes to further encourage the burgeoning local digital entertainment industry. Activities include organising professional seminars and training courses, as well as participating in associated industry exhibitions.



Scientific Research

The Hong Kong R&D Centre Programme is a core initiative of the Government's Innovation and Technology Commission. The programme aims to harness Hong Kong's advantages in applied research and intellectual property protection, as well as the city's ideal location adjacent to the Pearl River Delta region, to create a thriving regional technology service hub. Under the programme, six centres have been created, focusing on Chinese medicine; automotive parts and accessory systems; information and communications technologies; logistics and supply chain management enabling technologies; nanotechnology and advanced materials; textiles and clothing. Meanwhile, Hong Kong will reinforce its intermediary role to promote technological co-operation between the Mainland and the rest of the world.

To boost scientific research, the Government has increased its subsidy for the Internship Programme under the Innovation and Technology Fund, which supports innovative projects and help local companies and industry upgrade their technology. The pool of new recruits for the programme has also been expanded to cover science and engineering graduates, including non-local graduates, of local universities. The programme will be extended to R&D centres.

The DesignSmart Initiative and the InnoCentre

The HK\$250 million (US\$32 million) DesignSmart Initiative, launched in 2004, marks another successful step in Government efforts to support design and innovation by stimulating value-added, creative industries, projects and related infrastructure. By end-2007, DesignSmart had provided HK\$78 million (US\$10

million) for 121 projects, including design research, business design collaboration, professional education and the promotion of a design culture. In 2006 the InnoCentre evolved from this creative drive as a hub for design and innovation, providing a one-stop shop bridging designers and users of design services. Besides providing grade A office space for tenants, InnoCentre also offers a design incubation programme for start-up companies as well as design education, training and professional development. At end-2007, 26 design incubatees and 22 design tenants were in residence.

Hong Kong Design Centre (HKDC)

Since its establishment (with Government support) in 2001, HKDC has dedicated itself to helping local designers and businesses realise their full potential. Using a multi-faceted approach to attain its mission, HKDC organises seminars, workshops and conferences to promote the value and use of design in the business/industry communities and to sharpen the expertise of design professionals and students. To raise Hong Kong's profile as a regional design hub, HKDC organises an annual flagship event – the Business of Design Week – which includes forums, award presentations and exhibitions.

Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre (JCCAC)

Making good use of a renovated factory building, the Government-supported JCCAC, which opened in 2008, provides affordable space for artists to practise and showcase their work. Fitted out with studios, galleries, workshops, a blackbox theatre and other facilities, the JCCAC is already fully tenanted, with over 100 artists and art groups working under its roof.

Urban Design

With its dramatic mountainous landscape, building space is at a premium in Hong Kong, and this has given rise to one of the world's most compact and densely populated cities. In turn, this has resulted in some ingenious feats of architecture and civil engineering, as well as the efficient use of urban space. World-renowned and local architects have contributed to today's cityscape, with iconic high-rise structures on both sides of Victoria Harbour.

Famous skyscrapers include Two International Finance Centre, designed by Italian architect Cesar Pelli; HSBC Main Building, designed by British architect Norman Foster; the Bank of China Tower, designed by Chinese-born American architect I.M. Pei, and The Center, designed by local firm DLN Architects. In 2008, influential British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid was appointed to design a new landmark building – to be called Innovation Tower – to house Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Design.

Other noteworthy structures include the Mid-levels Escalator (the world's longest outdoor covered escalator system), and the labyrinth of raised walkways and footbridges connecting hotels, department stores and shopping centres. Hong Kong International Airport, designed by Norman Foster and Partners and completed in 1998, has been ranked as one of the top ten construction achievements of the 20th century.

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