

COMMENTHK

Time is ripe to pass Legislative Council baton to new cohort

Tu Haiming says there will still be other platforms for veteran legislators to contribute to Hong Kong's betterment

As the nomination period of the eighth-term Legislative Council election of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region approaches, several senior legislators have recently made known their decision not to run for reelection, triggering discussions among members of society. But there is no reason for people to overreact. As Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu recently said, it is normal for any organization to change guard through elections in due time, and the personal decision of those who want to quit should be respected.

In the process of Hong Kong's transition from governance to prosperity, the first phase — from 2020 to the present — emphasizes stability, focusing on promoting prosperity through stability; the next phase will emphasize change, focusing on promoting prosperity through change. As the focus shifts, the SAR's governance team naturally should change accordingly. It's quite normal for the veterans, after fulfilling their historical mission, to pass the baton to the next generation of legislators.

The veterans have made significant contributions to promoting Hong Kong's prosperity by helping the city to cope with daunting challenges and regain stability. By voluntarily vacating their seats for a younger generation of legislators, the old guard will contribute to the SAR and the nation in another way, a move that deserves the respect of Hong Kong society.

Notably, the veterans have demonstrated great perseverance in tough times, as evidenced by the following three major events:

First, when the insurrection broke out in the middle of 2019, the Legislative Council building was stormed and smashed by rioters, leaving it in a complete mess and unable to be used normally. Meanwhile, the anti-establishment lawmakers indulged in disrupting the operation of the legislature with various ploys. Under such unfavorable circumstances and conditions, LegCo President Andrew Leung Kwan-yuen overcame numerous obstacles and difficulties to maintain the operation of the legislature and conducted deliberation on various bills, with the assistance of many veteran legislators.

Second, on March 19, 2024, LegCo unanimously passed the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance after a marathon meeting of 40



Tu Haiming

The author is vice-chairman of the Committee on Liaison with Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Overseas Chinese of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and chairman of the Hong Kong New Era Development Thinktank.

hours, enabling the SAR to ultimately fulfill its constitutional responsibility under Article 23 of the Basic Law. As the president of LegCo, Leung also cast an unprecedented and historic vote for the bill. The unanimous passage of the motion fully demonstrated the patriotic and pro-Hong Kong sentiments as well as the sense of responsibility of the legislators.

Third, LegCo has proactively supported the executive branch's efforts to tackle longstanding livelihood-related problems, such as the subdivided housing woes. It passed the Basic Housing Units Bill in September, and another bill legalizing ride-hailing services in mid-October.

The incumbent LegCo has passed 60 percent more bills than the previous term. Such high efficiency was unimaginable in the past. Every senior LegCo member has devoted a great deal of effort to guarantee those achievements.

Now is the best time for veteran lawmakers to retreat from the front line for at least two good reasons:

First, most of the veterans who plan to retire are over 70 years old, and have served for more than two terms. Nowadays, the SAR's socioeconomic development has returned to the right track; LegCo operates smoothly, having established a healthy executive-legislature relationship that enables effective communication and cooperation. It is the right time for the veterans to lay down their burdens after making great contributions.

Second, as the SAR's socioeconomic development enters a critical stage amid a shifting international landscape and rising uncertainties, it is imperative and urgent for Hong Kong to cultivate a new batch of political talent who

are able to break free from the constraints of conventional thinking to help the city cope with rising external challenges, as well as meeting the nation's new requirements and roles for the SAR, as the national strategy for advancing high-quality development and high-level opening-up proceeds. Meanwhile, the progress of major projects that are crucial to Hong Kong's development, such as the Northern Metropolis, has not met expectations; bold reforms and innovations are needed to boost the momentum. By bringing in a cohort of young and promising political talent, a proactive and vigorous atmosphere will hopefully be created in the legislature, which will be conducive to initiating innovative reforms and policy proposals.

Veteran legislators can still contribute to the SAR's development after retreating from the front line, and can continue to play an important role in at least the following three aspects:

First, most of the veteran legislators who do not plan to run for reelection have many years of political or business experience; they have extensive connections with the Chinese mainland and overseas, and are familiar with the rules and regulations of various regions and countries. They can continue to help Hong Kong to give full play to its role as a superconnector.

Second, most of these veterans are leading figures or opinion leaders in their respective fields and possess strong social influence. As the saying goes, "A veteran is worth two novices." At critical moments, their words and actions can influence a large number of people.

Third, many middle-aged and young candidates with both strengths and weaknesses are likely to enter the contest. The retired veterans are obligated to help aspiring political talent to actively run for election.

The central government, particularly the central authorities that are directly in charge of the SAR's affairs, as well as the SAR government, recognize and attach great importance to the experience and role of these veteran legislators. They believe that there will still be other platforms and channels for them to make full use of their capabilities and continue to contribute to Hong Kong's betterment.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Nexperia seizure a case of political expediency taking precedence over law

The involvement of the Dutch government in the Nexperia saga has become a revealing case study of how external pressure can distort both the logic of law and the discipline of governance. The Dutch government's seizure of the Chinese-owned computer chipmaker, a measure introduced under the claim of safeguarding national security, has instead shown the fragility of Dutch government decision-making when it bows to political direction from abroad. The Dutch government's initial defiance, within days of its declaration, gave way to appeals for negotiation with Beijing. This abrupt shift in policy demonstrates that genuine sovereignty does not exist where policy is shaped by foreign dictates and improvised justification rather than by careful reasoning rooted in the national interest.

The foundation of the Dutch argument began to collapse when economic reality confronted the political illusion harbored by the Dutch government. China's response, delivered through swift and effective countermeasures, made it clear that rhetorical posturing cannot replace the tangible networks of material production. The urgency of the situation was underscored by the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association's urgent warnings that major factories would soon face suspension as semiconductor inventories dwindled. The Netherlands discovered, too late, that legal aggression against a strategic trading partner leads inevitably to industrial disruption. Policies presented as assertions of strength instead became acts of economic self-harm, exposing the degree to which European prosperity remains bound to predictable and respectful relations with China.

The subsequent reactions of the Dutch authorities revealed an erosion of moral restraint in administrative practice. Newly installed directors of Nexperia were reported to have suspended salaries and system access for Chinese employees, ignoring European labor protections and principles of contractual fairness. When a government tolerates such treatment of lawful employees to score a symbolic political point, such as a show of strength against China, it diminishes the meaning of the justice it proclaims to defend. The double standards undermine confidence among international investors and weaken domestic belief in institutional impartiality. A political order that values political expediency above law forfeits both moral credibility and long-term economic stability.

The effort to justify wanton government intervention in a private firm by alleging that a former company executive had engaged in financial irregularity further illustrates the lack of proportion in Dutch reasoning. Such issues belong within the jurisdiction of ordinary commercial litigation, not in the realm of national seizure. By converting a corporate disagreement into an act of sovereign appropriation, the government departed from the principle of equal treatment that underlies international investment law. Once the rule of law is subordinated to immediate political convenience, it ceases to inspire confidence. Foreign investors may well view this episode as evidence that Dutch institutions apply legality selectively and that protection under law is dependent upon political utility.

In contrast, the measured tone of Beijing's response revealed a steady confidence in principle. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce urged the Netherlands to respect market norms, maintain fairness, and address disagreements through dialogue. Rather than resort to rhetoric, China responded with actions that demonstrated balance and clarity. The economic consequences that promptly followed across Europe made clear that interdependence is not a vulnerability when it rests upon fairness. The Chinese stance reflected a consistency that translated principle into effective diplomacy, reminding all participants that mutual respect remains the only sustainable foundation of international cooperation.

The episode also provides a broader insight into the present condition of European policymaking. Cooperation among allies is legitimate, yet



Virginia Lee

The author is a solicitor, a Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area lawyer, and a China-appointed attesting officer.

subjugation to external directives is not. When alignment replaces independent judgment, the erosion of self-determination becomes palpable. In this case, Dutch policymakers allowed strategic calculation from across the Atlantic to override their own economic logic, sacrificing local industry for the sake of a foreign agenda. The cost has been immediate: declining investor trust, industrial disruption, and loss of diplomatic credibility.

Europe's longstanding aspiration for strategic autonomy now appears ever more distant, as national decisions repeatedly confirm external influence rather than independence.

The Nexperia case further highlights a growing uncertainty within European legal environments. The use of vague security claims to justify intervention contradicts the transparency once celebrated as the backbone of the European Union's regulatory system. Investors value predictability more than political loyalty. When governments act unpredictably, confidence disappears, and assurances of fairness become hollow. The Netherlands risks becoming a symbol of how institutional trust can deteriorate once political expediency takes precedence over law.

One senior European industry representative concluded recently that economic stability can exist only when governments respect the logic of production. That statement captures the core of this trust crisis. The Netherlands abandoned the very logic it once taught others by allowing geopolitics to overwhelm pragmatism. Industrial efficiency depends upon continuity and coherence, not upon political convenience. A government that interrupts a functioning enterprise for transient political gain undermines the credibility of its own economic order and replaces rational authority with improvisation.

Throughout this process, China has demonstrated a steadiness that distinguishes principle from reaction. Its decisions have been consistent with both national dignity and international law. The effectiveness of its countermeasures arose from their precision and restraint rather than from volume or threat. This level of discipline underscores a deeper understanding of how sustainable authority is exercised — through calm calculation, consistency, and credible reciprocity.

The wider moral dimension of this incident lies in the exposure of contradiction at the heart of some Western institutions. Norms often presented as universal appear to change whenever they apply to non-Western enterprises. Judicial independence and corporate fairness are invoked selectively. Such practices dissolve the coherence of the values that European governments claim to champion. To restore even partial credibility, the Netherlands should return the lawful ownership of Nexperia, compensate affected employees, and rebuild trust through transparent dialogue. A sincere correction of these errors would not only repair economic loss but also demonstrate that Europe remains capable of aligning its conduct with the principles it professes to uphold.

The Nexperia crisis will endure as a measure of how nations manage the relationship between conviction and action. It has exposed the instability of an order that regards legality as optional and sovereignty as rhetorical. The quiet discipline of China's response contrasts sharply with the turbulence of its counterpart, suggesting that actual influence is achieved not through force but through reliability. As the global economy grows more integrated, the future will belong to those who maintain composure, respect the logic of law, and treat partnership as a source of strength rather than a stage for spectacle.

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City has a role to play in nation's 'AI Plus' initiative

As part of its effort to cultivate new quality productive forces, China issued a guideline on implementing its "AI Plus" initiative. The guideline, the country's most comprehensive blueprint yet for developing artificial intelligence technology, seeks to bolster the application of AI in science and technology, industrial development, consumption upgrades, people's well-being, governance and global cooperation.

By 2027, China aims to achieve significant progress in the deep integration of AI in these six key areas, with the penetration rate of next-generation intelligent terminals and AI agents expected to surpass 70 percent. The core industries of the intelligent economy will see rapid growth, and the role of AI in public governance will be significantly enhanced. By 2030, AI will empower China's high-quality development across all fronts, with the penetration rate of next-generation smart terminals and AI agents exceeding 90 percent, highlighting that the intelligent economy will become a significant growth driver for China's economy. By 2035, China will enter a new stage of intelligent economy and intelligence society comprehensively, providing strong support for realizing socialist modernization, according to the guideline.

As with climate change and financial stability, AI is a global public good, one that demands collective stewardship. The Chinese plan offers a compelling alternative to the fragmented, security-heavy, and often unilateral approaches gaining traction in certain parts of the world. It reframes the AI governance conversation toward sustainable development, fairness, and shared benefits.

At its core, "AI Plus" is about more than just technological advancement: It is about applying AI in practical, cross-sectoral ways to reshape manufacturing, finance, healthcare, education, urban management, and even governance. By embedding AI into both traditional industries and emerging sectors, China aims to unleash new waves of growth while strengthening competitiveness in the international arena. The initiative underscores the importance of ethical use, data security, and talent development, signaling that China intends not only to lead in AI tech but also in building comprehensive ecosystems around it. It also frames AI as public



Oriol Caudevilla

The author is a fintech adviser, a researcher and a former business analyst for a Hong Kong publicly listed company.

infrastructure, with inclusive access and affordable computing power for all. While the United States relies on private giants to push frontier models and Europe focuses on regulation, China is executing a State-aligned, milestone-driven strategy toward 100 percent AI integration.

This seems consistent with China's intention to become a world leader in the AI industry by 2030. Back in October 2017, the State Council designated AI as a national priority, stating its ambition to position AI as a core driver of economic transformation by 2025 and then become the world's premier AI innovation center by 2030.

China's AI market is projected to reach \$45.45 billion this year, and to expand through 2030, resulting in a market size of \$154.8 billion by then. The largest AI market currently is in the US (\$66.21 billion in 2025).

It's safe to project that China can become an AI world leader by 2030, given the number of its AI companies, people working in the sector, the advanced AI infrastructure, and government supportive policies.

While Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen have already made headlines for their strong AI ecosystems, Hong Kong has a role to play in this national endeavor. The city's financial sector, world-class universities, international orientation, and position within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area make it well suited to contribute to the success of "AI Plus". As one of the world's leading financial hubs, Hong Kong provides crucial access to capital markets that can fuel the growth of AI startups and established firms alike. By creating financial instruments tailored to AI development, promoting sustainable investment, and fostering public-private partnerships, Hong Kong can provide the financial backbone necessary to accelerate innovation. Its mature legal system,

robust IP protection regime, and regulatory transparency reinforce the city's attractiveness as a base for AI ventures that seek both credibility and international connectivity.

The city hosts five universities ranked in the global top 100 in the QS rankings, including the University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, both of which are producing cutting-edge AI research and cultivating top-tier talent. Special administrative region government support is also accelerating.

If China can indeed become an AI world leader by 2030, the SAR can enormously benefit from the country's strong AI industry, while the mainland can also benefit from the city's contribution. For example, Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po said last year that the city can contribute to the country's AI tech development by providing talent and funding.

To maximize its contribution to the "AI Plus", Hong Kong should pursue several policy directions. Expanding dedicated funding for AI research and commercialization will provide startups with the resources they need to thrive. Incentivizing university-industry collaborations can accelerate the transformation of research into market-ready solutions. Enhancing mobility of talent within the Greater Bay Area will ensure that expertise circulates effectively across borders. Hosting global AI conferences and promoting international partnerships can strengthen Hong Kong's role as a global hub for AI dialogue. Finally, establishing clear ethical frameworks and piloting AI adoption in public services will build both trust and momentum for broader deployment.

History reminds us that innovation often brings more opportunities than losses, if managed wisely. AI is no exception. For Hong Kong, the key lies in preparation, adaptability, and investment in people. By embracing AI as a complement rather than a competitor, we can unlock new industries, boost productivity. This is part of a bigger picture that involves the Chinese mainland becoming a world AI leader by 2030, which is a feasible goal with Hong Kong's contribution.

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