

Speech by FS at Reception to Celebrate 203rd Anniversary of Independence of Republic of Peru (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Reception to Celebrate the 203rd Anniversary of Independence of the Republic of Peru today (July 25):

Consul General Cardenas (Consul General of the Republic of Peru in Hong Kong, Mr Enrique Carlos Cardenas Arestegui), distinguished guests, friends of Peru and Hong Kong, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening and Buenas noches.

First and foremost, congratulations to all our friends from Peru on celebrating the 203rd Anniversary of Peruvian Independence.

It is a great pleasure to join you all this evening to honour a truly remarkable country – a nation with a long and proud history, a unique and fascinating cultural heritage, and exceptional natural beauty and biodiversity.

Hong Kong and Peru are separated by more than 18 000 kilometres of Pacific Ocean. Yet, there is more that connects us than divides us. And as the old Chinese proverb says, "A close friend afar brings a distant land near."

I was particularly impressed to learn that Peru has maintained a consular presence in Hong Kong for over 170 years, since 1852.

Today, we are here to reaffirm our friendship and look forward to new possibilities for closer collaboration in areas such as trade and commerce, tourism, arts, culture, and much more.

These possibilities are unfolding before our very eyes. Let me tell you why.

First, I am delighted to announce that the negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between our two economies were fully concluded this Tuesday (July 23). Congratulations to the negotiating teams for their excellent work! This FTA will cover trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property and other related areas.

It will further strengthen our business and financial links, enhancing our bilateral relations.

Last year, Peru was Hong Kong's fifth-largest trading partner in goods

in Latin America. Our total merchandise trade amounted to more than HK\$5 billion. Over the past five years, our bilateral trade has grown at an average annual rate of four per cent. We are moving in the right direction.

Importantly, Hong Kong and Peru are prime connection points to wider markets in our respective regions. Hong Kong, in particular, is the "super connector" and "super value-adder" for foreign companies looking to access the enormous market of the Chinese Mainland, the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region and beyond.

And Peru, supported by major infrastructure projects such as the Chancay Port, is set to become a new strategic gateway for trade across the Pacific.

With this in mind, it is very encouraging to witness the strong and enduring friendship between our country, China, and Peru. This spirit of friendship was in full view last month when President Xi Jinping welcomed President Dina Boluarte in Beijing.

During their meeting, President Xi emphasised the mutual respect and co-operation between China and Peru. He highlighted the opportunities arising from Peru's signing of a memorandum of understanding in 2019 on co-operation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

The two governments should, President Xi said, and I quote: "Synergise China's eight major steps to support high-quality Belt and Road co-operation with Peru's development needs".

Hong Kong is proud to play an important role in this endeavor, fully utilising our singular role in connecting capital, enterprises, projects and people.

It is clear that Hong Kong and Peru share a common goal of championing free and open trade, promoting regional collaboration and sustainable development.

These goals align perfectly with the mission of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), which strives to support sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

As a member of APEC, Hong Kong had the honour of hosting the second 2024 APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) Meeting in April.

It was a very fruitful meeting, bringing together over 200 ABAC delegates and representatives from all 21 APEC member economies. They engaged in open and constructive dialogue on important issues affecting the region.

As Peru is the Chair of APEC this year, I wish Peru every success in its leadership of APEC. I also look forward to visiting Peru in October to attend the APEC Finance Ministers Meeting.

Speaking of APEC, I attended the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting in San Francisco last year on behalf of the Chief Executive. There, I had the honour to meet with and talk to President Boluarte (Ms Dina Boluarte) at the margins

of the meeting. She is a very charismatic leader, enthusiastic about strengthening co-operation between Peru and Hong Kong. I am sure the mutual relationship between our two economies will just grow stronger under her leadership.

Beyond the realm of business, we welcome more of Peru's fascinating arts and culture to Hong Kong. Our city is a great stage for Peru to showcase its renowned creative, cultural and tourism offerings to people in this region and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we celebrate the 203rd Anniversary of Peruvian Independence, I firmly believe that we will build an even brighter future of friendship and collaboration together.

Please raise your glasses and join me in a toast: "To the people of the Republic of Peru". Salud!



[CHP investigates two food poisoning clusters](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (July 25) investigating two epidemiologically linked food poisoning clusters affecting tourists of inbound tour groups from the Mainland. The CHP reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

All affected persons had meals in Hong Kong and subsequently travelled to Macao with the tour groups and sought medical advice there. According to the epidemiological investigations by the CHP and Macao authorities, two clusters with 13 affected persons were identified.

The first cluster involved five males and three females aged between 48 and 68, who developed abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea about 14 hours after having lunch in a restaurant in To Kwa Wan on July 22. The stool sample of one of the patients tested positive for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*.

The other cluster involved two males and three females aged between 26 and 57, who developed similar symptoms about nine hours after having lunch in the same restaurant on the same day.

All affected persons have sought medical advice in Macao. None of them required hospitalisation and all of them are in stable condition.

Initial investigations revealed that the affected persons aforementioned had consumed common food, while some other tour groups also patronised the restaurant. The CHP is currently contacting other tour groups to find out if they are being affected. The personnel from the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have conducted an inspection at the restaurant. The investigations of the CHP and the CFS are ongoing.

To prevent foodborne diseases, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times. When dining out:

- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters, at a buffet;
- Pre-cooked or leftover foods should be stored and reheated properly before consumption;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hotpot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process;
- Use two sets of chopsticks and utensils to handle raw and cooked foods;
- Do not patronise illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Do not try to use salt, vinegar, wine or wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.

Development Bureau imposed regulating actions on contractor involved in fatal industrial incident at construction site in Kwai Chung

A spokesman for the Development Bureau (DEVB) said today (July 25) that the Government attached great importance to construction site safety. In response to the fatal industrial incident at a construction site in Kwai

Chung today, the DEVB, being the party to procure services for public works, has suspended the contractor concerned from tendering for public works contracts pursuant to the regulating regime.

The spokesman said that the contractor concerned was under the List of Approved Contractors for Public Works (the List). The DEVB issued a notification to the contractor concerned today to suspend it from tendering for public works contracts in site formation category with immediate effect. The contractor concerned has to conduct an independent safety audit to review its safety management system. Taking cognisance of the outcome of the independent safety audit, the contractor is required to submit an improvement action plan and implement improvement measures, with a view to demonstrating that it has an effective safety management system before uplifting of the suspension from tendering can be considered. The suspension from tendering is not only confined to future tender exercises, but is also applicable to tender exercises with procedures initiated but not concluded.

Relevant government departments are investigating this industrial incident and will handle it in accordance with the law. Subject to the investigation findings, the DEVB will impose further regulating actions on the contractor concerned later on, including extension of the period of suspension from tendering for public works contracts and even removal from the List.

Hong Kong Children's Hospital receives smooth delivery of cord blood haematopoietic stem cell unit from Mainland for patient treatment

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hong Kong Children's Hospital (HKCH) has been treating a 5-year-old girl who suffers from thalassaemia. The clinical team had planned to perform a haematopoietic stem cell transplant for the patient, and during the process, it was noted that her relative has a cord blood unit stored in a cord blood bank in Guangzhou. Putting the patient's treatment as the priority, the clinical team communicated with the cord blood bank concerned, which included understanding the details of the cord blood unit, as well as regulations and procedures for cross-boundary transportation. The clinical team has rendered full facilitation during the process.

Upon notification by HKCH, the Hospital Authority Head Office informed relevant government departments about the transfer and transplant

arrangements of this case per the usual mechanism. The Hospital Authority has ensured the transfer and transplant processes comply with related regulations in Hong Kong and the Mainland, and requested that no commercial considerations would be involved.

The cord blood unit concerned arrived as planned today (July 25) at the HKCH stem cell transplant laboratory, where it is now being stored according to established procedures. The clinical team will perform the transplant for the patient at an appropriate time according to the treatment plan and her clinical condition.

HKCH expresses gratitude to all Hong Kong and Mainland units involved in the process for their support and facilitation in bringing hope for the patient's treatment.

HKCH is the only centre in Hong Kong to perform haematopoietic stem cell transplants for children. About 40 to 50 transplants are performed each year, including several thalassaemia cases. Sources of haematopoietic stem cells include bone marrow, peripheral blood stem cells and cord blood. Based on their individual situations, patients can receive an autologous or allogeneic transplant, using haematopoietic stem cells from their siblings, parents or unrelated donors.

Labour Department highly concerned about fatal work accident that happened in Kwai Chung today

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about a fatal work accident that happened at a construction site in Kwai Chung this morning (July 25), in which a male worker was trapped between a truck and an excavator. He was certified dead at the scene. The LD is saddened by the death of the worker and expresses its deepest sympathy to his family.

The LD's spokesman said, "We commenced an immediate on-site investigation as soon as we were notified of the accident and issued suspension notices to the contractors concerned, suspending the use of the excavator involved. The contractors cannot resume the use of the excavator until the LD is satisfied that measures to abate the relevant risks have been taken."

The spokesman added, "We will complete the investigation as soon as possible to identify the cause of the accident, ascertain the liability of the duty holders and recommend improvement measures. We will take actions pursuant to the law if there is any violation of the work safety

legislation."

To prevent any person from being struck or trapped by a moving or slewing machine, the LD reminds contractors and owners of machines to ensure that a safe distance is maintained between the machines and the persons nearby. Otherwise, all reasonable steps shall be taken to prevent any person from entering the place where the machine is in operation.

The general duty provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, plant and systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the relevant provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for two years on conviction on indictment; or \$3 million and imprisonment for six months on summary conviction.

In regard to today's accident, the LD will issue a Work Safety Alert through its mobile application "OSH 2.0", website and email, giving a brief account of the accident concerned to duty holders, workers' unions, professional bodies of safety practitioners and others, and reminding the industry of the importance of following safety precautionary measures to prevent a recurrence of similar accidents.

The LD will also remind the employer concerned of the liability for employees' compensation under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, assist family members of the deceased to claim employees' compensation and closely follow up on the case. For those with financial difficulties, the LD will assist them to apply for appropriate emergency funds. Subject to the needs and wishes of family members of the deceased, the LD will also liaise with the Social Welfare Department for financial or other assistance.

For the sake of securing the safety and health of employees at work, the LD appeals to employers to provide plant and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health. Employees should co-operate with their employers, adopt all safety measures and use personal protective equipment provided properly to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of other workers.