

Sixth Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Departments Joint Conference promotes “soft connectivity” of dispute resolution services among three places

The Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan, today (November 18) attended the sixth Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Legal Departments Joint Conference in Zhongshan to meet with representatives from legal departments of Guangdong and Macao on promoting the flow of legal talent among the three places, taking forward the interface of regulatory frameworks and the establishment of a diversified dispute resolution mechanism in the GBA to provide legal support for the development of a world-class Bay Area.

The conference also made good progress in the area of "soft connectivity" of talent.

Firstly, on the interface of mediation professionals, the three parties agreed to complete the work on the GBA mediators' accreditation as soon as possible and submit the proposed list of GBA mediators to the Joint Conference for confirmation, with a view to jointly announcing a consolidated panel of GBA mediators within this year.

Dr Cheung expressed his gratitude in particular to the Guangdong and Macao authorities for their strong support for the first GBA Mediator Training Course of Hong Kong held earlier by the Department of Justice, as well as their assistance in arranging mediation experts from Guangdong and Macao to share in the Course their practical experiences, enhancing Hong Kong mediators' understanding of the mediation systems in Guangdong and Macao.

On the interface of arbitration professionals, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao have considered and endorsed the Working Guidelines on the Panel of GBA Arbitrators and reached consensus on the detailed arrangements for the mechanism of setting up a panel of arbitrators. The three places will commence their respective nominations of local arbitrators and selection procedures next year, endeavouring to announce the first batch of GBA arbitrators within next year.

Dr Cheung said, "Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will announce a consolidated panel of GBA mediators and endorse the Working Guidelines on the Panel of GBA Arbitrators, both of which are important deliverables achieved by the three places in jointly taking forward the interfaces of regulatory frameworks and talent in the GBA, thereby facilitating the 'soft connectivity' of the non-litigation dispute resolution mechanism in the GBA."

Regarding the practice of GBA lawyers, Dr Cheung reflected at the meeting that the Hong Kong legal sector looks forward to participating in more practical training and explore further expansion of the scope of practice of GBA lawyers. He stressed that the Department of Justice is positively responding to the suggestions of the sector and will strive to establish a dedicated platform for GBA lawyers as soon as possible. The Department will also continue to support the sector in deepening professional co-operation with Guangdong and Macao counterparts and to support the sustainable development of GBA lawyers, contributing to the construction of foreign-related rule of law of the country.

On nurturing talent, Dr Cheung said that the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy, formally launched in early November, will proactively commence capacity-building programmes and conduct training projects, and also co-ordinate and collaborate with relevant ministries and institutions in the GBA to nurture legal talent.

Dr Cheung said that the full co-operation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao under the Joint Conference has yielded fruitful results, bringing forth stronger collaboration and synergistic development among the legal sectors of the three places, and promoting the development of the rule of law in the GBA.

This Joint Conference was hosted by the Director-General of the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province, Mr Chen Xudong, and attended by the Secretary for Administration and Justice of the Macao Special Administrative Region Government, Mr Cheong Weng Chon, and other representatives.

[Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (November 18) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From November 10 to 16, the CHP recorded two community-acquired LD cases:

1. A male patient, aged 76 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Southern District; and
2. A male patient, aged 74 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Yuen Long District.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of November 16, 110 LD cases had been recorded this year. In 2023 and 2022, there were 121 and 80 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;

- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 µm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
 2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
 5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

â€‹â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

CSSA caseload for October 2024

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in October showed a drop of 536 cases, representing a decrease of 0.3 per cent compared with that of September, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics released by the Social Welfare Department today (November 18).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of October stood at 196 477 (see attached table), with a total of 264 887 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, single parent cases registered a month-to-month decrease of 0.9 per cent to 19 382 cases. Unemployment cases dropped by 0.6 per cent to 16 357 cases. Ill-health cases, permanent disability cases and low-earnings cases all decreased by 0.4 per cent to 27 862 cases, 16 875 cases and 1 420 cases respectively. Old age cases declined by 0.1 per cent to 110 659 cases.

Speech by Acting CE at Asian Logistics, Maritime and Aviation Conference 2024 (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Acting Chief Executive, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at the Asian Logistics, Maritime and Aviation Conference 2024 today (November 18):

Vice Minister Fu Xuyin (Vice Minister of Transport), Dr Peter Lam (Chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council), distinguished guests from around the world, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am pleased to welcome you to the 14th Asian Logistics, Maritime and Aviation Conference – the largest supply-chain management conference in Asia. And I am delighted to note that this year's two-day global gathering is expected to attract some 2 000 professionals from more than 30 countries and regions.

Hong Kong has long been a key player in the global logistics chain. And we are determined to build on our logistics heritage.

Thanks to the National 14th Five-Year Plan, Hong Kong has the country's full support to develop as an international shipping and aviation centre – and, no less important, to boost our global standing as a financial and trade hub.

Hong Kong's aviation strength is built on our world-class infrastructure, extensive air network and excellent connectivity within the Greater Bay Area. Indeed, Hong Kong International Airport is connected to nearly 200 destinations worldwide and has topped the world for air cargo throughput in nine of the past 10 years. It helps, too, that about half the world's population is within five hours' flight time of Hong Kong.

This year, I am delighted to say, Hong Kong International Airport enters the era of the Three-runway System, which is set for commissioning in about 10 days. It will be a game changer. By 2035, the airport will be able to handle up to 120 million passengers and 10 million tonnes of cargo a year.

More good news. Internationally recognised logistics companies are turning to Hong Kong International Airport for their future. United Parcel Service will develop a new hub facility at the airport. That follows last year's launch of DHL's expanded Central Asia Hub and the Cainiao Smart Gateway.

These and other developments will also enhance our cargo connectivity with the Greater Bay Area, boosting our status as an air cargo transshipment

centre.

And we will continue to expand our air network, strengthening co-operation with civil aviation partners and supporting airlines to elevate their services on major routes and to explore new destinations, particularly in Belt and Road countries.

This week, of course, is Maritime Week. And we have plenty to celebrate, thanks to Hong Kong Port and our superb connectivity with ports around the world.

The Hong Kong Shipping Registry, let me add, is the fourth largest in the world in gross tonnage.

Hong Kong boasts a dynamic maritime services cluster, counting more than 1 100 companies and providing solid support for the industry. And we are committed to expanding our high-end maritime service offerings, as last month's Policy Address underlined.

Hong Kong ranked fourth in this year's International Shipping Centre Development Index, a testament to our strengths as an international maritime centre.

And we see long-term opportunities in Hong Kong's rise as a green and smart port. Our Action Plan on Maritime and Port Development Strategy outlines that promising future, including building green fuel-bunkering capabilities. Just three days ago, we published an action plan on developing Hong Kong into a green maritime fuel-bunkering centre.

A port community system will be up and running next year, enabling the flow and sharing of data within the industry.

Combining our aviation and maritime strengths, Hong Kong has long been a major cargo gateway to and from the Greater Bay Area.

And the Government is committed to sustaining Hong Kong's standing as a regional logistics hub. The Action Plan on Modern Logistics Development published in October 2023 will guide our way, helping the industry capitalise on the far-reaching opportunities made possible by e-commerce and smart and green logistics.

The Government will encourage transshipment, extending arrangements under the Air Transshipment Cargo Exemption Scheme to other cargo-transshipment options. That will enlarge our cargo catchment area, increasing cargo throughput and boosting our competitiveness as a transshipment hub.

We will also step up efforts to develop Hong Kong into a cross-boundary, e-commerce logistics and distribution centre.

Ladies and gentlemen, this year's Asian Logistics, Maritime and Aviation Conference is all about creating a resilient and sustainable future for global supply chains. And Hong Kong is determined to play a vital part in that promising future.

My thanks to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council for organising this year's conference with us. I am grateful, too, for the support of our partners and sponsors in making this year's conference a resounding success.

I wish you all a rewarding and enjoyable stay here in Hong Kong, and the best in business and logistics in the coming year.

Thank you.



[Import of poultry meat and products from Kern County of State of California in US suspended](#)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (November 18) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Kern County of the State of California in the United States (US), the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the area with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 63 470 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 17.2 million poultry eggs from the US in the first nine months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the American authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.