

Speech by Acting CE at Opening Ceremony of Hong Kong Maritime Week 2024 cum World Maritime Merchants Forum 2024 (English only)

Following is the speech by the Acting Chief Executive, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at the Opening Ceremony of Hong Kong Maritime Week 2024 cum World Maritime Merchants Forum 2024 today (November 18):

Honourable Vice-Chairman C Y Leung (Vice-Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference), Director Zheng Yanxiong (Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Commissioner Cui Jianchun (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR), Vice Minister Fu Xuyin (Vice Minister of Transport), Chairman Miao Jianmin (Chairman of the China Merchants Group), distinguished guests, friends of the global maritime community, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. A very warm welcome to Hong Kong Maritime Week and the World Maritime Merchants Forum, which gets going, right here, immediately after our opening ceremony.

This is the eighth edition of Maritime Week, and I am delighted to say it is expected to draw some 14 500 professionals from all over the world.

The theme of this year's Maritime Week, "Navigating to a Greener Future", is a clear and compelling statement of our commitment to sustainability.

Throughout this week, you will want to take in some of the many seminars, workshops and related events spotlighting sustainability and our industry. That includes the Asian Logistics, Maritime and Aviation Conference, which opened this morning. And there is lots more on offer, from harbour and terminal tours and the Golf Cup, to lunches and networking cocktails, games, competitions and a diverse array of international, regional and local happenings. It is all part of Maritime Week 2024.

So is the World Maritime Merchants Forum, the fourth edition.

Indeed, the Forum has become a signature event promoting the global shipping industry chain.

This year's Forum tackles such critical topics as the role of ship finance in industrial transformation, the implications of new carbon-tax regulations and the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in driving digital change in shipping.

Our strategic location as a gateway to Asia, together with our sophisticated facilities and infrastructure, has been central to Hong Kong's rise as one of the world's busiest and most efficient ports.

In the latest International Shipping Centre Development Index, Hong Kong ranked fourth, overall, boasting more than 300 weekly international container-vessel sailings to nearly 500 destinations.

The average length of stay of container vessels in Hong Kong port is 0.95 days. That is about half the average of 1.85 days for the world's top 20 container ports. Our efficiency, I am pleased to say, has earned us the reputation of being a "catch-up port".

And our unique institutional strengths under "one country, two systems", together with our common law system, make Hong Kong an ideal hub for high-value-added maritime services.

We are determined to build on our maritime strengths, as the 2024 Policy Address, published last month, underlined.

Maritime initiatives outlined in the Policy Address include the establishment of the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Development Board. The high-level advisory body will assist the Government in developing policy and long-term strategy for the maritime sector.

The board will include representatives from the maritime industry, ensuring that our policies are informed by those who understand the industry best.

We will also promote the development of high-value-added maritime and professional services by encouraging shipping principals and maritime enterprises to establish a presence or expand in Hong Kong.

That means promoting the tax exemptions we introduced in the past few years for ship-leasing businesses and half-rate tax concessions for marine insurance, ship management, ship agency and ship broking. We will also look to enhance these concessions to ensure that they remain internationally attractive.

And we will explore tax measures to encourage commodity traders to look to Hong Kong for their future.

Talent is also critical to our future success. We will continue to invest in maritime service talent development, strengthening our collaboration with international marine insurance organisations. We will also expand the Maritime and Aviation Training Fund to cover more green energy courses and marine insurance examinations.

Sustainability – transforming Hong Kong into a green maritime centre – is at the heart of our policy priorities.

Earlier this year, our Marine Department began offering cash incentives for Hong Kong-registered ships that meet international decarbonisation

standards. We will expand our promotion of this initiative, encouraging more ships to participate.

Our ambitions also include developing Hong Kong into a green maritime fuel-bunkering centre. Just a few days ago, we published our Action Plan on Green Maritime Fuel Bunkering. Our efforts include the development of essential infrastructure, promoting reduced port emissions, and providing incentives for the use of green maritime fuels. No less important, the Action Plan emphasises collaboration with Greater Bay Area ports and working to create green shipping corridors with other ports.

In short, it will fast track our progress as a green maritime centre.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you the best of business and pleasure at Maritime Week, a productive World Maritime Merchants Forum and smooth sailing in the coming year, whatever your course or destination.

Thank you.

Provision of verified e-contact means by TD licence applicants mostly smooth so far (with photos)

The Transport Department (TD) said that, starting from today (November 18), applicants for the new issue or renewal of 21 driving and vehicle licences must provide a verified Hong Kong mobile phone number or email address as the e-contact means (ECM) before the TD processes the relevant licence/permit applications.

The TD encourages the public to submit applications online, so that they can provide and instantly verify their ECM during the application process, thereby saving time and enjoying convenience. If a paper application is necessary, members of the public must provide a verified ECM via a one-time password on the TD's [designated online platform](#) within three months before submission, and provide the same verified ECM in the application form before submitting the application.

A spokesman for the TD said that those planning to submit licence/permit applications are having their ECM verified, and such arrangements have been proceeding smoothly so far. The spokesman reminded the public that the record of verified ECM is valid for three months and it can be used for more than one licensing application within the validity period. Moreover, a correct, frequently-used and verified Hong Kong mobile phone number or email address should be provided to ensure timely receipt of notifications of the Police and the TD in future. The public should also note that the verified ECM will

only be automatically updated in the applicant's records of driving licence and/or all vehicle(s) registered under his/her name after the application concerned has been approved.

A total of 30 Licensing Service Ambassadors have been deployed at the four Licensing Offices at United Centre in Admiralty, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, Sha Tin Government Offices and Kowloon East Government Offices in Kwun Tong as well as the Cross Boundary Unit at Harbour Building in Central to assist the public in verifying their ECM and submitting applications. The TD will issue letters in batches to about 300 000 registered vehicle owners and driving licence holders whose licences will expire in the following four months, drawing their attention to the legal requirements.

For any change of ECM, a licence holder must notify the TD within 72 hours through the [online services in "GovHK"](#) or by submitting form [TD559](#). Any person in contravention of such requirement without reasonable excuse commits an offence and is liable to a fine of \$2,000 upon conviction.

The public may refer to the TD's [thematic webpage](#), HKeMobility mobile application and Agent T Facebook page (www.facebook.com/AgentT.hk), or call the hotline at 2804 2600 for details.



[Enforcement actions against illegal hillside burial cases](#)

The Home Affairs Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Lands Department (LandsD) today (November 18) launched a joint enforcement operation at the Permitted Burial Ground (PBG)

of Fo Tan (ST/29) in Sha Tin against illegal hillside burials. Two illegal urn houses that were found vacant with no human remains have been removed.

The LandsD posted notices on two unauthorised urn houses located within the PBG of Fo Tan in Sha Tin on September 25 this year, requiring the related persons of the urn houses concerned to cease occupation of the government land and to contact relevant government departments before October 25 this year. As both urn houses remained unclaimed upon expiry of the deadline, the Government commenced the enforcement operation today.

The Government has been implementing a pilot scheme on the management of PBGs in individual PBGs since 2016. Taking into account the actual circumstances of each PBG, the Government has been implementing appropriate improvement measures, including erecting boundary pillars for the PBGs, conducting record surveys of existing graves/urn houses/urns, imposing restrictions on the size of burial sites and demarcating available spaces in PBGs for new applications of burial sites, in order to ensure that the places of burials are within PBGs. The pilot scheme has now been extended to 15 PBGs, covering all nine administrative districts in the New Territories.

Having examined the data obtained from the pilot scheme, the Government has commenced enforcement actions against illegal burials in the PBGs in phases from July 2021 onwards. Besides conducting enforcement actions in the PBG of Fo Tan in Sha Tin, the Government will also commence follow-up actions in other PBGs under the pilot scheme, including posting notices on other unauthorised graves/urn houses/urns before the coming Ching Ming Festival, with a view to removing unclaimed graves/urn houses/urns as soon as possible after the expiration of the notice period.

A Government spokesman reiterated that, according to the Land (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 28), it is an offence when any person occupying government land, otherwise than under permission from the Authority, does not cease the occupation as required by a notice prescribed by the Ordinance. Any property or structure on the occupied government land may be demolished and removed by the Government, and the occupier may be prosecuted. Furthermore, according to the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), it is an offence to bury human remains without permission in writing of the Authority. Offenders are liable to prosecution, and the human remains inside the graves concerned will be removed.

[Fraudulent websites and internet banking login screens related to Bank](#)

of China (Hong Kong) Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited relating to fraudulent websites and internet banking login screens, which have been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the websites or login screens concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

SME Financing Guarantee Scheme enhancements to take effect

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

HKMC Insurance Limited announced that the enhancements to the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme (SFGS) as set out in the "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address" will take effect today (November 18). The measures allow borrowing enterprises under the SFGS to apply for principal moratorium for up to 12 months, for both existing and new loans. The application period will last for 12 months, and end on November 17, 2025. In addition, the maximum loan guarantee periods of the 80% and 90% Guarantee Products will both be extended by three years, to ten years and eight years respectively. The partial principal repayment options will be offered to new loans under the two guarantee products. These measures aim to alleviate the repayment pressure on borrowing enterprises, helping them address challenges brought about by economic restructuring.

Borrowing enterprises in need may approach the relevant participating lenders to discuss specific arrangements. For details, please refer to the

SFGS website (www.hkmc.com.hk/sfgs).