

Speech by CS at 21st Century Cup National English Speaking Competition Hong Kong Region Awards Ceremony 2023 (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at the 21st Century Cup National English Speaking Competition Hong Kong Region Awards Ceremony 2023 today (July 15):

Mr Wang Weiming (Director-General, Department of Educational, Scientific and Technological Affairs, Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Mr Sun Zhaomin (Deputy Director-General, Department of Publicity, Cultural and Sports Affairs, Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR), Mr Song Lai (Deputy Director-General, Department of Youth Affairs, Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR), Mr Huang Jingrui (Political Counselor, Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR), Mr Zhou Li (Deputy Editor-in-Chief, China Daily Group; Publisher and Editor-in-Chief, China Daily Asia-Pacific), teachers, parents, students, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to join you all today for the awards ceremony of the 21st Century Cup National English Speaking Competition – Hong Kong Region.

It is exciting to see so many talented young people here – at every level of our education system – from primary and secondary school to university undergraduates. And, for the first time, this year's competition features a kindergarten category, open to all Hong Kong kindergartens.

Each and every one of these students – of you – has a passion for public speaking. And you are not alone.

This year's competition attracted more than 3 000 students from over 200 schools. That is the largest number of entries since Hong Kong first took part in this renowned national contest six years ago.

To date, more than 10 000 Hong Kong students have participated in the 21st Century Cup, I am happy to say.

The champion of the university category will represent Hong Kong in the National Grand Final later this year. The Hong Kong winner will compete with hundreds of brilliant speakers from across the Mainland.

Our university champion will have plenty of company too. That is because our primary and secondary school category winners will be there, at the Grand

Final, as well. They will take part in a National English-Speaking Exchange Programme, a highlight event of the Grand Final.

The Grand Final, together with the Exchange Programme, will enable Hong Kong students to gain valuable experience in public speaking. No less important, they will meet other bright young people shaping the future of our motherland. They will also have a welcome opportunity to tell the good stories of Hong Kong.

For that, and much more, my thanks to the organisers, China Daily Hong Kong and VDO English. Allow me to thank, as well, all the schools, teachers, judges and countless supporters who have devoted their time and energy to making this public speaking event a success.

On the part of the HKSAR Government, we are determined to implement at full steam the Youth Development Blueprint launched last December.

In particular, upon resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the rest of the world early this year, a number of internship and exchange activities outside Hong Kong are being arranged one after another. In the year 2023-24, the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau of our Government has pulled together over 41 000 places under a wide range of internship and exchange programmes, with details all available at the one-stop online portal of the Youth Development Commission.

It is my belief, as the Chinese proverb goes, that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step (千里之行，始于足下). And I encourage Hong Kong youth to cherish these internship and exchange opportunities to widen their horizons and realise their potential.

My congratulations to this year's winning students and finalists. Your future looks just bright. After all, our city's unique advantage is "one country, two systems", which brings a world of people and businesses alike together for mutually rewarding opportunities. And that can only be realised through clear and compelling communication.

On that note, I wish you all every success, and good health, in the year to come. Thank you very much.

