

InvestHK and HKCEA collaborated a spring reception for Mainland enterprises in Hong Kong (with photos)

Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) and the Hong Kong Chinese Enterprises Association (HKCEA) collaborated a spring reception this evening (February 26) receiving over 900 representatives from major Mainland enterprises in recognition of their lasting commitment and contributions to the city.

Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Mr Yin Zonghua; the Deputy Financial Secretary, Mr Michael Wong; the Director-General of Investment Promotion, Ms Alpha Lau; and the Chairman of the HKCEA, Mr Miao Jianmin, attended the event, which was organised by HKCEA and co-organized by InvestHK. A toasting ceremony and a lion dance performance at the end took the celebrative mood to its height.

Addressing the guests, Mr Wong thanked the HKCEA for its continued support of Hong Kong over the years. He said that the HKSAR Government will press ahead in building a vibrant economy and give full play to Hong Kong's distinctive advantages of enjoying strong support of the motherland and being closely connected to the world under "one country, two systems". The city will strive to provide the best business environment for enterprises to flourish.

Mr Miao said that since last year Hong Kong has emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic and resumed exchanges with the world, returning to the centre of the global stage. Looking to the new year, the HKCEA will continue to unite Chinese enterprises and fully support the HKSAR Government in exercising good governance, governance in accordance with the law, and achieving long-term peace and stability. The association will help Hong Kong align itself with major national strategies and strive for the economic growth.

The annual spring reception marks an important occasion for InvestHK and the HKCEA. As the country and the city continue to forge closer ties, the number of Mainland companies in Hong Kong has been on the rise. In 2023, InvestHK assisted 136 Mainland companies setting up or expanding in the city, which represents the largest source market in the department's portfolio.



[Caritas Medical Centre announces incident of nursing student and staff member suspected of being indecently assaulted](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

â€‹The spokesman for the Caritas Medical Centre made the following statement today (February 26) regarding an incident of a nursing student and a staff member suspected to have been indecently assaulted:

A nursing student and a patient care assistant were suspected to have been indecently assaulted while performing nursing procedures for an 86-year-old male patient in an eye ward this morning. Upon receiving the report, the hospital reported the incident to the Police immediately. A man was subsequently arrested by the Police in the ward.

The hospital is highly concerned about the incident and expressed sympathy to the nursing student and patient care assistant concerned. The hospital has provided support to them. The hospital resolutely adopts a zero-tolerance attitude to this incident, strongly condemns indecent acts, and

will follow up seriously and fully co-operate with the Police investigation.

The hospital has reported the incident to the Hospital Authority Head Office via the Advance Incident Reporting System.

Government held seminar on promotion of Qianhai Overall Development Plan

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (February 26) held a seminar to promote the Overall Development Plan for the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Co-operation Zone (Qianhai Overall Development Plan) at the Central Government Offices. The Director General of the Department of Regional Economy of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Mr Wu Shulin, was the keynote speaker and delivered a thematic presentation on "Shouldering the mission and forging ahead to open up new horizons for the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Co-operation Zone (Qianhai Co-operation Zone)". Representatives from the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, Guangdong Provincial Development and Reform Commission, and Shenzhen Municipal Government were also present. Hong Kong Deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) and Hong Kong Members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), as well as relevant HKSAR Government officials attended the seminar and learned about embracing the requirements and objectives of the Central Government in regard to the Qianhai Overall Development Plan, and had exchange with the delegation of the NDRC on how to resolutely uphold the Central Government's strategic decisions on Qianhai development.

The development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) is a national strategy personally devised, personally planned and personally driven by President Xi Jinping. Qianhai is one of the major co-operation platforms in the GBA. President Xi emphasises high-quality co-ordinated regional development, and shows care for Qianhai's development and opening up. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, he has visited Qianhai three times, personally steering the reform and development of Qianhai.

The Central Government promulgated the Qianhai Overall Development Plan in end last year, serving the purpose for achieving full implementation of President Xi's earnest expectations and strategic planning on Qianhai. The Qianhai Overall Development Plan provides a comprehensive view of the strategic positioning, development objectives, spatial layout, industry planning, business environment, urban planning, quality living environment, and governance model of the Qianhai Co-operation Zone, among other things. Its objective is to promote the demonstrative and leading roles Qianhai plays in the development of the GBA, further deepening the collaboration between

Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen held a meeting of the Task Force on the Development of the Qianhai Co-operation Zone on February 6 this year in Shenzhen. At the meeting, both sides remarked that they would press ahead at full steam for promoting the demonstrative and leading roles Qianhai plays in the development of the GBA, further deepening the collaboration between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, maintaining close collaboration with relevant central ministries and commissions, and enhancing the publicity and briefing work on the policy content of the Qianhai Overall Development Plan.

At the seminar, Mr Wu Shulin focused on studying and upholding President Xi's important steer on Qianhai's development, profoundly explained the significance of promoting Qianhai's development and opening up, and comprehensively analysed the situation facing Qianhai's development. Following closely the overall requirements of full implementation of the Qianhai Overall Development Plan, with important missions including to facilitate Guangdong-Hong Kong and Hong Kong-Shenzhen co-operation and to expand the scope of development of Hong Kong, Mr Wu also systematically elaborated various specific measures on industry development, business environment, urban development, public services, and institutional mechanisms and so forth.

Mr Wu said, "As the next step, the NDRC will fulfill the responsibilities of the Central Regional Coordination Development Leading Group Office and work with relevant central ministries and commissions to fully support Guangdong Province and Shenzhen Municipality to, by leveraging the Plan for Comprehensive Deepening Reform and Opening Up of the Qianhai Co-operation Zone and the Qianhai Overall Development Plan, deepen co-operation between Hong Kong and Shenzhen on all fronts, so as to make new contributions to promoting Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability, and better integration into the overall development of the country."

In his speech delivered at the seminar, the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, said, "The HKSAR Government welcomes and is grateful for the Central Government's promulgation of the Qianhai Overall Development Plan. The Qianhai Overall Development Plan has a significant bearing on not only the high-level development of Qianhai and the GBA, but also the country's continued deepening reform and opening up and high-quality development in a comprehensive manner. It also supports the HKSAR in enriching the practice of 'one country, two systems' which will in turn provide vital guidance and set a direction for Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability."

Mr Tsang also remarked that, "The Qianhai Co-operation Zone serves as an important platform for the opening up of the Mainland market by industries in which Hong Kong's strengths lie, and a key gateway for Mainland enterprises to attract foreign investment and to go global by expanding their overseas market through Hong Kong. Hong Kong will be able to consolidate and enhance its status as international finance, maritime and trade centres, as well as an international aviation hub, with a view to supporting its social and economic development. Hong Kong will continue to support Qianhai in trying

out new policies on a pilot basis and pursuing more policy innovation and breakthroughs, with a view to spreading the successful policies to the rest of the GBA and even the entire country, and making greater contributions to the further reform and opening up of the country. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. As the country embarks on its new journey of building a great modern country in all respects through a Chinese path to modernisation and in advancing great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the GBA is flourishing and presented with unlimited opportunities. The HKSAR Government will continue to take proactive steps and work together with other cities of the GBA to, under the principle of complementarity, deepen collaborations and strive to resolve each and every difficulty and bottleneck, thereby turning barriers into bridges and smoothing the process of development. We will also introduce more policy measures to foster the flow of people, goods, capital and information, enabling local and overseas talents and enterprises, as well as members of the general public, to seize and embrace the unlimited opportunities brought about by the GBA. Meanwhile, we will support other cities of the GBA to tap into global markets through the international platform of Hong Kong, fully leveraging Hong Kong's dual roles in 'going global and attracting foreign investment' and making good use of Hong Kong's strengths to contribute to the needs of the country."

Hong Kong Deputies to the NPC and Hong Kong Members of the National Committee of the CPPCC represent broadly all sectors of the community. Mr Tsang encouraged participants to join hands and appeal to different sectors to proactively take forward the development the Qianhai Co-operation Zone and the GBA, through their extensive network and influence, with a view to facilitating Hong Kong's better integration into the overall development of the country, providing new and greater contributions to the development of Qianhai as well as the high-quality development of the country.

DH continues interdepartmental operation against distribution of smoking product advertisements in public housing estates (with photos)

To step up enforcement actions against the distribution of smoking product leaflets in public housing estates, the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of Health (DH) has carried out joint operations with the Police and Housing Department (HD) in a total of 21 public housing estates in various districts across Hong Kong since January this year. Four joint operations have also been conducted with the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) in February to combat the sale of illicit

cigarettes and related promotional activities in public housing estates. TACO today (February 26) continued to carry out relevant joint operations with the HD and the C&ED, during which officers conducted patrols at a public housing estate in Kowloon Bay, and provided estate security personnel and residents with information on what to do when a suspected violation is found.

In accordance with the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) (the Ordinance), no person shall distribute any smoking product advertisement (including any promotion leaflets). Any person who contravenes the regulation is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000. TACO will continue to carry out relevant interdepartmental operations, and follow up and investigate every complaint regarding the distribution of smoking product advertisements, as well as to refer any suspected cases of illicit cigarettes that involve violations of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) to the relevant department for further investigation.

TACO, the Police and the HD have established a co-operation mechanism targeting the distribution of smoking product leaflets in public housing estates. When any smoking product leaflet distribution is detected at public housing estates, the housing estate staff will contact the Police for assistance and subsequently refer the case to TACO for further investigation. Since 2021, TACO has successfully prosecuted 12 offenders (involved in 13 cases) for distributing smoking product leaflets. The highest penalty for these convicted cases was a fine of \$8,000.

A spokesman for the DH stressed that the department has always been closely monitoring and taking stringent enforcement actions against violations of the Ordinance (including the distribution of smoking product advertisements). The spokesman reiterated that all tobacco products, regardless of whether they are duty paid or not, pose significant health risks. Smokers should quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. Information on smoking cessation can also be obtained from www.livetobaccofree.hk.



Transcript of remarks by CE at media session (with photo/video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session this afternoon (February 26) after accompanying the Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, Mr Xia Baolong, to an engagement session with representatives from local and foreign chambers of commerce:

Chief Executive: Director Xia Baolong is continuing his visit to Hong Kong. Today is his fifth day of the visit here, in what has been a valuable series of sessions for all concerned. Hong Kong's economic development is, of course, one of the primary objectives of Director Xia's visit. That underlines the Central Government's continuing support and care for the economy, and the community, of Hong Kong.

This afternoon, Director Xia held a meeting with about 40 representatives of local and foreign chambers of commerce to listen to their views. The exchange lasted for over 1.5 hours.

Chamber representatives commented on a wide range of subjects and issues, such as economic development of Hong Kong, integration with GBA (Greater Bay Area) and the development of China, access to GBA, convenience to gain access to both the GBA market and the overall Mainland market, regional co-operation with Southeast Asian countries and Middle East countries, tourism, attraction of foreign investments, and how to capitalise the strengths of Hong Kong in areas such as education, I&T (innovation and technology), culture and using Hong Kong as the aviation hub.

The study team attaches great importance to the status of Hong Kong as an international city, and wants to hear the views of local and foreign chambers. The chambers, and their members, have been in Hong Kong for many years, some for decades. They are familiar with Hong Kong's economic situation and business environment. And they have a good grasp of the global economy and its potential direction in the year. Their experience, their belief in Hong Kong and their open exchange of views were appreciated by the study team.

Hong Kong, let me be clear, will continue to serve as an international financial centre and global city. We will continue to leverage Hong Kong's "one country, two systems" framework, enjoying the unwavering support of the motherland, while being closely connected to the world at large.

That unique advantage has long blessed Hong Kong, long reinforced our solid institutional foundation. Hong Kong leads global rankings in finance, trade and commerce, as well as in shipping and other professional services. We are the only common law jurisdiction in China, and our courts exercise

independent judicial power, including the power of final adjudication. As many of the world's major commercial and financial centres also practise common law, this commonality enables our legal connectivity with the world, creating more certainty and understanding for all. In turn, it allows Hong Kong to play a bridging role – a "super connector" and "super value-adder" between the Mainland and the rest of the world.

Foreign companies and their investments here are the most solid and visible manifestation of international confidence in Hong Kong. Last year, Hong Kong was ranked number one, globally, in its investment environment. As for enterprise conditions, Hong Kong was tops in the Asia Pacific region and number two globally. According to the 2023 World Investment Report, Hong Kong's size of foreign direct investment inflows was the world's fourth-largest. Total deposits in Hong Kong at the end of 2023 exceeded HK\$16 trillion. That, let me add, was up 5.1 per cent, year-on-year.

Last year, the number of start-ups in Hong Kong increased by 270, year-on-year, to nearly 4 300. And that, I'm pleased to note, is a record high for Hong Kong. Last year, as well, the number of overseas and Mainland companies establishing or expanding their business in Hong Kong through Invest Hong Kong increased significantly – rising some 27 per cent over the previous year. Among them, we welcomed a 40 per cent increase in the number of companies from the United Kingdom. Those from Singapore rose 35 per cent, while companies from the United States climbed by more than 10 per cent. And the investment these companies are making in their first year of operation, here in Hong Kong, exceeds HK\$61.6 billion – nearly three times the previous year's total.

There's more, lots more, to say. But I believe these numbers speak, loudly and convincingly, about the confidence local and foreign enterprises have in Hong Kong – in our economy and our future.

Now I would like to invite the chairpersons of local and foreign chambers to speak. I thank for the participation of all the chamber members in the forum earlier and I thank three representatives from the participants to tell you about what they think. They are Mrs Betty Yuen, the Chairperson of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce; the Chairman of the Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (Hong Kong & Macau), Dato' Gan Khai Choon; and the Chairman of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (Hong Kong & Macau), Mr Wilhelm Brauner.

Reporter: A few questions for the representatives from the foreign chambers. Did the meeting talk about Article 23? Is there any concern from the foreign businesses regarding Article 23, and how did Director Xia respond? Thank you.

Chief Executive: You have raised the question about the purpose of the meeting we just had with representatives of Hong Kong and foreign chambers. Basically, three points: the study team, led by Director Xia, has made his goal very clear, principally in two areas, one is the economic development of Hong Kong, and also the district administration since we had the new system. And you can see all the arrangements that have been made principally focused on these two areas.

In the earlier forum Director Xia had with the representatives of local and foreign chambers, it is also for the theme of economic development. And I am thankful for the active participation of the chamber representatives, who have given a lot of ideas and views on economic development, which include how to capitalise on the strengths of Hong Kong in the area of education, tourism, I&T, aviation, etc. They have also talked about how they would like easier and more convenient access to the GBA and other Mainland city markets. It is a very good exchange. Director Xia has been very open, and also very keen to listen to the views. And of course, he has also given his opinions in answer to the views expressed.

There were one or two representatives who did talk about Article 23. They basically said that they understood the reason for it, and they supported it, because in their country, they have similar laws, and they don't have any effect on their consideration and confidence in Hong Kong. In fact, a few even said that, with the stability ensured, then there is a good foundation for development. I would allow other chamber representatives to answer your questions.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

