

# HKSAR Government strongly disapproves of and firmly rejects United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission report

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) today (November 15) strongly disapproved of and firmly rejected the untruthful remarks, slanders and smears against various aspects of the HKSAR in the so-called "report" of 2023 issued by the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC).

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "The HKSAR Government strongly disapproves of and firmly rejects the USCC's manoeuvre with politics prevailing over the rule of law and its interference in the affairs of the HKSAR through the so-called 'report'. The HKSAR is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China, is a local administrative region that enjoys a high degree of autonomy under 'one country, two systems', and comes directly under the Central People's Government. The HKSAR will continue, in accordance with the law, to effectively prevent, suppress and punish acts and activities that endanger national security and to safeguard the rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong people. The HKSAR Government strongly urges again those individual United States politicians to discern facts from fallacies, and immediately stop acting against the international law and basic norms that govern international relations and interfering in the affairs of the HKSAR, which are purely China's internal affairs."

The spokesman reiterated, "Under the 'one country, two systems' principle, Hong Kong has the distinctive advantage of enjoying strong support of the motherland and being closely connected to the world. With the unparalleled connectivity with the Mainland and the rest of the world, Hong Kong will continue to play its unique role as a 'super-connector' and 'super value-adder'. With the strong support of the motherland, and the wide room for development brought about by national strategies including the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development and the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative, Hong Kong embraces unlimited business opportunities. The HKSAR Government will continue to create strong impetus for growth at full steam, forge a better integration of a capable government and an efficient market, and proactively compete for enterprises and talent to strengthen the city's competitiveness, with a view to steadily advancing from stability to prosperity in the new phase."

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# Speech by CE at THE ONE Humanitarian Award 10th Anniversary Award Gala Dinner (English only) (with video)

Following is the video speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the ceremony of THE ONE Humanitarian Award 10th Anniversary Award Gala Dinner today (November 15):

Dr David Harilela (Founder and Global Chair of THE ONE Humanitarian Award), Mr Gordon McInally (Rotary International President), Mr Andy Li (District Governor of Rotary International District 3450), Mr Eugene Fong (THE ONE Co-Chair), Mr H W Fung (THE ONE Hong Kong Chair), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It gives me great pleasure to address you at tonight's prestigious event. You are all gathered here to celebrate one cause. The one cause, that has been promoting the sustainability of exemplary service for humanity for a decade.

THE ONE Humanitarian Award was founded by Dr David Harilela in 2012. It is a project by Rotary International District 3450. It recognises and empowers outstanding individuals, who have dedicated their lives to the improvement of mankind.

Throughout the years, THE ONE Award International, together with the award's local editions in Hong Kong and the Philippines, has rewarded over 60 unsung heroes around the globe. The award has donated over US\$3 million, and transformed over 300 000 lives.

I express my sincere gratitude to THE ONE Humanitarian Award, for the selfless humanitarian service you have encouraged in mankind, and for your continuous effort in spreading the important value of compassion.

The Belt and Road Initiative was proposed by President Xi Jinping 10 years ago. It has become a key platform for building a global community with a shared future. Last month at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, President Xi said that we should jointly address various global risks and challenges, and deliver a bright future of peace, development, co-operation and mutual benefit for future generations.

Under the "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong is bestowed with unparalleled connectivity with both the Mainland of China and the rest of the world. Not only are we an international financial, shipping and trading centre, Hong Kong is also committed to becoming a major international philanthropic centre.

And we need to look no further than to our people for the drive to

achieve that. The people of Hong Kong are well-known for their benevolence. They always lend their helping hands to those in need, to those who suffer from natural disasters, poverty, sickness or other misfortune.

At last count, based on their tax exemption status, some 10 000 charities have been set up in Hong Kong. In the financial year 2020-21, approved charitable donations under profits tax for business donors totalled US\$560 million. For individual donors, charitable donations approved under salaries tax was about US\$1 billion.

Figures aside, if you simply look around the kind and faithful faces around you this evening, you will know why I am confident that we can rise as a charitable hub.

I know you are all eager to know which of this year's award finalists will win THE ONE honour. My heartfelt congratulations to the awardees and all finalists for your dedicated service to the community.

My thanks again to THE ONE Humanitarian Award for the past decade of success, in recognising the best in humanity. And I wish you every success in the years to come.

Enjoy the evening. Thank you very much.

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## [CHP investigates imported case of Zika Virus Infection](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (November 15) investigating an imported case of Zika Virus Infection, and urged the public to adopt strict anti-mosquito measures and safe sex during travel. Pregnant women should not travel to [areas with Zika virus transmission](#) (affected areas).

The case involves a 58-year-old female patient with good past health, who had developed a fever since November 7 and later presented with generalised skin rash, muscle pain and joint pain since November 9. She attended the Accident and Emergency Department (AED) of Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) on November 12. She then attended the AED of Ruttonjee Hospital on the next day (November 13) and was admitted on the same day for management. She has been in stable condition all along.

Her blood specimen tested positive for Zika virus.

Upon laboratory confirmation, the CHP immediately commenced epidemiological investigations, and initial enquiries revealed that the

patient had travelled to India on October 30 and returned to Hong Kong on November 12. She recalled insect bites during travel. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), India is recorded with previous Zika virus transmission.

One of her travel collaterals developed similar symptoms on November 12 and has been admitted to CMC. Her home contact has remained asymptomatic so far.

The CHP has informed the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department for vector surveillance and control. The CHP will also report the case to the WHO and the national, Guangdong and Macao health authorities. Letters will be issued to doctors and hospitals to alert them to the latest situation. Zika Virus Infection is a statutorily notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong, suspected or confirmed cases must be promptly notified for investigation, control and surveillance.

According to the WHO, multiple countries/areas in the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia have recorded with current or previous Zika virus transmissions. The public should heighten their vigilance during travel. Doctors should stay alert to patients with compatible symptoms and travel history.

The CHP's Port Health Division (PHD) has been carrying out inspections and health promotions (including reminding travellers to adopt anti-mosquito measures when travelling) at boundary control points (BCPs) to maintain strict environmental hygiene with effective mosquito control, and keeping close contact with relevant stakeholders (e.g. airlines and the travel industry) to provide the latest disease information and health advice at appropriate times. Routine health surveillance on body temperature of inbound travellers at all BCPs is ongoing. However, infected persons are mainly asymptomatic. Therefore, those arriving from Zika-affected areas are urged to apply insect repellent for at least 21 days upon arrival to reduce the risk of transmission.

A spokesman for the CHP said that Zika Virus Infection is a mosquito-borne disease caused by Zika virus. Zika virus is primarily transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito. Aedes aegypti, which is currently not found in Hong Kong, is considered the most important vector. Most people infected with Zika virus infection are asymptomatic. For patients with symptoms, they commonly present with rash, fever, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise and headache.

Zika Virus Infection during pregnancy is a cause of microcephaly and other congenital malformations in the infant, and it can also cause complications such as fetal loss, stillbirth and preterm birth.

Apart from [general measures on preventing mosquito bites and mosquito breeding](#), the public should take heed of special notes below:

A. Travelling abroad

- If going to affected areas, travellers, especially persons with immune disorders or severe chronic illnesses, should arrange a consultation with a doctor at least six weeks before the trip, and have extra preventive measures to avoid mosquito bites;
- During the trip, if travelling in rural affected areas, carry a portable bed net and apply permethrin (an insecticide) on it. Permethrin should not be applied to skin. Seek medical attention promptly if feeling unwell; and
- Travellers who return from affected areas should seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to a doctor if feeling unwell e.g. having fever.

#### B. Sexual transmission

- Travellers should consider not having sex during travel to affected areas, or else a condom should be used; and
- Male and female travellers returning from affected areas should abstain from sex for at least three months and at least two months respectively upon return, or else a condom should be used.

#### C. Pregnant women

- Pregnant women should not travel to affected areas. Women preparing for pregnancy should note Point B above. If they or their male sex partners plan to travel to affected areas, they should consult their doctors for advice on the risk. Use of mosquito repellent containing DEET during travel and returning from these areas for a period of at least 21 days are advised for all travellers including pregnant women;
- Attend antenatal follow up regularly and tell the attending doctor the history of recent travel;
- Observe for symptoms of Zika Virus Infection and seek medical advice as soon as possible if feeling unwell; and
- Abstain from sex with partner who had travelled to affected areas, or else a condom should be used throughout the pregnancy.

â€‹The public may visit the Zika pages of the [CHP](#) and the [Travel Health Service](#) for more information.

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## [HKETO, Brussels promotes innovation and technology opportunities to Web Summit Lisbon 2023 participants](#)

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Brussels (HKETO, Brussels)

promoted opportunities in Hong Kong for innovation and technology (I&T) start-ups and companies that are attending the Web Summit Lisbon 2023 in Portugal.

HKETO, Brussels hosted a networking reception for participants on November 14 (Lisbon time), in collaboration with Invest Hong Kong and supported by the Portugal-Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce and Industry. At the reception, Deputy Representative of HKETO, Brussels Miss Grace Li outlined Hong Kong's distinctive advantages under "one country, two systems" and in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. In particular, she highlighted opportunities for the I&T sector.

Miss Li emphasised the commitment of the Government in strengthening the role of Hong Kong as an international I&T centre. She encouraged I&T companies to set up their operations in Hong Kong and benefit from the city's business-friendly environment, a well-developed I&T ecosystem and a wide range of infrastructure facilities.

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The Web Summit is a major technology conference in Lisbon, Portugal, and is being held this year from November 13 to 16 (Lisbon time). It has been attended by over 70 000 international participants in previous years, including entrepreneurs, investors and professionals in the field of technology.

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## **LCQ6: Rebuilding of village houses**

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hok-fung and a reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (November 15):

Question:

It is learnt that there are currently more than 700 villages in Hong Kong where many village houses are aged over 50 years and their building structures pose potential safety hazards. However, I have recently received requests for assistance from members of the public pointing out that their applications for rebuilding village houses made 11 years ago have not yet been approved. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number and percentage of rejected applications among the applications for rebuilding village houses in the past five years, as well as the reasons for rejecting the applications; among the applications which are still being processed at present, of the time spent so far on the application which has taken the longest time to process;

(2) whether it has streamlined the administrative procedures and processes

for rebuilding village houses, and set indicators for the time required for vetting and approving the applications; and

(3) given that in September this year, the Government designated a total of about 626 hectares of land in areas across Tai Long Wan, Tong Fuk, Cheung Sha, Pui O, Mong Tung Wan, etc. in the South Lantau Coast Outline Zoning Plan as "Regulated Areas" to protect the natural environment and ecology of the relevant areas, and that there are many village houses in such areas, whether the Government has, before making the aforesaid planning, consulted the relevant stakeholders and explained to them how the Government will handle the applications for rebuilding such village houses; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In general, if a New Territories Exempted House meets the criteria under the Buildings Ordinance (Application to the New Territories) Ordinance (Cap. 121) (Note), it will be exempted from the requirement under the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) to apply to the Building Authority for approval of the plans prior to the works, but the Certificate of Exemption issued by the Lands Department (LandsD) must still be obtained prior to commencement of such works.

Redevelopment applications generally involve archaic leases and houses, and considerable time has to be spent on checking the records during processing. Due to the difference in the complexity of different cases, the time required can hardly be generalised. Despite so, as redevelopment mainly involves existing old village houses, the Government will process relevant applications in a humane way to the extent possible, and speed up the approval through streamlining the procedures in order to enhance building safety and improve the countryside living environment.

In response to the respective parts raised by Hon Chan, my reply is as follows:

(1) Within five years from January 2019 to October 2023, the LandsD received around 2 370 redevelopment applications, and approved around 1 380 applications and rejected around 1 080 applications. Around 2 020 applications were under processing. As the handling of cases may span across one year, the cases approved and rejected within the same year may not be the same as the applications received.

The main reasons of the LandsD's rejecting the applications include unable to confirm whether the applicant was the registered owner of the lot concerned; inconsistency between the boundary of the lot under application and the records or the boundary of the lot overlapping with that of the adjacent lot(s); and the applicant failing to provide proposals concerning the proposed house, balcony and septic tank according to existing requirements, etc. The LandsD will inform the applicant the reason of

rejection in writing, and if the applicant can subsequently resolve the relevant matters, the LandsD will resume the processing of the application as soon as possible. In general, the applicant will not be required to re-submit the application.

As a reference, among the approved cases from 2016 to 2020, the processing of more than half were completed within five years. The shortest and the longest processing time were less than a year and more than 10 years respectively. We agree that there is room for improvement.

(2) To streamline the procedures involved in redevelopment applications and speed up processing, the LandsD enhanced the processing procedures of redevelopment applications in October 2021 and January 2023 respectively, including:

1. To commence the procedures under various aspects in parallel, such as the verification of land ownership and lot boundary, and consultation with relevant departments;
2. To simplify the procedures for handling objections;
3. To encourage more face-to-face meetings with the applicant for direct discussion;
4. To delegate the approval of relatively simple cases to officers under the District Lands Officer, and only non-straightforward redevelopment cases will be submitted to the District Lands Officer or District Lands Office Conference for approval;
5. To enhance the supervision by the LandsD on District Lands Offices, including regularly following up on the progress of the redevelopment applications.

Efforts have been made to clear the backlog cases (including those received before October 2021) through the above measures, with noticeable results delivered in the period, as the average number of cases completed each year increased from 480 in 2021/22, to around 510 within the period from January to October 2023.

As for new applications received since the streamlining measures were in place in October 2021, the LandsD announced in its 2021/22 performance pledge that the processing of straightforward cases shall be completed within eight months. As for non-straightforward cases (for example cases requiring resolution of matters concerning lot boundaries or local views), the LandsD endeavours to gradually complete the processing of new applications within 24 months after completing the processing of the backlog cases.

(3) On September 15, 2023, as the Secretary for Development, I exercised the power conferred by the amended Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131), and designated certain areas zoned "Green Belt" ("GB"), "Conservation Area" ("CA") and "Coastal Protection Area" ("CPA") in the South Lantau Coast Outline Zoning Plan as "Regulated Area". As explained to the Members of the

Legislative Council and Heung Yee Kuk, etc, in the course of the legislative amendment exercise, the designation of "Regulated Area" only provides the Planning Authority with enforcement power he did not have in the past to take enforcement actions against unauthorised developments in areas worth protecting or deserve conservation, for the purposes of protecting the area from environmental degradation. The relevant arrangements only target at unauthorised developments. It does not impose any additional requirements on the redevelopment of village houses in compliance with the relevant laws and regulations. In other words, the redevelopment of a village house within the "Regulated Area" in South Lantau is subject to the same planning requirements as those prior to the designation of the relevant land as "Regulated Area", viz., redevelopment of village house within the "GB" zone does not require a planning application, whereas a planning application is all along required if the redevelopment falls within the "CA" or "CPA" zones.

As the designation of "Regulated Area" involves the extension of the geographical coverage of enforcement powers, it is not appropriate to announce the location(s) in advance to prevent circumvention. Furthermore, as the designation per se does not affect the uses planned for the area, no prior consultation will be conducted, but we will continue to explain the situation to villagers to allay their concerns.

Thank you, President.

Note: Which means not exceeding three storeys and 27 feet in height, and with the area of each storey not exceeding 700 square feet.