

Second 2024 ABAC Meeting concludes successfully in Hong Kong

The following is issued on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Advisory Council Hong Kong, China:

The second 2024 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Advisory Council (ABAC) Meeting (the second Meeting) successfully concluded in Hong Kong today (April 25).

Co-organised by ABAC Hong Kong, China (HKC) and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), the second Meeting was attended by over 200 ABAC delegates and staffers from all 21 APEC member economies.

Under the theme "People. Business. Prosperity." for ABAC 2024 and led by the Chair from ABAC Peru, Mrs Julia Torreblanca, the four-day meeting commenced on April 22 and focused its discussions on business sector priorities in the key areas of trade and investment facilitation, digital transformation, sustainability and inclusion. ABAC delegates deliberated on emerging challenges to free trade and their potential impact on undermining economic progress, and put forward a set of recommendations to APEC ministers to address these urgent issues.

ABAC HKC welcomed the outcomes of the second Meeting, including ABAC's recommendations to APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade on, for instance, strengthening the World Trade Organization, revitalising the strategy towards achieving the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific and advancing digital trade. ABAC HKC also welcomed the recommendations to APEC ministers on enhancing women's participation in the economy.

Indeed, taking the opportunity of the full attendance of the 21 member economies at the second Meeting, ABAC HKC has put in place a comprehensive programme for the delegates, with an aim to showcasing HKC's role as an international finance and business centre, as well as its unique strengths in cultural exchange, performance sports, technological development, start-up ecosystem, smart health care, conservation and world-class logistics infrastructure, etc.

On April 23, HKC's representative to ABAC Ms Mary Huen hosted a luncheon titled Hong Kong's Resilience as an International Financial Centre with the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Mr Eddie Yue, as the keynote speaker, as well as the Chief Executive Officer of Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited, Ms Bonnie Chan, and Chairman, UBS Global Wealth Management Asia, Head and Chief Executive, UBS Hong Kong, Mrs Amy Lo, as panellists.

ABAC HKC extended its heartfelt thanks to the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, for hosting a welcome dinner for the ABAC delegates and guests on April 23 at the Hong Kong Palace Museum, as well as to the Financial Secretary, Mr

Paul Chan, for giving a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the second Meeting on the same day.

On April 24, the Airport Authority Hong Kong, the Hospital Authority and Ocean Park Hong Kong organised three site visits respectively for interested ABAC delegates to learn about HKC's strengths as an aviation and logistics hub, its application of smart health care and technology as well as work in conservation and sustainable development. The Hong Kong Jockey Club hosted a gala dinner for the ABAC delegates, at which the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, spoke on the importance of public-private collaboration in building a strong, resilient and sustainable future of the Asia-Pacific Region.

Earlier that day, HKC's representative to ABAC Ms Nisa Leung organised a luncheon titled Global Biotech Innovation from Hong Kong with the participation of the Under Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Ms Lillian Cheong, and three home-grown biotech companies.

The second Meeting concluded today with a press conference, with the Chair of ABAC 2024 giving an overview on the outcomes of the four-day meeting. The Chair of ABAC 2024 also thanked the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), ABAC HKC and the HKTDC for their support in hosting the second Meeting.

The remarkable success of the Meeting relies on the invaluable support rendered by a number of organisations. ABAC China wishes to particularly express sincere appreciation to the HKSAR Government, the HKTDC, the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, the Airport Authority Hong Kong, the Hospital Authority, the Hong Kong Jockey Club, Ocean Park Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, as well as the sponsors for their support to this four-day Meeting.

Set up in 1989, APEC is a forum for high-level government-to-government dialogue on trade and economic issues. It currently comprises 21 member economies.

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ABAC was established in 1996 as a permanent business advisory body to provide advice to APEC on business sector priorities. The Chief Executive has appointed Ms Marjorie Yang, Ms Mary Huen and Ms Nisa Leung as HKC's representatives to ABAC, as well as Mr Spencer Fung and Mr Duncan Chiu as HKC's alternate representatives.

ABAC meets four times a year. HKC last hosted a meeting of ABAC in 2015. The third 2024 ABAC Meeting will be held in Tokyo, Japan, from August 1 to 4.

8th Inter-departmental Cyber Security Drill held to enhance cyber defence capability of government departments (with photos)

The Government Computer Emergency Response Team Hong Kong (GovCERT.HK) under the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) and the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau (CSTCB) of the Hong Kong Police Force co-organised the 8th Inter-departmental Cyber Security Drill today (April 25). The Drill aimed to strengthen the preparedness and the overall incident response capability of government departments to cyberattacks.

In their opening remarks, the Assistant Government Chief Information Officer (Cyber Security and Digital Identity), Mr Daniel Cheung, and the Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime), Ms Chung Wing-man, both expressed their hope that the Drill could enhance the ability of the participants in countering the escalating threat of cyberattacks in this era of digitalisation to further strengthen the Government's overall capacity to prevent, detect and respond to cyberattacks.

The GovCERT.HK and the CSTCB have jointly hosted the Inter-departmental Cyber Security Drill since 2017, with a view to enhancing the cyber security awareness and overall response capabilities of government departments. Over 250 government officers from 70 bureaux and departments (B/Ds) joined the Drill. It simulated a real-world cyber security incident where participants had to take immediate actions against various simulated cyberattack scenarios as well as conducting associated incident response and investigation. Prior to the Drill, the GovCERT.HK and the CSTCB held an online training workshop for the participants to share some strategies and techniques in handling cyberattacks.

In addition, the OGCIO has promulgated the revised Government IT Security Policy and Guidelines to ensure that the information security standards in the Government tie in with the latest national and international developments. The revised Policy and Guidelines strengthened security control measures in various areas including the incident reporting mechanism. To effectively protect the Government's information systems and data assets, classified protection of IT security was also enhanced to mandate all B/Ds to adopt a risk-based approach to assess the classifications of their information systems and implement corresponding tiered security control measures according to the classifications.

The Government will continue to implement measures to enhance its cyber security capabilities in order to ensure all departments can effectively tackle different cyber threats and uphold public information security.



SWD stringently combats abuses and frauds in relation to Traffic Accident Victims Assistance

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) noted that a woman earlier charged by the Independent Commission Against Corruption for fraud over Traffic Accident Victims Assistance (TAVA) payments pleaded guilty at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (April 25).

An SWD spokesman said that the department has long been strictly verifying every TAVA application, including seeking written confirmation from the Police on whether a traffic accident is involved and maintaining close liaison with the Hospital Authority and the Department of Health to ensure the injuries sustained by the applicants are related to the traffic accidents concerned. In addition, the SWD also strengthens the procedures of checking income proof, verifies whether the applicants have made any claim for damages or compensation through other means for the same traffic accident and informs insurance companies in writing on the disbursement of payment in a timely manner to avoid double compensation. Any cases found suspected of involving criminal elements will be handled with caution, while referrals will also be made to law enforcement agencies for investigations.

The spokesman stressed that the SWD will continue to step up random

checks to strictly combat any abuses or frauds related to TAVA. Any person who possesses information about improper or illegal activities by any person in applying for relevant assistance may lodge a report to the SWD or the law enforcement agencies.

The TAVA Scheme is a social welfare initiative administered by the SWD to provide speedy financial assistance to road traffic accident victims or the surviving dependents of deceased traffic accident victims. An applicant must meet relevant conditions in order to be eligible for assistance payment, including: (1) the accident must have been reported to the Police and determined by the Police as a road traffic accident; and (2) the victim is injured or killed in the accident. In case of injury, the injured victim must be certified by a registered doctor that such injury requires hospitalisation of no less than three days or issued with proof for medical leave of no less than three days.

DH responds to media enquiries on case of importing alternative smoking products

In response to media enquiries about a convicted case of importing alternative smoking products (ASPs), a spokesman for the Department of Health (DH) today (April 25) reiterated that the government has always been taking stringent enforcement actions to deter illegal activities under the relevant ordinances.

The Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department intercepted a man in the West Kowloon Station of the Express Rail Link on January 28, 2024, when over 100 ASPs were found on him and in his luggage. Upon investigation by the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the DH, the man was charged with contravening the Import and Export Ordinance (Cap. 60) by importing ASPs. He was convicted at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today, and fined \$5,000.

According to the Import and Export Ordinance (Cap. 60), a person who imports alternative smoking products, including electronic smoking products, heated tobacco products and herbal cigarettes, commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years; or is liable on conviction on indictment to a fine of \$2,000,000 and imprisonment for seven years.

Moreover, in accordance with the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371), no person may promote, manufacture, sell, or possess for commercial purposes alternative smoking products, offender is liable to a fine of

\$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The spokesman stressed that TACO has always been closely monitoring and taking stringent enforcement actions against violations of the ordinances. TACO will also conduct an investigation upon receiving complaints or referrals, and lay charges against offenders when sufficient evidence is found. Since the ban on ASPs came into effect on April 30, 2022, more than 350 cases have been convicted of importing ASPs as of March 31, 2024. The highest penalty for these convicted cases was a fine of \$24,000.

The spokesman cautioned against the use of any ASPs and stressed that these products contain amounts of nicotine similar to those of conventional cigarettes in order to sustain addiction. In addition, health hazards of long-term exposure to ASPs are unknown. The Government appeals to smokers to quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. They are encouraged to call the DH's Integrated Smoking Cessation Hotline on 1833 183, and information on smoking cessation can also be obtained from www.livetobaccofree.hk.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected dangerous drugs worth about \\$2.6 million \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs on April 20 and yesterday (April 24) seized a total of about 5.6 kilograms of suspected ketamine and about 120 grams of suspected crack cocaine with a total estimated market value of about \$2.6 million in the New Territories. Two men were arrested.

Acting on intelligence analysis, Customs on April 20 raided a logistics warehouse in the New Territories and seized about 5.6kg of suspected ketamine from four carton boxes.

After a follow-up investigation and a controlled delivery operation, Customs officers yesterday arrested two local men, aged 18 and 22, who were suspected to be connected with the case in Kwai Chung.

Customs officers later escorted one of the arrested men to his rented flat nearby for a search, and further seized about 120g of suspected crack cocaine, about 10g of suspected ketamine and a batch of drug packaging paraphernalia.

The two arrested men have been jointly charged with one count of trafficking in a dangerous drug. The 22-year-old man has been additionally charged with one count of trafficking in a dangerous drug. They will appear at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (April 26).

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment. Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

