

[SCED: e-commerce has become key driving force for global trade and economic growth \(with photos\)](#)

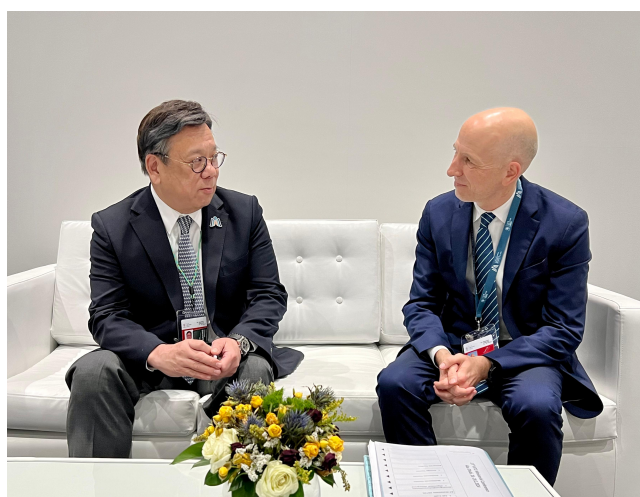
The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, continued to attend the 13th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC13) in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, on February 29 (Abu Dhabi time).

Speaking at the session on e-commerce, Mr Yau said that e-commerce is rapidly developing and has become a key driving force for global trade and economic growth, highlighting the importance of maintaining an enabling environment for international e-commerce to flourish.

Noting that the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmission has played a pivotal role in underpinning the stability and predictability for e-commerce in the past quarter century, Mr Yau reaffirmed Hong Kong's strong support for the extension of the moratorium, and called on WTO members to answer the calls of the global business community to ensure a predictable and tariff-free environment for the continued development and prosperity of digital trade.

Meanwhile, Mr Yau held a bilateral meeting with the Federal Minister of Labour and Economy of Austria, Dr Martin Kocher, to exchange views on issues of mutual interests on the sidelines of the MC13.

After attending the MC13, Mr Yau will proceed to Manama, Bahrain on March 2.



[HKETO San Francisco rings in Year of Dragon at spring reception supported by HKTB \(with photos\)](#)

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in San Francisco (HKETO San Francisco) rang in the Year of the Dragon along with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) on February 27 (San Francisco time). Nearly 300 local officials, dignitaries, academia, business representatives and community leaders attended the spring reception at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, California.

Speaking at the reception, the Director of the HKETO San Francisco, Ms Jacko Tsang, said, "Hong Kong has fully entered a post-pandemic economy. The economy continued to revive in the fourth quarter, with GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growing by an estimated 4.3 per cent. For 2023 as a whole, GDP resumed growth of 3.2 per cent."

She pointed out that Hong Kong's trade relationship with the United States (US) remains robust. In 2023, US goods exports to Hong Kong totalled nearly US\$28 billion. The US enjoys one of its highest trade surpluses with Hong Kong, valued at over US\$23 billion. Nearly 1 300 American companies operate in the city which is home to approximately 90 000 Americans. The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong released in January its business sentiment report which reveals that some 75 per cent of respondents regarded Hong Kong as a competitive global business hub thanks to its international connectivity, free flow of capital, low and simple tax regime and legal and regulatory systems.

At the event, the Director, Americas of the HKTB, Mr Michael Lim, gave a presentation on the latest happenings of Hong Kong's tourism industry. "Over the past year, we welcomed 34 million visitors, of which over 590 000 were Americans," he said. In addition to campaigns such as Night Vibes Hong Kong , an action-packed year-round calendar of signature events and festivals, ranging from arts to sports and pop culture, will bring a more immersive experience to visitors, he added.

The reception concluded on a high note with renowned harmonica ensemble RedBricks from Hong Kong giving a special festive performance. The HKETO San Francisco will host spring receptions in three other cities – Houston, Seattle and Los Angeles between March 1 and 6.



[CHP reminds public on precautions against cold weather](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (March 1) reminded the public, particularly the elderly and people with chronic illnesses, to adopt appropriate measures to protect their health in view of the cold weather.

A spokesman for the CHP said that cold weather can easily trigger or exacerbate diseases, especially among the elderly and persons suffering from heart disease, respiratory illness or other chronic illnesses.

"Elderly people have less insulating fat beneath their skin to keep them warm and their body temperature control mechanism may be weaker. Their body may not be able to appropriately respond to the cold weather," the spokesman said.

Some senior persons may have decreased mobility, which can in turn impair their ability to generate and conserve body heat. Chronic illnesses, such as hypertension, diabetes and endocrine disorders may undermine the health of elderly people and lower their metabolic rate, subsequently causing their body to generate less heat. Persons with chronic illnesses such as

chronic respiratory illnesses or heart disease are vulnerable to disease aggravation due to cold weather.

The CHP reminded the public, in particular the elderly and persons with chronic illnesses, to adopt the following preventive measures:

- Take note of the weather forecast. Wear warm clothing, including hats, scarves, gloves and socks accordingly;
- Consume sufficient food to ensure adequate calorie intake;
- Perform regular exercise to facilitate blood circulation and heat production;
- Stay in a warm environment and avoid prolonged outdoor exposure;
- Use heaters with care, and maintain adequate indoor ventilation; and
- Seek medical advice if feeling unwell.

In addition, the public should avoid alcoholic beverages.

"Drinking alcohol cannot keep you warm. Alcohol accelerates the loss of body heat through dilated blood vessels, resulting in chilling instead," the spokesman said.

"Parents should ensure that babies are sufficiently warm, but it is also important to keep babies relatively lightly clothed to avoid overheating them," the spokesman added.

Parents should observe the following safety measures when putting their children to bed:

- Keep the room well ventilated and at a comfortable temperature;
- Always place babies on their back to sleep. Leave their head, face and arms uncovered during sleep;
- Babies do not need pillows. Place babies on a firm and well-fitted mattress to sleep. Avoid soft objects, pillows and loose bedding;
- Let babies sleep in a cot placed in the parents' room and near their bed; and
- Maintain a smoke-free environment.

In addition, seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications. Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive seasonal influenza vaccination early. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the [CHP's website](#).

A person who gets influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill and would have a higher risk of death. Influenza vaccination may reduce the likelihood of hospitalisation and the length of stay. It is important for elderly persons, especially those residing in residential care homes, to receive both seasonal influenza vaccination and COVID-19 vaccination. They should also receive an additional booster against COVID-19 according to recommendations as soon as possible. The public should also

maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against respiratory illnesses and note the following:

- Surgical masks can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub;
- Cover the mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

Food-borne diseases, particularly those linked to hot pot cuisine, are also common in cold weather. The following preventive measures should be taken:

- Wash hands before handling and consuming food;
- Do not patronise unlicensed vendors or those with poor hygienic standards while selecting food;
- Wash and cook all food thoroughly;
- Vegetables should be washed thoroughly in clean running water before cooking and consumption. When appropriate, scrub vegetables with hard surfaces with a clean brush to remove dirt and substances, including pesticide residues and contaminants, from the surface and crevices;
- Shrimps should be fully cooked until the shells turn red and the flesh turns white and opaque;
- For shellfish such as scallops and geoduck, scrub the shells thoroughly and remove internal organs;
- Most hot pot ingredients should be stored in a refrigerator at 4 degrees Celsius or below, while frozen food should be stored in a freezer at -18 degrees C or below;
- Never use raw eggs as a dipping sauce for hot pot; and
- Use different sets of chopsticks to handle raw and cooked food to avoid cross-contamination.

In addition, when using fuel-burning appliances, especially in indoor areas, the public should ensure adequate ventilation to avoid harmful

exposure to carbon monoxide (CO) and prevent CO poisoning.

For more health information, the public may call the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111) or visit the [CHP's website](#) and [Facebook Fanpage](#).

The public may also call Dial-a-Weather (1878 200) or visit the [website of the Hong Kong Observatory](#) for the latest weather information and forecast, or its [page on Weather Information for Senior Citizens](#).

Employers and employees should take precautions during cold weather

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following special announcement immediately, and repeat it at frequent intervals when the Cold Weather Warning is in force:

The Labour Department reminds employers that as the Cold Weather Warning is in force, they should take appropriate precautions such as reminding employees who have to work outdoors or in remote areas to wear appropriately warm clothing, and make arrangements for employees to rotate from outdoor to indoor or sheltered work sites as far as possible. Employees should take note of the weather report, wear appropriately warm clothing and be mindful of their health conditions. They should notify their supervisors and seek medical help immediately if feeling unwell, such as having cold limbs and body shivering.

HKSAR Government strongly disapproves of and rejects US Government's biased and misleading remarks on Basic Law Article 23 legislation

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (February 29) strongly disapproved of and rejected the biased and misleading remarks made by the United States (US) Government about the Basic Law Article 23 legislation (Article 23 legislation).

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "The US was found conducting long-term covert surveillance around the world and even against the governments of multiple countries. A former US national security advisor even publicly admitted that he helped plan coups in foreign countries. It is simply unconvincing for the US Government to comment at this juncture on the HKSAR's legislative proposals for safeguarding national security, especially those on offences relating to 'state secrets' and 'external interference'."

"The practice of providing for proportionate extraterritorial effect for offences endangering national security fully aligns with the principles of international law, international practice and common practice adopted in various countries and regions. The national security laws of the US and many other countries have extraterritorial effect. A lack of extraterritorial effect in the relevant laws in safeguarding national security is tantamount to condoning activities endangering national security carried out by ill-intentioned people overseas. Therefore, extraterritorial effect is an essential component of national security laws. The US even often abuses 'long-arm jurisdiction' and unilateral sanctions to target residents of other countries. The smears by the US Government on the extraterritorial effect of the Article 23 legislation are simply untenable.

"Moreover, the HKSAR Government has pointed out publicly time and again that the proposed offences relating to 'state secrets' and 'external interference' have multiple conditions. It is necessary to meet all the relevant conditions concurrently before the offence concerned is committed, and hence it is impossible for anyone to violate the law unwittingly. In formulating the relevant offences and drafting the bill, we will target acts endangering national security with precision and ensure that the elements and penalties of the relevant offences are defined with clarity.

"Furthermore, the HKSAR law enforcement agencies have been taking law enforcement actions (including arrest and detention) based on evidence and strictly in accordance with the law in respect of the acts of the persons or organisations concerned, and have nothing to do with the background or political stance of the person or organisation.

"To safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests is the top priority of the principle of 'one country, two systems'. To legislate on Article 23 is precisely for safeguarding national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity; and ensuring the full and faithful implementation of the principle of 'one country, two systems' under which the people of Hong Kong administer Hong Kong with a high degree of autonomy. It will also better safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of the residents of the HKSAR and other people in the city. The US should immediately stop making irresponsible remarks on the Article 23 legislation and interfering in Hong Kong affairs which are internal affairs of China," the spokesman stressed.