

Speech by FS at Inter-School Athletics Competition (English only)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Inter-School Athletics Competition today (March 8):

Stella (The Chairperson of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Secondary Schools Regional Committee of Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation, Mrs Stella Lau), distinguished guests, students and athletes, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

So here comes the remarkable last day of this year's Inter-School Athletics Competition, which has run for 18 competitive days, with more than 250 schools and nearly 23 000 students taking part. You competed, head-on, in sports ranging from badminton and basketball to football, rugby, netball, swimming and life saving.

Sport is certainly life expanding – in health and well-being, and in the sheer joy of competition. I certainly saw that just a few moments ago, taking in the exciting finals of the 4×400 metre relay races.

I'm delighted to be here to congratulate the winners today, and also the participants, along with their coaches and schools and parents. And let's not forget the Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation, which works closely with the Government on the development of sports and runs, smartly and smoothly, the vast programme of sporting competitions within our school system.

I'm here, as well, to let you know that the Government is committed to sport, believes in what it can do for our students, our schools and the well-being of the community.

Recently, we awarded a \$30 billion contract for the construction of Kai Tak Sports Park. Work on what will be our most important sports centre began last month and is expected to be completed in 2023.

For those of you who are interested to become an elite athlete, let me assure you that the Government is committed to support you.

In the Budget last year, I injected an additional \$6 billion to the Elite Athletes Development Fund to ensure that our internationally competitive athletes can count on a stable source of funding support.

This year, I will boost the Hong Kong Athletes Fund by another \$250 million. That will create more scholarships in support of young athletes pursuing dual-track development, i.e. pursuing sports training and academic studies at the same time. Additional cash recognition awards will also be provided to full-time athletes on their retirement.

In summary, the Government is working to ensure that you can take part in your favourite sports at whatever level.

The point of the game is playing, enjoying, and developing a spirit of sportsmanship. That, I'm pleased to say, was brilliantly obvious today.

Thank you.

Thirty-one immigration offenders arrested (with photo)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a territory-wide anti-illegal worker operation codenamed "Twilight" from March 4 to 7. A total of 22 illegal workers and nine suspected employers were arrested.

During the operation, ImmD Task Force officers raided 39 target locations including a car park, a clinic, companies, construction sites, an elderly home, a fish market, a flower show, a garbage collect point, a hostel, industrial buildings, massage parlours, restaurants, salons, a shop and warehouses. Twenty-two illegal workers and nine employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised seven men and 15 women, aged 28 to 52. Among them, one woman was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. In addition, four men and six women were suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards. Meanwhile, six men and three women, aged 27 to 60, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases. It is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity

card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.



Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, March 8, 2019 is 103.6 (up 0.3 against yesterday's index).

Fraudulent website related to China CITIC Bank International Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by China CITIC Bank International Limited on fraudulent website, which has been reported to the HKMA. Hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#) for ease of reference by members of the public.

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information to the website concerned or has conducted any financial transactions through the website should contact the bank concerned using the contact information provided in the press release, and report to the Police or contact the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

Red tide sighted

A red tide has been sighted over the past week, an inter-departmental red tide working group reported today (March 8).

The red tide was spotted by staff of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department at Golden Beach, Tuen Mun, on March 4 and the red flag was hoisted at the beach immediately. The red tide has dissipated and no associated death of fish has been reported.

A spokesman for the working group said, "The red tide was formed by *Mesodinium rubrum*, which is commonly found in Hong Kong waters and is non-toxic."

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) urged mariculturists at Ma Wan fish culture zone to monitor the situation closely

and increase aeration where necessary.

Red tide is a natural phenomenon. The AFCD's proactive phytoplankton monitoring programme will continue monitoring red tide occurrences to minimise the impact on the mariculture industry and the public.