

# Speech by FS at Kuwait National Day Reception (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at Kuwait National Day Reception today (February 24):

Consul General (Consul General and Ambassador of the State of Kuwait in Hong Kong, Mr Naser S Al-Ghanim), Deputy Commissioner Pan (Deputy Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Mr Pan Yundong), Your Excellencies, Consuls General, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

It is my great pleasure to be here tonight to celebrate with you the 64th National Day of the State of Kuwait.

Kuwait is the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with China. You are also an active participant in our country's Belt and Road Initiative.

These provide a solid foundation for the growing ties between our two economies. As alluded to earlier by the CG (Consul General), it is heartening to see that our bilateral trade is growing rapidly. Last year, the bilateral goods trade between Hong Kong and Kuwait rose more than 20 per cent year on year, reaching more than US\$240 million. On many other fronts, our connections are deepening.

And this is part of a burgeoning relationship between Hong Kong and the Gulf countries. Over the past two years or so, the Chief Executive, myself as well as senior government officials and corporate leaders have been leading delegations to the region, seeking to strengthen connections with our partners in trade, finance, legal services, innovation and technology, cultural exchanges, and much more.

With Kuwait's presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 2025 under the leadership of the Amir, much is anticipated on what we can do together to boost our bilateral ties, and the Hong Kong-Gulf relations at large. Indeed, the Secretary-General of the Council, His Excellency Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi, also a Kuwait national, came to Hong Kong last month to attend the Asian Financial Forum. I also had a fruitful meeting with His Excellency at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos.

There is a strong will from both sides to strengthen co-operation on multiple fronts. In particular, Hong Kong wants to advance discussions on signing a free trade agreement with the GCC, and looks forward to the support from Kuwait and other Council members. We believe that solidifying our trade partnership will only be beneficial to our respective economies. In light of rapidly changing geopolitical dynamics marked by unilateralism and

protectionism, it calls for action to build a fair, open and more resilient global economic and trade system.

Hong Kong is a perfect partner for Kuwait in realising the Kuwait Vision 2035, which covers your nation's strategic and forward-looking plans for infrastructure development, digital transformation, green transition and global participation, and, above all, a more diversified economy.

Under the "one country, two systems" arrangement, Hong Kong is a place that enjoys unique connectivity with both the Mainland and the rest of the world. We are a converging point of global capital, investors and talent, the gateway not only to China but also the rest of Asia. Kuwaiti businesses and entrepreneurs can capitalise on the city's full suite of fund-raising options, world-class professional services, and extensive transport and logistics network to expand and thrive.

Hong Kong is keen to share knowledge and expertise with Kuwait, and find new growth frontiers together. For example, Hong Kong's start-ups, with innovative solutions ranging from AI (artificial intelligence) to biotech, and from greentech to fintech, are keen to support the exciting projects in your country.

Ladies and gentlemen, the promising prospects for our co-operation extend well beyond – to education, arts and culture, and much more.

Since 2023, Kuwait has been actively participating in our Asia+ Festival, giving our residents a taste of your country's rich cultural heritage. Your Kuwaiti Culture, Art and Literature Week last year, with a host of community-based activities, was a heartening success.

And I can't tell you how delighted I am to meet with some of Kuwait's brightest students who are studying in Hong Kong tonight. You are the ambassadors who will build more bridges of understanding and friendship between our two economies.

With all the goodwill and friendship, I am confident that the bonds between Hong Kong and Kuwait will flourish and endure for generations to come.

For that, ladies and gentlemen, please join me now in a toast: to the people of Kuwait.

Cheers.



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## Correctional officers stop assault on remand person in custody

Correctional officers stopped three remand persons in custody from assaulting another remand person in custody at Pak Sha Wan Correctional Institution today (February 24).

At 7.18am today, three male remand persons in custody aged from 36 to 41 assaulted a 36-year-old male remand person in custody inside a dayroom. Officers at the scene immediately stopped the assailants.

During the incident, the victim sustained injuries to his head. He was referred to a public hospital for further treatment after receiving an examination and treatment by the institution Medical Officer. Two assailants sustained injuries to their hands. They did not need to be sent to a public hospital after receiving medical examination and treatment by the institution Medical Officer. The remaining assailant did not sustain any injuries.

The case has been reported to the Police for investigation.

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The four persons in custody were respectively remanded for the offences of trafficking in a dangerous drug, burglary, taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration, etc.

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## FEHD takes serious follow-up actions

## against suspected misconduct of outsourced cleaning workers

In response to media enquiries about a video being circulated on social media, in which outsourced cleansing workers were suspected of removing display bills posted by themselves in Nam Cheong Street, Sham Shui Po, a spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (February 24) responded as follows:

The FEHD is very concerned about, and is investigating, the incident. A preliminary investigation revealed that the four staff members involved were employed by an outsourced street cleaning service contractor. The FEHD has instructed the contractor to suspend the staff members concerned from carrying out their contractual duties until the investigation is completed.

The spokesman reiterated that the department attaches great importance to the performance of contractors and the behaviour and conduct of their employees. The FEHD has immediately requested the contractor to submit a report on the incident. If the investigation confirms the incident, the FEHD will seriously hold the contractor liable in accordance with the contract, which may include the deduction of service fees, and record the incident as a considering factor for future service procurement. Moreover, the FEHD will refer the suspected falsification of records to the Police for follow-up.

The spokesman said that the workers concerned are responsible for removing unauthorised display bills and posters in public places, and must take photos for record purposes. The FEHD has not set a minimum target for the number of bills and posters to be removed by the contractors.

The FEHD will continue to closely monitor the contractor's service performance to ensure compliance with the service contract requirements.

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## Schools participate in Anti-"Space Oil Drug" Week campaign (with photos)

The Anti-"Space Oil Drug" Week campaign, co-organised by the Narcotics Division (ND) of the Security Bureau and the Education Bureau (EDB), is being held in all schools in Hong Kong this week from February 24 to 28. The campaign aims to enhance the correct understanding among students of the harm of the "space oil drug" and strengthen their resolve to stay away from drugs. Diverse learning activities will be held in schools, including talks, anti-drug videos and drama shows, as well as dissemination of anti-"space oil drug" messages in class.

A spokesperson from the ND said, "The EDB has produced and uploaded anti-'space oil drug' life event examples and a music video entitled 'Building Our Dreams – Let's Knock Drugs Out', and has issued a circular informing schools of the relevant resources produced by various government departments for reference and deployment. The ND has also provided anti-'space oil drug' publicity materials to schools. Following the campaign, the Government will continue to incorporate knowledge about combating the 'space oil drug' in preventive education and publicity in schools. We also welcome schools to arrange visits for students to the Hong Kong Jockey Club Drug InfoCentre."

A spokesperson from the EDB emphasised, "The EDB has always attached importance to the cultivating of correct values and positive life attitudes among students, guiding them to practice lawful and appropriate behavior, and establishing healthy lifestyles. We encourage schools to teach students to stay away from the 'space oil drug' through learning activities of the campaign, and work together to protect our next generation from the harm of drugs. We also urge teachers, school social workers and parents to work hand in hand. If they notice any signs of drug use among students, they should refer the students to suitable counselling and treatment programmes."

Action Committee Against Narcotics member Dr Rizwan Ullah, who is also an education worker, agreed that schools must take actions to remind students of the harm of the "space oil drug" and educate students in ways to resist drug temptations in schools. Dr Ullah said, "Drug problems may appear in any school, and the school sector must take the initiative to deal with it. The Anti-'Space Oil Drug' Week provides an opportunity for schools to intensively educate their students about the harm of drugs and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. I noticed that some schools are actively holding activities under the campaign, and also joining hands with others in the community to safeguard schools from drugs. Indeed, everyone can make a contribution to the anti-drug cause."

Students or others who face issues related to the "space oil drug" or have other drug problems can contact professional social workers for information or assistance through WhatsApp or WeChat at 98 186 186, or call the 24-hour hotline at 186 186.



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## DH announces latest situation of Legionnaires' Disease cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (February 24) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and reminded the public of the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From February 16 to 22, the CHP recorded two community-acquired LD cases. The details of the cases are as follows:

1. A 71-year-old male patient with underlying illnesses living in Sha Tin District; and
2. A 70-year-old female patient with underlying illnesses living in Eastern District.

The CHP is conducting epidemiological investigations to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any.

As of February 22, 19 LD cases had been recorded this year. In 2024 and 2023, there were 135 and 121 LD cases respectively.

Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill

the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2  $\mu\text{m}$  filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
  1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
  2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
  3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
  4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
  5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.