

Education Commission Chairman welcomes "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address"

The following is issued on behalf of the Education Commission:

The Chairman of the Education Commission, Dr David Wong, welcomed the education initiatives announced in "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address" delivered today (October 16).

Dr Wong said, "As the Chairman of the Education Commission, I support the Government's commitment to enhancing the quality of education. To complement the country's development strategy, the Government strives to develop Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education on all fronts, nurture and attract diversified talent to achieve the goal of building an international hub for high-calibre professionals.

"I support the Education Bureau's ongoing efforts in leveraging Hong Kong's edge of a highly international and diversified post-secondary education sector. Through encouraging local institutions to enhance exchanges and collaboration with institutions from around the world, hosting more international education conferences and exhibitions to promote the 'Study in Hong Kong' brand on a global scale, and setting up the Hong Kong Future Talents Scholarship Scheme for Advanced Studies, our goal is to establish Hong Kong as an international hub for post-secondary education and enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness."

He added, "I am pleased that the Government, to complement the national strategy of invigorating the country through science and education, will promote digital education, review the curriculum of junior secondary Science, and support teachers in utilising artificial intelligence for teaching. These efforts will continue to foster STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) education in primary and secondary schools, thereby enhancing Hong Kong's edge in innovation and technology. Furthermore, the Government is committed to enhancing the language proficiency of our students and strengthening support to achieve a good mastery of English language, Putonghua and other languages to heighten their global competitiveness and broaden their horizons. Additionally, the Government will remain dedicated to promoting national security and patriotic education on all fronts by incorporating elements of Chinese history and national geography into Mainland study tours to foster students' sense of national identity. To build a high-quality teaching force, the Government will set up the Teacher Professional Development Fund of \$2 billion to provide a steady funding source for teacher training and exchange programmes."

Dr Wong also appreciated the Government's efforts in enhancing students' whole-person development and the well-being of teachers and students. This

includes further promotion of the 4Rs Mental Health Charter, launch of the "Mental Health Literacy" resource packages, strengthening of teacher training and parent education, and extending and enhancing the Three-Tier School-based Emergency Mechanism, promoting the physical and psychological wellness of students, teachers and parents, and enhancing resilience and cultivating positive thinking among them.

"Education is the cornerstone of social advancement. The Education Commission will continue to render advice and work together with the Government to foster the long-term development of Hong Kong's education, with a view to cultivating values and nurturing people with quality education. We aim to enable young people to unleash their potential and gain a global perspective, and become visionary, innovative and creative successors with an affection for the motherland and a sense of responsibility towards society, who shall contribute to the new quality productive forces and high-quality development of our country, shaping a better future," Dr Wong said.

[Hong Kong Customs detects four seaborne illicit cigarette smuggling cases with seizure worth about \\$33 million \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs detected four illicit cigarette smuggling cases from September 25 to October 4. A total of about 7.4 million of suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$33 million and a duty potential of about \$25 million in total were seized.

Through risk assessment and intelligence analysis, Customs on September 25 selected and inspected a 40-foot seaborne container, arriving from Nansha to Hong Kong and declared as carrying ceramic tiles, at the Tuen Mun River Trade Terminal Customs Cargo Examination Compound. Upon inspection, Customs officers seized about 2.4 million of suspected illicit cigarettes inside the container, and a 68-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case was arrested.

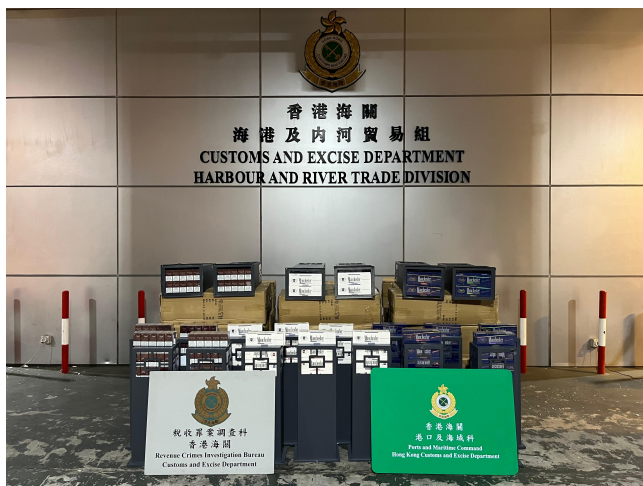
After a follow-up investigation, Customs on October 2, 3 and 4 further detected three similar cases at the Tuen Mun River Trade Terminal Customs Cargo Examination Compound, where three 40-foot containers, all arriving in Hong Kong from Nansha and declared as carrying food, cardboards and chandeliers respectively, were examined. A total of about 5 million suspected illicit cigarettes were seized therein. Three men, aged between 67 and 68, who were suspected to be connected with the cases were arrested.

Investigations of the four cases are ongoing.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis, and step up enforcement actions to combat cross-boundary illicit cigarettes activities. Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 80 80 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).



[Youth Development Commission welcomes initiatives on youth development announced in “The Chief Executive’s 2024 Policy Address”](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Youth Development Commission:

The Youth Development Commission (YDC) warmly welcomed the policy initiatives on supporting youth development in "The Chief Executive’s 2024 Policy Address" delivered by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, today (October 16).

The Vice-Chairman of the YDC, Mr Kenneth Leung, said, "I strongly endorse the expansion of the Youth Hostel Scheme in the past two years mentioned in the Policy Address, which responds to our young people's aspiration to have their own living space. I also support the setting up of different youth facilities at the Kai Tak Community Isolation Facility, the Nam Cheong District Community Centre and Youth Square to provide more physical spaces for young people to engage in mutual exchange and develop individual potential. These initiatives demonstrate the Government's determination to support youth development in the long term. I am also pleased to note that the Policy Address has put forward measures of various areas that could benefit young people, in particular helping young people to overcome hurdles in education, employment, entrepreneurship and home ownership, and also assist them to realise their life planning and seize national development opportunities."

He expressed appreciation of the Government's acceptance of suggestions raised by members of the YDC, and said that the YDC would continue to work proactively and closely with the Government and different sectors of society to follow up on the implementation of relevant policy initiatives in the Policy Address and the Youth Development Blueprint to promote youth development on all fronts.

Chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, the YDC strives to enhance policy co-ordination within the Government for promoting youth development and enable a more holistic and effective examination of and discussion on issues of concern to young people. Since its establishment, the YDC has implemented a wide spectrum of programmes to promote youth exchanges, internship, entrepreneurship, life planning, positive thinking and more. It has also actively supported the Government in formulating and implementing the Youth Development Blueprint to promote the all-round development of young people and nurture a new generation of young people with an affection for the country and Hong Kong, and are equipped with a global perspective, an aspiring mindset and positive thinking.

[Hong Kong Customs detects money laundering case involving about \\$1.6 billion](#)

Hong Kong Customs mounted an operation codenamed "Spark II" yesterday and today (October 15 and 16). Five local men, aged between 34 and 71, were arrested for conspiracy or aiding to "deal with property known or reasonably believed to represent proceeds of an indictable offence" (commonly known as money laundering) under the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance (OSCO). They included a former compliance officer and a company secretary of a money

changer, a bank staff member and former company directors. The total amount involved was about \$1.6 billion.

In October last year, Customs mounted an operation codenamed "Spark" and cracked down on a money changer suspected of money laundering in which the compliance officer laundered about \$600 million from unknown sources by setting up a shell company. After an in-depth follow-up investigation, it was further found that the compliance officer manipulated two other shell companies and opened a total of 23 accounts at a number of local banks to deal with over 4 000 suspicious transactions since 2020. Meanwhile, the investigation also found that a bank staff member was suspected of assisting the relevant arrested persons to evade the bank's monitoring of customers' transactions.

During the operation, a number of mobile phones were seized and the five persons who were suspected of assisting in dealing with the suspected crime proceeds in the accounts were arrested.

The investigation is ongoing. All arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation, and the likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs reminds members of the public that they risk committing the crime of money laundering if they use bank accounts to assist in dealing with money from unknown sources, regardless of whether a monetary reward is involved.

Under the OSCO, a person commits an offence if he or she deals with any property knowing or having reasonable grounds to believe that such property, in whole or in part, directly or indirectly represents any person's proceeds of an indictable offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and imprisonment for 14 years while the crime proceeds are also subject to confiscation.

Members of the public may report any suspected money laundering activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

Policy Address: Reform for Enhancing Development and Building Our Future Together

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, today (October 16) announced his third

Policy Address entitled "Reform for Enhancing Development and Building Our Future Together", setting out a range of initiatives to create new impetus for economic development, improve people's livelihood and enhance their quality of life.

Mr Lee said, "In this Policy Address, I will continue to follow through the 'four proposals' put forward by President Xi Jinping in his important speech delivered on July 1, 2022. I will also outline our vision and objectives for reforms and changes, as well as the related key measures and key performance indicators.

"Reform is a continuous process. Over the past two years, my team and I have focused on economic growth and on improving people's livelihood through development, with the well-being of the people of Hong Kong close to our hearts. This Policy Address will deepen our reforms and explore new growth areas."

Consolidate and enhance Hong Kong's status as an international financial, shipping and trade centre

Hong Kong has established strengths as an international centre for finance, shipping and trade, which are closely intertwined and can be developed in a synergistic and complementary manner.

On the financial front, the Policy Address sets out the strategic development of Hong Kong as an international financial centre on all fronts. It strives to reinforce Hong Kong's status as the world's largest offshore Renminbi business hub, enhance the asset and securities markets, and develop Hong Kong into an international gold trading market through measures such as building world-class gold storage facilities and strengthening the trading mechanism and regulatory framework. This will in turn drive demand for related services such as collateral and loan businesses, opening up new growth areas of the financial sector.

On the shipping side, the existing Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board will be reconstituted into the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Development Board. Additional funding will be provided to enhance its research capabilities, strengthen its Mainland and overseas promotional work and step up manpower training, encouraging more Mainland and overseas maritime service enterprises to establish presence in Hong Kong, promoting the sustainable development of Hong Kong's maritime industry. The Government will advance the development of Hong Kong into a green maritime centre, while at the same time exploring the introduction of tax concessions and facilitate international commodity exchanges to set up accredited warehouses in Hong Kong, so as to establish a commodity trading ecosystem, especially for the storage and delivery of non-ferrous metal products, further promoting the development of Hong Kong's maritime and trading services.

In respect of the trade sector, the Government will establish a high-value-added supply chain service centre. Through measures such as enriching a high value-added supply chain services mechanism and enhancing export credit services, as well as making good use of the new opportunities brought about

by the Second Agreement Concerning Amendment to the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) Agreement on Trade in Services, the Government will seek to attract Mainland and overseas enterprises to set up their headquarters or corporate divisions in Hong Kong. The Government will continue to vigorously expand Hong Kong's global economic and trade networks, with particular emphasis on strengthening Hong Kong's economic and trade ties with and marketing efforts in emerging markets, so as to enable Hong Kong to exert a greater role in the country's opening up to the world. Moreover, the Government will reduce the import duty on liquor, fostering trading of liquor and boosting development of high value-added industries.

Develop new quality productive forces tailored to local conditions

The core element of new quality productive forces is to achieve high quality economic development through technological empowerment. The Government is striving to expedite Hong Kong's development into an international innovation and technology (I&T) centre. On top of the additional investment put in over the past two years, a \$10 billion I&T Industry-Oriented Fund will be set up to guide more market capital to invest in specified emerging and future industries of strategic importance, including life and health technology and artificial intelligence. The Government will also launch the I&T Accelerator Pilot Scheme to attract professional start-up service providers to set up accelerator bases in Hong Kong, fostering the robust growth of start-ups.

The Policy Address also proposed the establishment of the Working Group on Developing Low-altitude Economy. Starting with projects on low-altitude applications, the working group will designate specific venues for such purposes, draw up regulations and design the institutional set-up, study and map out plans to develop the required infrastructure and networks, and promote interface with the Mainland, pushing forward development of the low-altitude economy.

At the same time, the Government is committed to promoting new energy development, such as green maritime fuel, sustainable aviation fuel and hydrogen energy. The Government will also expedite the reform of the approval mechanism for drugs and medical devices, establish the Real-World Study and Application Centre, and join hands with Shenzhen to establish the GBA Clinical Trial Collaboration Platform to enhance Hong Kong's clinical trial capability and accelerate registration of new drugs, developing Hong Kong into an international health and medical innovation hub.

Build Hong Kong into an international hub for high-calibre talents

To boost synergy and effectiveness of policies, the Policy Address introduced the establishment of the Committee on Education, Technology and Talents to co-ordinate and drive the integrated development of education, technology and talents. In addition to reforming various aspects of the talent admission regime to build a quality talent pool for long-term development, the Government will endeavour to create the "Study in Hong Kong" brand to attract overseas students, launch a pilot scheme to support the

market to flexibly increase the supply of self-financed and private student hostels, and map out the development plan of the Northern Metropolis University Town. These measures aim to expedite the development of Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education, bringing in more global high-calibre talents.

Promote integrated development of culture, sports and tourism and foster economic diversification

Promoting integrated development of culture, sports and tourism is the objective of this term of Government in setting up the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau. The Government will reinforce the development of the West Kowloon Cultural District to take a leading role in establishing an industry chain for the arts and culture and creative industries of Hong Kong. The Government will also strive to develop the Kai Tak Sports Park into a sports and mega event landmark, building an international sports mega event hub. The Government will publish the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0, putting emphasis on promoting areas including culture, sports, ecology and mega events, with a view to revitalising Hong Kong's tourism industry. A Working Group on Developing Tourist Hotspots will be set up to strengthen cross-departmental co-ordination, and to identify and develop tourist hotspots of high popularity and with strong appeal in various districts.

Hong Kong is facing economic restructuring. To assist small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to cope with the prevailing challenges, the Government will put in place a range of support initiatives. Key measures include: relaunching the principal moratorium to offer SMEs flexibility in managing cash flows; injecting \$1 billion into the BUD Fund (Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales) to facilitate upgrading of enterprises; expanding the scope of the Digital Transformation Support Pilot Programme to cover the industries of tourism and personal services; and launching the Incentive Scheme for Recurrent Exhibitions 2.0. In addition, a Working Group on Promoting Silver Economy will be set up to implement measures in five areas, namely consumption, industry, quality assurance, financial and security arrangements, and productivity, meeting the growing needs of the elderly and help the industry to seize business opportunities.

Take forward the Northern Metropolis as growth engine and deepen GBA collaboration

To take forward the development of the Northern Metropolis, it was announced in the Policy Address to explore the establishment of a pilot industrial park in the Northern Metropolis by granting it to a company established and led by the Government. The company will, in accordance with the Government's industrial policies, be responsible for formulating the park's development and operation strategies. To expedite the development, the Government will adopt, on a pilot basis, a large-scale land-disposal approach, for collective development by successful bidders. In addition, the Steering Committee on the Hong Kong Shenzhen I&T Park in the Loop, chaired by the Chief Executive, will formulate the overall strategy, planning and layout for the development of the Hong Kong Park. The Development Outline for the

Hong Kong Park of the Hetao Shenzhen Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone will be published later this year.

Improve people's livelihood in pursuit of happiness

This year, the Policy Address outlined a number of new measures on different livelihood areas, including land creation and housing construction and healthcare, making Hong Kong a better place to live and enjoy life.

On housing, a system on the renting of subdivided units (SDUs) in residential buildings will be devised, through legislation, to tackle the long-standing problem of SDUs at its roots in an orderly manner. The Government will also enhance the housing ladder to allow more people to realise their aspiration for home ownership.

Regarding healthcare, as noted in the Policy Address, the Government will deepen the reform of the healthcare system, strengthen public and primary healthcare services and promote the development of primary healthcare on all fronts, and boost healthy fertility. The Government also supports the plan, by local universities, to establish a third medical school. The Government will set aside sites in Ngau Tam Mei to build a new campus and an integrated medical teaching and research hospital.

To improve people's livelihood, the Government will continue to take forward and enhance various measures for targeted poverty alleviation and focusing on different needs of the underprivileged. Meanwhile, the Government will regularise the funding provision for Care Teams and increase funding in the next term of service to strengthen support for their work. The Policy Address also proposed to reform the roles of the Employees Retraining Board to devise skills-based training programmes and strategies for the entire workforce, and lift the restriction on educational attainment of trainees.

Mr Lee concluded, "This Policy Address deepens the reforms that I have introduced since I became Chief Executive. It presents enhanced measures to boost the economy and improve people's livelihood. It seeks to address the prevailing needs of our people, while mapping our vision and long-term goals for building a brighter future for Hong Kong. I am confident that Hong Kong will continue to go from strength to strength and attain new heights. Through our united efforts to reform and innovate, our economy will go even stronger and our people will lead a better life, making Hong Kong a shining city."

A Supplement offering more backgrounds and details of various policy measures has been compiled with this year's Policy Address. For related information and key initiatives of the Policy Address, please visit www.policyaddress.gov.hk.