



Chief Executive visits Singapore

DONALD TSANG, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) had fruitful meetings with the leaders and senior government officials of Singapore during his second visit to the country since July 2006.

"The visit helps to strengthen our bilateral relations by enhancing our understanding of each other's latest developments and allowing us to explore areas of further cooperation," Mr Tsang said.

Mr Tsang called on Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister, and Lee Kuan Yew, the Minister Mentor when he arrived in Singapore on May 16. He attended a lunch hosted by Goh Chok Tong, the Senior Minister on the following day.

At the meetings with several senior Singaporean officials, Mr Tsang learned about the latest developments of the country in health care, tourism and environmental protection.

"These provide useful reference for Hong Kong," he said.

Mr Tsang also toured Bedok NEWater Visitors Centre during his three-day visit. ◇



CE Donald Tsang (left) joins Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, in proposing a toast at the dinner hosted by Mr Lee.

Hong Kong, Thailand forge closer trade ties

TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY

of his visit to Bangkok for the 7th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministerial Meeting on Telecommunications and Information Industry, Frederick Ma, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED), called on Mingkwan Sangsuwan, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce, on April 24.

At the meeting, Mr Ma was assured a stable supply of Thai rice for Hong Kong.

Mr Mingkwan said that Thailand exported nine million tonnes of rice each year. Though there was a trend that the global demand for Thai rice was increasing, Thailand would not change the amount of its total exports. Noting the cordial bilateral relationship between



SCED Frederick Ma (left) meets Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce Mingkwan Sangsuwan in Bangkok.

Hong Kong and Thailand, Mr Mingkwan pledged that Hong Kong would be given priority treatment when importing rice from Thailand. Hong Kong will continue to receive about 300,000 tonnes of Thai rice per year.

Mr Mingkwan also told Mr Ma that under the new government, there would be a change in Thailand's export policy on fruit. The amount of export of Thai longan, mango and durian in terms of total production would increase from between 20 per cent and 30 per cent, to about 70 per cent.

Mr Mingkwan hoped Hong Kong could become a regional distribution centre of Thai fruits.

Editor's note: Mr Ma stepped down as SCED on July 11 for health reasons. ◇



Olympic Torch Relay concludes successfully in Hong Kong



*Hong Kong participant in the Paralympics Equestrian Event
Nelson Yip (middle) is one of the torchbearers.*

THE OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY in Hong Kong — the first stop on Chinese soil after the torch's journey across five continents — concluded successfully on May 2, spreading the Olympic spirit across the territory.

Donald Tsang, Chief Executive said at the launching ceremony of the torch relay that it was a great honour for Hong Kong to be the first city welcoming the Olympic Flame back to China after its global journey.

"Hong Kong has long been the bridge between the peoples of the world, and the people of our country," he said.

The Olympic ideals of friendship, equality and solidarity were universal ideals that Hong Kong embraced, he said.

Lee Lai-shan, Olympic wind-surfing gold medallist received the torch from Mr Tsang and started the Hong Kong leg of the Torch Relay.

The Olympic Flame was carried by 119 torchbearers through Kowloon, the New Territories and Hong Kong Island on foot, horse, dragon boat and vessel.

The route, passing through major landmarks and scenic spots showcased to the world Hong Kong's beautiful scenery and the vibrancy of the Asia's world city.

The last torchbearer, Wong Kam-po, the gold medallist from the Men's Individual Road Race at the Doha Asian Games, carried the torch to the Golden Bauhinia Square and lit the cauldron, symbolising the smooth completion of the Torch Relay.

Speaking at the closing ceremony at the Golden Bauhinia Square, Henry Tang, Chief Secretary for Administration said the relay was truly a journey of harmony. ◇

Breakthrough for China in Equestrian Events

HONG KONG is riding high with Olympic equestrian enthusiasm, and preparation for staging the Equestrian Events has now entered the final stage.

The Equestrian Events will be held from August 9 to 21 in Sha Tin and Beas River. The events comprise three disciplines — dressage, show jumping and eventing, with both team and individual events. There are a total of about 200,000 equestrian tickets for sale in Hong Kong, Mainland China and overseas.

China's Equestrian Team has qualified for all the three disciplines of the Equestrian Events, and four Hong Kong Equestrian Team riders have achieved the minimum eligibility standard for jumping, which is a historic breakthrough for China in the Olympic Equestrian Events. Two athletes, one from Mainland China and the other from Hong Kong, have been qualified to join the Paralympics Equestrian Event.

"We have an unswerving commitment to offer the best possible service to athletes, team officials and visitors, and



Photo: Kowloon Club

to provide world-class equine care for the magnificent competition horses," said Henry Tang, Chief Secretary for Administration.

Promotion in Singapore

Meanwhile, the HKETO sponsored the Kowloon Club in Singapore to take part in the Singapore Dragon Boat Festival on June 28 and 29. Dragon boat paddlers and visitors were delighted to receive the Equestrian promotional literature, coasters and frisbees. Equestrian banners were also prominently displayed at the Kowloon

Club booth to show support for Hong Kong.

More than 70 local and international dragon boat teams of some 1,400 paddlers participated in the races, attracting more than 3,000 spectators.

Photo shows the eye-catching promotional display at the racing venue.

More information on the Equestrian Events is available from <http://www.equestrian2008.org/eng/front.aspx> ◇

Olympic rings brighten Victoria Harbour

HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD (HKTB) on May 1 unveiled the Olympic rings fronting the Victoria Harbour. They become a landmark at the harbourfront and provide a perfect backdrop for visitors' photos.

Displayed at the harbourfront exterior of Hong Kong Museum of Art until the end of this year, the rings are fully lit in the evening, further enhancing the city's night vistas and allowing visitors and residents to see the structure both day and night.

Apart from the Olympic rings, HKTB is launching a series of

promotional activities locally to give visitors full experience of the Olympic atmosphere in Hong Kong. Olympic Piazza will be set up outside Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Besides broadcasting the Olympic Games through giant screens, HKTB will dedicate an area to showcase Hong Kong's major attractions in the Piazza. During the Olympic period, various parts of entry and special locations in Hong Kong will be adorned with Olympics decoration. Olympic mascots will also appear at selected parts of entry to greet visitors. ◇



Regional collaboration in education strengthens

MICHAEL SUEN, Secretary for Education attended the fourth APEC's Education Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) in Peru on June 11 and 12 to share with member economies Hong Kong's initiatives in four priority areas identified for discussion.

The four priority areas are: mathematics and science; career and technical education; learning each other's languages, and information and communication technologies and systemic reform.

During his stay in Lima, Mr Suen also held bilateral meetings with Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Talib, Brunei's Minister of Education, and Rear Admiral Lui Tuck Yew, Singapore's Senior Minister of State



SED Michael Suen (middle in back row) attends the fourth APEC Education Ministerial Meeting in Peru.

of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, to share with them experiences and recent developments in education in Hong Kong.

The AEMM is an opportunity for education ministers and senior officials of APEC member economies to strengthen collaboration in education. Mr Suen joined other member economies in adopting a Joint Ministerial Statement at the end of the meeting. Members agreed to

concentrate efforts on developing the knowledge, the skills and the attitudes that students must develop to face the challenges of the 21st century. ◇

Hong Kong students among world top performers

THE PROGRESS IN INTER-NATIONAL READING LITERACY STUDY (PIRLS) 2006, the results of which were published in November 2007, found that Hong Kong's Primary Four students (aged 9-10) ranked second in reading literacy among the 45 participating countries/regions — just one point less than their peers in Russia. Having moved up from 14th place in PIRLS 2001, Hong Kong students have improved by leaps and bounds.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006, conducted under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has also found that Hong Kong students (aged 15) ranked third in mother tongue reading literacy, up from 10th place in 2003, falling behind only Korea and Finland.

The results of PISA 2006 reveal that Hong Kong has high equality in education access. Compared to the situation in other participating countries/regions, Hong Kong students' socio-economic background has relatively small association with student performance. This shows that Hong Kong is capable of providing quality and equal education to all students.

These two international studies have not only reflected Hong Kong students' excellent standard in reading, but also given due recognition to the efforts of schools and teachers alike. The findings also confirm that Hong Kong's education and curriculum reforms are in step with global development. ◇

New immigration arrangements for non-local graduates

TO ATTRACT more non-local graduates to stay and work in Hong Kong, the Immigration Department has, with effect from May 19, implemented the new "Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates", the major features of which are as follows:

(a) Non-local fresh graduates who wish to apply to stay and work in Hong Kong after graduation are not required to secure an offer of employment upon application. Provided that normal immigration requirements are met, they may be granted 12 months' stay and are free to take up or change employment.

(b) Applications from non-local students who had previously graduated in Hong Kong and wish to return to work will be favourably considered so long as the job they have secured is at a level commonly taken up by degree holders and the remuneration package is set at market level.

(c) Non-local students of full-time, locally accredited programmes at degree or above levels may also be allowed to take up study-related internships and part-time on-campus jobs or off-campus summer jobs.

More information on the new arrangements is available from <http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/id991.htm> ◇



Hong Kong shares water strategy with international audience



PS(W) Mak Chai-kwong (left) speaks at the China Business Forum of the Singapore International Water Week.

MAK CHAI-KWONG, Permanent Secretary for Development (Works), spoke on Hong Kong's water supply and drainage strategy during the Singapore International Water Week. He

introduced the major water supply and drainage projects in Hong Kong to an international audience of consultants, contractors and industry leaders on June 26.

Mr Mak, accompanied by Ma Lee-tak, Director of Water Supplies, also attended the Water Leaders Summit to exchange views with top government officials and leading industry players. The summit discussed the delivery of water solutions through sound policies and practices, effective governance and implementation, and investment in technology and innovation.

Officials from Water Supplies Department and Drainage Services Department, who were members of the Hong Kong visiting delegation, also took the opportunity of the Singapore trip to pay technical visits to a number of water treatment and management facilities which applied advanced technology in sea water desalination and water reclamation.

With the theme "Sustainable Water Solutions for Cities", the Singapore International Water Week took place on June 23 to 27. ◇

New Sensation at the Peak

VISITORS to the famous Victoria Peak in Hong Kong are thrilled by new and exciting features including a Visitor Information Centre at the Peak piazza and the wax figure of Donald Tsang, Chief Executive, at Madame Tussauds.

The visitor information centre was converted from a heritage tram cabin. The tram was in service from 1959 to 1989 and is an artifact of historical value. The transformed tram cabin, installed under a canopy of Victorian-style design, blends heritage with

innovation, and resonates with the history of the Peak.

Officiating at the launching ceremonies for the Hong Kong Tourism Board's promotional scheme, "The Peak — A New Sensation" on April 7, Mr Tsang pointed out that the appearance and public facilities of the Peak had changed over the years. "The only thing that remains unchanged is its unparalleled panoramic view of Victoria Harbour. No wonder the Peak remains the top pick for tourists, despite the emergence of new attractions in Hong Kong," said Mr Tsang. ◇



CE Donald Tsang unveils his own wax figure (centre). On the right is Madame Tussauds Hong Kong's General Manager Bret Pidgeon.

Visitor arrivals surge in first five months

HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD (HKTb)'s latest statistics show that visitor arrivals in May this year reached 2,342,146, representing a 6.3 per cent increase over the same period last year. This brings cumulative arrivals in the first five months of 2008 to 12,037,578. The figure is 9.5 per cent ahead of the same period last year.

Almost all long- and short-haul market regions recorded positive growth in May this year, notably:

North Asia	: 192,586 (+13.6 per cent)
South and Southeast Asia	: 278,138 (+9.9 per cent)
Taiwan	: 177,028 (+7.4 per cent)
Mainland China	: 1,290,806 (+6.4 per cent)
Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific	: 62,216 (+4.6 per cent)

In North Asia, South Korean travellers have recently voted Hong Kong as Asia Pacific's Best Sightseeing City in the inaugural Seoul Tourism Awards 2008. Adding to the roll of honour, HKTb's DiscoverHongKong.com website has also been chosen by the region's tourism professionals as Asia Pacific's Best City Tourism Website for its high quality content and user-friendly functions. Visitors can create their own visit itinerary by using the DIY interactive itinerary planner on the website. ◇

Emergency relief for Myanmar cyclone victims

THE HKSAR Government approved in May and June three grants from the Disaster Relief Fund totalling HK\$6.19 million for three relief agencies to undertake relief projects for cyclone victims in Myanmar.

The three grants are: HK\$5 million to World Vision Hong Kong, HK\$0.63 million to Médecins Sans Frontières, and HK\$0.56 million to the Cedar Fund.

The Disaster Relief Fund was established in December 1993 to provide a ready mechanism for Hong Kong to respond swiftly to international appeals for humanitarian aid in relief of disasters outside Hong Kong. ◇



New HKETO director seeks closer ties

SUBRINA CHOW (right in picture), formerly the Administrative Assistant to Secretary for Labour and Welfare in Hong Kong, has succeeded K K Lam as Director of the HKETO in Singapore.

Ms Chow's civil service career in Hong Kong has provided her with exposure in the policy areas of civil service management, education, district administration and information technology. From 1998 to 2001, she was the Deputy Director in the HKETO in San Francisco.

"I hope that the cooperation of Hong Kong with ASEAN countries can extend beyond trade and commerce to areas such as arts and culture, education, public health and environmental protection. I look forward to working with different sectors in this region in the years ahead to foster closer relationships between Hong Kong and the ASEAN region," Ms Chow said.

Mr Lam commenced his pre-retirement leave on June 17 after having headed the HKETO for more than three years since January 2005. ◇



Hong Kong farmers conduct study tour to Malaysia



Hong Kong farmers learn about the agricultural technology adopted in Malaysia during a study tour.

A DELEGATION of Hong Kong farmers conducted a six-day visit in Malaysia in early May to learn about the advanced technology and food quality assurance system of Malaysia's agricultural sector and exchange experience with their counterparts.

The 23-member group comprised representatives from the Vegetable Marketing Organisation, Hong Kong farmers' co-operative societies and vegetable wholesale merchant associations. They visited Malaysia's wholesale and retail markets, organic and conventional farms, agriculture research and experiment station as well as the 5th Malaysia International Halal Showcase.

Members of the delegation also visited the Cameron Highlands, the so-called "Green Bowl" of Malaysia, valleys in which vegetable and fruit farms, self-pick strawberry farms, tea farms and tea factories are planted.

Lau Sin-pang, acting Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, presented a banner to the representatives of the delegation as well as the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation for their assistance in arranging the visits. ◇

Greater convenience for APEC Business Travel Card holders

WITH EFFECT from June 1, APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) holders can use the special service lanes at selected control points of participating economies (except Chinese Taipei and Japan which will announce the implementation at later dates) regardless of whether pre-clearance has been granted by that economy.

The ABTC Scheme aims to enhance the mobility of business travellers among the APEC economies, thus promoting business within the region.

The Card is the size of a credit card. It is normally valid for three years. It is good for multiple visits of two to three months to participating economies without the need for a visa if pre-clearance has been granted.

Eighteen APEC economies are currently participating in the Scheme — Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong (China), Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Vietnam.

For card holders travelling to a participating economy where pre-clearance has not been granted, they are still subject to usual immigration clearance process, such as presenting valid passports and where applicable, valid visas.

More information on the ABTC Scheme is available from http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/hktraveldoc_4.htm

Self-service immigration clearance

Self-service immigration clearance at the Hong Kong International Airport have already been made available to holders of ABTC with the economy code " HKG ", provided that they have successfully enrolled with the Immigration Department of the HKSAR.

The enrolment office is located at the airport arrival hall. Enrolment is free of charge and simple. More information on this service is available from the web site of the Immigration Department. ◇



Hong Kong to showcase its attractions in Shanghai Expo

THE BUREAU OF THE SHANGHAI WORLD EXPO CO-ORDINATION

announced on April 2 that Hong Kong's proposal to participate in the Urban Best Practice Area (UBPA) Exhibition at the World Exposition 2010 Shanghai China (the Expo) had been accepted.

The HKSAR Government will join hands with the local creative industries in staging the UBPA exhibition. Titled "Smart Card, Smart City, Smart Life", the proposal features the smartcard systems that Hong Kong is proud of — Octopus Card and Smart ID Card — to demonstrate how Hong Kong extensively uses innovative ways to improve efficiency in everyday city life and promote the connectivity within the city and with other parts of the world.

The Expo will be held in Shanghai from May 1 to October 31, 2010. As at March 2008, 197 places and international organisations would exhibit at the event which is expected to attract more than 70 million visitors. Besides participating in the UBPA exhibition, the HKSAR Government also plans to construct a Hong Kong Pavilion with distinct characteristics to highlight the theme, "Hong Kong — A City With Unlimited Potential", and organise a series of activities to promote Hong Kong.

A Concept Design Competition for the Hong Kong Pavilion has been successfully held to tap the best creative talents of local professionals on the design and development of the pavilion. ◇



CS Henry Tang (right) attends Concept Design Competition for "World Exposition 2010 Shanghai China — The Hong Kong Pavilion" Award Presentation Ceremony and presents the first prize to the designers of the winning entry "Pavilion of Infinity".

Hong Kong tops global enabling trade index

HONG KONG leads the world in terms of enabling trade, according to a report that measures and analyses factors enabling trade in 118 industrialised and emerging economies around the world released on June 18 by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

John C Tsang, Financial Secretary welcomed the report. He said: "It demonstrates strong positive recognition of Hong Kong's open, transparent and efficient trading infrastructure."

Published for the first time, the WEF's Global Enabling Trade Report 2008 is the result of years of research into factors, policies and services of national economies in trade facilitation; and the Enabling Trade Index covers four areas, namely, market access, border administration, transport and communications infrastructure, and business environment.

Mr Tsang said that the research findings showed that Hong Kong performed strongly in all four areas.

"We will continue our policy of facilitating free trade while ensuring an appropriate degree of government regulation to provide a fair business environment for investors, and aiming to maintain Hong Kong as a global leader in enabling trade in goods and services," he said. ◇

Merchandise trade grows strongly in April

THE VALUES of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods in April both showed distinct year-on-year increases, at 14.5 per cent to HK\$243.4 billion, and at 11.3 per cent to HK\$259.6 billion respectively.

Comparing April 2008 with April 2007, exports to Asia as a whole grew by 17.3 per cent. In this region, strong increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular India (+92.4 per cent), Vietnam (+37.8 per cent), Singapore (+25.4 per cent), Thailand (+19.0 per cent), Malaysia (+17.8 per cent) and Mainland China (+17.4 per cent).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from all major suppliers, in particular India (+41.5 per cent), Germany (+24.9 per cent), Malaysia (+17.1 per cent), the USA (+16.8 per cent) and Thailand (+11.9 per cent).

The April 2008 issue of the "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in the month. Users can download them free of charge at www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/index.jsp ◇

HK FILES Subscription / Response Form

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of HK FILES. To make sure that you can continue to receive free copies of the newsletter, please mail or fax the response form back to us and give us your comments.

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Address: _____

Comments:

Please put me on your mailing list

I enjoyed reading your newsletter. I would like to read about:

Other comments: _____

Mail or fax back to the Editor, HK FILES.
Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office,
9 Temasek Boulevard #34-01 Suntec City Tower Two, Singapore 038989.
Tel: (65) 6338 1771, Fax: (65) 6339 2112.