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工月 商刊 THE Bulletin

A HONG KONG GENERAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MAGAZINE
香港總商會月刊

一九九八年三月 MARCH 1998

Budget 1998-99

Renewing Hong Kong's Strengths

九八至九九財政預算案

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Riding Out the Storm
Renewing Hong Kong Strengths



*Chamber applauds the
Financial Secretary's
blueprint for the future*
總商會歡迎預算案

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PUBLISHED BY

**The Hong Kong General
Chamber of Commerce**

22/F United Centre,

95 Queensway, Hong Kong

Tel 2529 9229 Fax: 2527 9843

PRODUCED BY

The Publisher,

(address above) and

OMAC Production House

5/F E1B Tower,

4-6 Morrison Hill Road,

Wanchai, Hong Kong

Tel: 2572 7144 Fax: 2832 7903

PRINTED BY

Excellent Printing Co

Flat G & H, 20/F Blk 2, Kingley Ind Bldg,

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圖文傳真：2527 0380

本會並非政治組織，任何帶有政治

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出版：香港總商會

金鐘道統一中心廿二樓

電話：2529 9229

製作：奧瑪製作室

電話：2572 7144

承印：百美印刷

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*Riding Out the Storm
Renewing Hong Kong Strengths*



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Caution needed on Labour Outlook

The Government's monthly unemployment and under employment figures are more than just ordinary economic statistics. In good times, they are a measure of the direct benefits of solid economic growth. In poorer times, they are a measure of the human cost of any economic downturn. At all times, they are a measure of how our economy uses its most precious resource – the skills and talents and labour of its people. It is for these reasons that any change in the figures can often bring such an emotional response in the community. Understandably, this is especially the case when unemployment figures begin to move marginally higher. We must be careful always, however, not to over-react to any short term increase in the official unemployment figures.



James Tien, Chamber Chairman

When we examine recent employment trends, for example, it is apparent that the overall unemployment rate has edged up slightly to 2.5 per cent in December from 2.2 per cent in September. That means there are 75,000 people looking for work compared with 70,000 three months earlier. The impact of this slight increase in the figures has had a far greater effect on community perceptions than it warrants partly because of several high profile dismissals in some sectors of the economy. What we should not forget is that there are today more people employed in Hong Kong than ever before – some 3.22 million people as of November last. This seeming paradox – record employment and slightly higher unemployment – is explained by the rapid growth in the labour force Hong Kong has experienced in recent years.

Having recognised these facts, it is still important that we should not become complacent about the employment situation. It is for this reason that the business community has given its broad support to Government initiatives to promote employment through such measures as job matching, training and re-training. At the same time, however, it is important not to over-react to marginal movements in the unemployment rate when the underlying employment situation remains sound.

Unfortunately, we do not seem prepared to learn the lessons of recent experience. Under the former Hong Kong administration, for example, a rise in unemployment to 3.6 per cent (113,000 people) in late 1995 led to no less than three Governor's Employment Summits between early-June 1995 and mid-September 1996. While these Summits did some good work, they also over-dramatised the unemployment situation then in existence. They ignored the Chamber's explanation of the upward movement in unemployment – that it was a temporary phenomena brought on by a very rapid growth of the workforce at a time of slight economic downturn. They ignored evidence from the business community that job vacancies were still very much available and could not be filled. They ignored pleas for the establishment of a job seeker's registry. And most dramatically they resulted in a substantial – and potentially damaging – downgrading of the imported labour scheme, which remains a contentious issue to this day.

Clearly there is a need for a balanced, level-headed approach to the employment situation. We must recognise that Hong Kong generally enjoys close to full employment and has done so for many years. But where sectoral difficulties arise we must be ready to address them – and address them quickly. The business community stands ready at all times to play its part. What we do not want to see is an emotive response to any problems that do arise from a marginal increase in the unemployment figures. By eroding confidence in the economy that sort of response would be likely to do more harm than good. ■

James P C Tien
Chairman

香港特別行政區 第一屆立法會



十個議席由 選舉委員會選出

5月24日選舉
六十個立法會議席中
有十個由選舉委員會選出



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勞工問題須審慎處理

政府每月公佈的失業及就業不足數字，重要性超越一般經濟數據。繁榮時，這些數字是直接量度實質經濟增長成果的指標；不景時，則顯示了社會面對經濟逆境所付出的人力代價；不論何時，這些數字也反映了我們怎樣運用社會上最珍貴的資源——人民的技術、才能和勞動力。正因如此，數據上任何變動，往往會掀起社會的激烈迴響，遇上失業數字稍微上升，情況尤其明顯。這種反應雖然可以理解，但我們仍須保持冷靜，避免對官方失業數字的一時上升反應過激。

以最近的就業趨勢為例，整體失業率從九月的百分之二點二微升至十二月的百分之二點五，從實際數字比較，十二月份的失業人數為七萬五千人，較三個月前的七萬人為多。由於部分行業的裁員行動較為矚目，即使失業人數只是輕微上升，也足以在社會上掀起巨大震盪。然而，實際情況是本港現時的就業人數為歷來最多，截至去年十一月，就業人口已高達三百二十二萬人。近年，勞動人口急劇增長，正好解釋了為何就業人數屢創新高，但失業率卻微見上升的矛盾現象。

了解上述種種事實後，我們決不可以此自滿。正因商界深明箇中道理，故一向不遺餘力，全面支持政府透過職業選配、培訓及再培訓等措施增加就業機會。此外，我們亦不可對失業率微升反應過激，忽略整體就業情況良好的現實。

可惜，我們似乎並未汲取最近的經驗。舉例說，在九五年底港英政府治下，失業率曾一度上升至百分之三點六（十一萬三千人），當時的港督連忙從六月初至九月中召開三次就業高峰會。誠然，這些會議自有其效，但卻反映了政府對失業問題反應過敏，漠視了本會、商界及社會人士的意見。對於失業率微升，本會已解釋為經濟溫和調整，勞動人口迅速增長下的短期現象；商界亦臚列了多項例證，顯示本地仍有大量職位空缺，有待填補；社會人士曾促請政府設立求職人士登記處，可惜不為當局接納。最不幸的是，政府大幅收縮輸入勞工計劃，對社會帶來潛在損害，至今，計劃仍然備受爭議。

顯而易見，香港需要以持平、冷靜的態度處理就業問題。多年來，社會幾乎達致全民就業的佳績，但當某些行業不景，我們便須當機立斷，隨機應變。無論何時，商界均樂意承擔責任；然而，我們卻不願看見因失業率微升而引起的非理性回應。這種態度只會打擊經濟信心，相信弊多於利。



香港總商會主席田北俊

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Budget targets tax relief and faster growth in '98

By deciding to forego \$13.6 billion in Budget revenue in the 1998-99 financial year and \$100 billion through to 2001-02, the Financial Secretary, Sir Donald Tsang Yam-kuen, moved swiftly to help underpin confidence in the SAR economy.

At the same time, he has maintained his reputation for fiscal prudence – not least with the international financial markets – by budgeting for a surplus of \$10.7 billion in 1998-99 to further add to the SAR's current fiscal reserves of \$446 billion.

While Sir Donald denies that the SAR's relatively small Budget – it accounts for just 19 per cent of Gross Domestic Product – can do little to stimulate economic growth directly, this year's Budget measures will have some impact.

Far more important is the climate of greater confidence the Budget has already brought to the local community. The Government was not just doing something to ease the burden of the recent economic downturn, but was also being seen to be doing something.

As Sir Donald said at the end of this Budget address: "Today I have sought to give new impetus to past strengths. By judiciously applying the resources and revenue measures available to Government in concert to increase opportunities, I have aimed to refresh the spirits of business and community alike." (para 146)

Whether the Financial Secretary can achieve his objective, however, may well be outside his control, being dependent on regional and global growth to help achieve his forecast growth rate for the year of 3.5 per cent.

The broad nature of the concessions in the Budget mean that the Government generally and the Financial Secretary in particular are taking quite a substantial risk that the local economy is not further affected by the fallout from the recent regional currency and economic crisis.

But it is a risk worth taking given, first, the benefits that could flow from renewed local confidence and, second, the



The Financial Secretary delivers the first full Budget of the SAR Administration

財政司司長發表特區首份預算案。

紓緩稅務負擔 刺激經濟增長

財政司司長提出的種種減稅建議，雖會令政府在九八至九九財政年度減少一百三十六億收入，而從現在到二零零一至零二年間，政府收入更會減少一千億之巨，但有關措施卻可大大增強本地的經濟信心。

減稅之餘，財政司司長的預算案預料仍可為特區帶來一百零七億盈餘（特區現有儲備為四千四百六十億），充分體現謹慎理財的傳統。

預算案中，公共開支只佔本地生產總值百分之十九，比例並不算高，但曾蔭權不認為對刺激經濟毫無幫助。

事實上，預算案重要之處，在於提高社會對經濟增長的信心。經濟逆轉，政府以實際行動紓緩困局，努力有目共睹。

正如曾蔭權在預算案演辭尾聲所說：「我今天提出的措施，目的是抓緊香港過往

的強處，配合政府可以動用的資源和稅務工具，作出策略性調整，為工商界和市民創造一股新的動力。」(第 146 段)

財政司司長的目標能否實現？百分之三點五的經濟增長能否成為現實？這一切均須視乎亞洲區及全球經濟狀況。

減稅措施範圍極廣，意味政府 — 特別是財政司司長必須冒上一定風險，這就是香港經濟不會進一步受亞洲金融危機的餘波衝擊。

然而，預算案有助重振本地經濟信心，加上政府擁有龐大儲備作為後援，假如預算案能做到以下兩點，上述風險還是值得承受。

- 滿足社會上各類減稅要求，以及為最受經濟逆轉影響的一群提供特別優惠；

substantial cushion he has in the fiscal reserves if things were to again produce a further economic setback.

"We will ride out of the storm," he said. "Our main markets, particularly the mainland of China and the United States remain prosperous. We can expect continued, if moderate, growth in 1998. Best of all we can take this passing setback as a spur to new achievement."

The public response to the Budget contents, reflected in the overwhelming approval/shown in opinion polls immediately after its announcement, indicated at least short term success in his objectives. But by playing down the prospects for the 1998-99 Budget before he stood in the Provisional Legislative Council to deliver his "surprise package" of revenue measures, Sir Donald and his Government colleagues also helped ensure a positive public responses.

Ahead of the budget announcement, the Financial Secretary and other senior Government officials went out of their way to prepare the Hong Kong community not to anticipate anything very exceptional in the Budget.

Even when the expenditure side of the package was announced a week before the Budget itself, few people in the community, including the business community, had high hopes for Budget initiatives on the revenue side of the account.

As a result, when Sir Donald stood before the Provisional Legislative Council (PLC) on February 18 to deliver a wide

range of judicious taxation concessions and other initiatives, he had the advantage of surprise over his audience.

Subsequent to Budget, he was also able to reap the positive publicity benefits as a delighted community measured the benefits outlined in the Budget against their low expectations of it.

This is by no means meant to imply that the 1998-99 Budget outlined to the PLC on February 18 is lacking in substance. Far from it. There was something of substance for almost everyone in the first SAR Budget. Looked at in the broadest terms, the Financial Secretary's third Hong Kong Budget managed to:

- Satisfy the financial markets by maintaining a prudent approach to expenditure plans, giving concessions on the revenue side and still producing a surplus of \$10.7 billion to add to the SAR's fiscal reserves.
- Satisfy the local community with broad ranging benefits, or tax concessions, on the revenue side, with benefits targeting particularly those most hard hit in the community as a result of the economic downturn.
- Ensure that the Budget will be approved by the Provisional Legislative Council - an important consideration in the first twelve months after the return of sovereignty and within three months of the first SAR legislative elections.

- 確保預算案獲臨立會通過 (在特區成立不足一年, 以及距離首屆立法會選舉只有三個月的情況下, 確保預算案順利通過十分重要。)

今年, 財政司司長首次向公眾解釋政府的長遠儲備政策。這包括在日常運作上, 預留相當於政府三個月開支的數額作為儲備; 撥出相當於九個月開支的數額, 作為應急之用; 利用儲備保持金融及匯率穩定。

整份預算案最寶貴之處, 在於字裡行間對經濟復蘇的信心, 以及政府願意提供的有力支持。當局把預算盈餘降低至一百零七億 (社會本預期高達二百三十三億), 即表示有額外一百三十億元可供私營環節消費及投資之用。

假如東亞經濟回穩, 中國內地和美國經濟又持續增長, 對香港順利取得政府預測的經濟增長率 (百分之三點五) 應有一定幫助。

為了達致這個目標, 財政司司長向市場發出了一個強烈信息: 預算案協助刺激本地經濟之餘, 亦可同時貫徹審慎理財的原則。

個人稅務方面, 財政司司長建議降低新僱稅邊際稅率, 擴闊稅階, 提高包括長者在內的各類家庭成員免稅額, 以及給予買樓自住者按揭利息扣稅優惠, 總計全套建議將使政府少收稅款八十億元。

此外, 他亦建議把差餉徵收率由百分之五減至百分之四點五, 並調高無需繳稅的遺產上限, 以及降低遺產稅稅率。

去年, 香港總商會曾就預算案內容及《利得稅檢討諮詢文件》向政府提交意見, 結果, 不少建議均獲財政司司長採納。

這些建議中, 以各項減稅措施 (尤其是削減利得稅) 最廣為人知, 但總商會作為本地商界代表, 卻對數項較少人注意的成就特別感到欣慰。

其一是對稅制作出更清晰的指引, 包括更清楚界定「利潤來源地」的含義。此外, 我們也樂見當局與內地達成避免雙重課稅的協議。

從中小型企業的角度出發, 政府凍結大部分收費一年, 也是令人欣喜的好消息。本會中小型企業委員會在這方面曾作出不少努力。



Government officials and Legco members listen to the Financial Secretary's address

政府官員及臨立會議員聆聽預算案演辭。

對低沉的旅遊業來說，削減酒店房租稅（由百分之五減至百分之三）及機場離境稅（至五十元）自然值得歡迎；此外，股票交易印花稅由百分之零點三減至零點二五也是好消息。

預算案內容創新進取，社會上的反對聲音少之又少，這當然不會叫人意外，事實上，最明顯的批評也只是公共開支增長和減稅措施不足！但正如曾蔭權自己所說，在經濟不明朗的日子，謹慎理財十分重要，因此，可以做的事情有限；此外，政府本身更有明確規定，開支增長不能超越名義經濟增幅。

不管外界如何批評，九八至九九年度的公共開支將達二千八百八十八億，其中二千三百三十億屬政府基本開支，兩者均創下歷年新高。

醫療、教育、福利等經常開支合共為一千七百二十億，不過，若論增長最快的開支部分，仍是有助未來經濟發展的資本投資項目（六百一十三億）。

對預算案較實在的批評，泰半與政府的經濟增長預測有關。究竟這些預測是否準確？假如未能達致預期目標，對預算案內容和現行稅制又有什麼影響？

財政司司長在預算案指出，九七年的本地經濟增長為百分之五點二，預期九八年為百分之三點五。

九七年雖有百分之五點二的經濟增長，但最後一季的增長只有百分之二點三，遠遜於首三季達百分之六點二的平均增幅。

經濟放緩的現象大概會延續到今年第一季，換言之，九八年下旬的經濟必須大幅改善，否則難以達到政府的預期目標。

預算案提出的種種措施，相信有助本港經濟溫和增長。

眾所周知，香港奉行簡單、穩定的低稅率制度，對吸引投資和人材起了重要作用。部分社會人士憂慮，與薪俸稅有關的一些減免措施可能令整體稅制變得複雜。

總括來說，各界對九八至九九年度預算案反應良好，財政司司長獲讚譽可謂實至名歸。

總商會對預算案的即時反應，是特區政府並未背離香港奉行已久的審慎理財原

則，但卻為復蘇本地經濟提供了良好基礎。

本會當時的聲明指出：「預算案一方面向全球顯示香港經濟健全，是理想的投資地點，另一方面亦達到有利民生，助民紓困的目的。」

「觀乎財政司司長今日公布的各項措施，已為提高經濟信心奠下良好基礎，一待區內的不明朗因素消除，香港經濟即可持續增長。」

「財政預算案建議提高個人及各類商業免稅額，凍結大部分政府收費，並溫和增加公共開支，此舉雖會令政府收入減少一百三十六億，但預算盈餘仍會高達一百零七億。」

「總商會以促請當局降低利得稅稅率一點五個百分點及編製平衡預算為目標，並曾於去年十一月及更早前，分別就預算案及《利得稅檢討諮詢文件》提交意見書，目標雖未達到，但財政司司長能大量採納有關建議，本會亦感到欣慰。」

「本會獲採納的建議包括：削減公司利得稅稅率；對「利潤來源地」作更清晰的界定；調整薪俸稅邊際稅率及稅階；調整折舊免稅額及擴大翻修工程開支註銷優惠的適用範圍；降低股票交易印花稅；調低差餉；削減機場離境稅及酒店房租稅。」

「總商會屬下中小型企業委員會曾呼籲當局凍結各類政府收費，我們欣見這一點得到落實。」

「正如財政司司長所言，我們認為預算案可在特區現有的優勢上加添新的增長動力。」

「財政司司長對維持儲備水平，應付公共財政在日常運作、處變應急及金融等三方面的需要作了詳盡解釋。本會認為這做法值得嘉許。」

「雖然當局預測今年的本地經濟增長僅有百分之三點五，但總商會相信，若預算案內各項措施得以落實，這應是略為保守的估計。總商會本身則預測經濟增長會達百分之四。通脹率方面，政府與本會的預測同為百分之五。」

「總括來說，這份預算案既有利香港經濟長遠發展，亦可為現時處於艱難日子的香港商界注入強心針。」

The Financial Secretary also further satisfied financial markets by explaining, for the first time, the Government's long term fiscal reserves policy, including three months reserves for operating expenditure, nine months reserves for any contingencies and the balance to underpin monetary and exchange rate policy.

Probably the most important aspect of the whole 1998-99 Budget, however, was the underlying message of confidence in economic recovery it sent to the community and the level of support the Government was prepared to provide.

By announcing a lower surplus for the year of \$10.7 billion (compared with a previously expected surplus of \$23.3 billion), the Government signaled it was leaving a further \$13 billion in the community for consumption and investment.

Given stabilising economic conditions in the East Asia region and good growth in China and the US, this may help push the local economy enough to reach the Government's targeted growth rate for the year of 3.5 per cent.

By doing so, the Financial Secretary sent a strong message to the financial markets that he could provide a modest level of fiscal stimulus in the local economy and still produce a fiscally prudent Budget.

For the broad community, the Financial Secretary offered \$8 billion in salaries tax relief by reducing marginal tax rates and adjusting the progressive salaries tax bands, offering home mortgage loan tax relief and giving further tax relief for family dependents, including the elderly.

He also reduced the percentage rates payment for one year to 4.5 per cent (from 5 per cent) and adjusted the Estate Duty exemption level and payment rates.

As far as the business community is concerned, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce was particularly pleased with the Budget contents, as many of the Financial Secretary's initiatives had been recommended in the Chamber's pre-Budget and Profits Tax Review submissions.

By far the most publicity has been given to the tax cuts in the 1998-99 Budget, especially the reduction in the profits tax rate to 16 per cent from the current 16.5 per cent rate. But the Chamber, as a key business representative body, was especially pleased with several other measures in the Budget which have attracted for less attention.

The greater clarity given the business



And Sir Donald explains his Budget initiatives to the media

曾蔭權向傳媒介紹預算案內容。

tax system, particularly the improved outline of the "source of profits" tax system and the double taxation arrangement reached with the Mainland, were especially welcome.

From a small and medium enterprises perspective, so, too, was the freeze on most government fees and charges for one year. This measure had been strongly advocated by the Chamber's own Small and Medium Enterprises Committee.

Also welcome were the special concessions offered the hard hit tourism sector, through the cut in the hotel accommodation tax to three per cent (from five per cent) and the halving of the airport departure tax to \$50, and the further reduction in the stamp duty on stock transactions to 0.25 per cent from 0.3 per cent.

Given such an innovative Budget, it is hardly surprising that there has been little criticism of its contents, with the most obvious one from some quarters being that the Financial Secretary had not gone far enough in its spending increases and revenue (tax) concessions.

But as Sir Donald Tsang pointed out himself there was still a limit to what he could achieve given the need for fiscal prudence in uncertain economic times and the Government's own self-imposed rule concerning spending growth being in line with nominal growth.

Despite the limited criticism, total public spending for the 1998-99 Budget year will be a record \$288.8 billion, with core government spending also a record \$233 billion.

Recurrent or day-to-day, spending on such government services as health, education and welfare, makes up \$172 billion of this. But the biggest spending increase is in capital investment projects of \$61.3 billion and it is these which will help

underpin future local economic growth.

More substantive criticisms of the Budget can be made, however, principally concerns about whether the Government's economic forecasts will be met – and, if they are not, what this will mean for the Budget outcome – and the complications that are being introduced into the tax system.

In his Budget announcement, the Financial Secretary announced that economic growth for the 1998 year would be 3.5 per cent and that growth for the 1997 was 5.2 per cent.

What this overall, average, 5.2 per cent growth for 1997 hides, of course, is the fact that economic growth in the final three months of last year was only 2.3 per cent, compared with an average 6.2 per cent in the first three quarters of the year.

This slowdown in economic growth would have extended into the first quarter of this year and means that the Government is looking to a substantial recovery in the latter half of 1998 to achieve its 3.5 per cent growth for the year.

Indeed, it is hopeful that the modest fiscal stimulus provided for in the Budget will help bring this modest recovery in economic growth about.

As far as the taxation system is concerned, it is widely recognised that Hong Kong's low simply and stable taxation regime has played a key role in its attractiveness to both business and individuals.

There are, therefore, some concerns in some sectors of the community that specific concessions being offered in the salaries tax system may complicate the overall tax system in the longer term.

Nevertheless, the 1998-99 Budget announced by the Financial Secretary Sir Donald Tsang on February 18 has deservedly been well received throughout the community and Sir Donald can rightly take the kudos for this.

In its own immediate reaction to the Budget, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce said that first SAR Budget provided a sound base for the economic recovery of Hong Kong without abandoning its long history of fiscal prudence which is reflected in the SAR's underlying financial strength.

"This is a budget which shows the world Hong Kong has a very healthy economy attractive for investment and which has a very strong ability to benefit its people," it said.

"With the Budget measures announced today the Financial Secretary has provided a sound base to boost local confidence and return Hong Kong to sustained growth once the current regional economic uncertainties are overcome."

"By judicious use of personal and business tax concessions, a freeze on increases in most government fees and charges, and modest spending increases, the Financial Secretary has managed to reduce his revenue take by \$13.6 billion and still produce a Budget surplus of \$10.7 billion.

"Although the Chamber had supported a profit tax cut of 1.5 per cent and a balanced budget, we are still quite pleased that the Financial Secretary was able to adopt many of the proposals put forward in the Chamber's pre-Budget submission to Government in November last year and its earlier submission in the Profits Tax review process.

"These include the cut in the company profits tax and new certainty in the "source of tax system"; alterations to the marginal salaries tax rates and tax bands; the changes to depreciation and rebuilding allowances for tax purposes; the reduction in the stamp duty on stock transactions; the temporary rates relief and reductions in the air passenger departure and hotel accommodation taxes.

"Following the call from the Chamber's Small and Medium Enterprises Committee for a freeze in Government fees and changes, the Chamber was also pleased to see this measure implemented.

"The Chamber agrees with the Financial Secretary that the combined measures in the 1998-99 Budget will give "new impetus to the current strengths" of the SAR.

"It appreciates his detailed explanation of the need for substantial fiscal reserves and the parameters he has set for their future determination for the purposes of operating expenditure, contingency reserves and the underpinning of the monetary system.

"While economic growth this year is predicted at a relatively low 3.5 per cent, the Chamber believes that with the measures taken in the Budget this could well be a conservative estimate and the Chamber itself is still expecting four (4) per cent growth. Inflation at five (5) per cent is in line with the Chamber forecast.

"In summary, this is a budget which can help Hong Kong's economy develop in the long run and can provide stimulus to Hong Kong businesses in this difficult economic period," the Chamber said. ■

Budget Highlights 1998-99

- ✎ Total Public Spending \$288.8 billion (19.3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product).
- ✎ Total Government Spending \$233 billion, including Recurrent Spending \$172 billion and Capital Spending \$61.3 billion.
- ✎ 5.2 per cent growth in 1997. 3.5 forecast for 1998/99.
- ✎ Inflation for 1997-98 was around 5.8 per cent.
- ✎ A revised 1997-98 budget surplus estimate of HK\$77 billion, HK\$45.3 billion greater than the forecast of HK\$31.7 billion given in last year's budget. The forecast for 1998-99 is a surplus of HK\$10.7 billion.
- ✎ At the end of 2001-2002, the SAR Government is projected to have fiscal reserves of around HK\$527 billion.
- ✎ A reduction in Corporate Profits Tax rate from 16.5 per cent to 16 per cent.
- ✎ Introduction of 100 per cent relief for expenditure on plant and machinery specifically related to manufacturing, and on computer hardware and software, owned by end users. Full relief will also be given for the residual value of such items already in hand. Also, widening of relief for expenditure on research and development.
- ✎ Increase in depreciation rates for commercial buildings from 2 per cent to 4 per cent. Amortisation of refurbishment expenditure over five years to be extended to all business sectors.
- ✎ Extension of scope of exemption from tax for income derived by beneficiaries from fund management, and introduction of 50 per cent reduction in tax for offshore reinsurance business.
- ✎ Advance ruling procedure to be introduced for source of profits.
- ✎ Intention to explore negotiation of comprehensive double taxation agreements with selected countries. Arrangements for relief from double taxation have been made with Mainland China. Reciprocal exemption provisions for ship operators to be added to the tax law.
- ✎ Marginal Salaries Tax bands increased to HK\$35,000, coupled with a reduction in the marginal tax rates to 2 per cent, 7 per cent, 12 per cent and 17 per cent.
- ✎ The basic and married person's allowances increased by 8 per cent to HK\$108,000 and HK\$216,000 respectively.
- ✎ A single income family of four will have to earn HK\$2,871,000, an increase of 133 per cent, before they pay tax at the 15 per cent standard rate. The number of standard rate taxpayers will reduce from 71,000 to 10,000. Overall, 99 per cent of all Salaries Taxpayers will pay less.
- ✎ Introduction of tax deduction of up to HK\$100,000 per annum for home mortgage interest payments in respect of properties for self-occupation. Deduction can be claimed for up to five years.
- ✎ Deduction of HK\$12,000 a year for employee contributions to retirement schemes when the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme is implemented.
- ✎ 6 per cent increase in duties for tobacco, fuel and methyl alcohol.
- ✎ Relief from Motor Vehicle Registration Tax on the scrapping of cars 10 years old or more extended for four years.
- ✎ Reduction in ad valorem capital duty from 0.3 per cent to 0.1 per cent and capped at HK\$30,000 per case. Reduction in Stamp Duty on stock transactions from 0.3 per cent to 0.25 per cent.
- ✎ Estate Duty bands extended and tax rates reduced. No tax on estates of not more than HK\$7.5 million. Maximum rate of 15 per cent on estates with a value of over HK\$10.5 million.
- ✎ Hotel Accommodation Tax reduced from 5 per cent to 3 per cent. Air Passenger Departure Tax reduced from \$100 to \$50 from 6 July 1998.
- ✎ Reduction in rates from 5 per cent to 4.5 per cent for one year. Subject to review again next year.
- ✎ Majority of Government fees and charges to be frozen. ■

(Source: HKGCC; Price Waterhouse)

預算案重點摘要

- ✎ 公共開支總額為二千八百八十八億元（佔本地生產總值百分之十九點三）；
- ✎ 政府總開支為二千三百三十億（包括經常開支一千七百二十億及資本開支六百一十三億）；
- ✎ 九七年經濟增長為百分之五點二，預料九八至九九年度的增幅為百分之三點五；
- ✎ 九七／九八年度的通脹率約為百分之五點八；
- ✎ 預測九七／九八年度的財政盈餘將達七百七十億，較去年預算案預測的三百一十七億高出四百五十三億；預計九八／九九年度的盈餘為一百零七億；
- ✎ 到二零零一至二零零二年度結束時，特區政府的財政儲備將接近五千二百七十億港元；
- ✎ 公司利得稅率由百分之十六點五減至百分之十六；
- ✎ 與製造業有關的家用自置工業裝置和機械，以及電腦硬件和軟件開支可享有百分百註銷優惠；現有類似設施的剩餘價值亦可全數註銷；研究及發展的稅項寬減範圍亦有所擴大；
- ✎ 商業建築物的每年折舊免稅額由百分之二增至百分之四；翻修工程開支的稅項寬減優惠適用於各行各業，有關開支可在五年內攤銷；
- ✎ 擴闊受益人從基金管理所得的免稅範圍，並減半徵收離岸再保險業務的稅項；
- ✎ 提供預先裁定利潤來源地的服務；
- ✎ 與選定國家磋商協議，全面避免雙重課稅；已跟中國內地達成雙重課稅寬免安排；在稅務條例內加入互惠課稅寬免條款，為航運業提供優惠；
- ✎ 把薪俸稅邊際稅階擴闊至三萬五千元，並把邊際稅率順序減至百分之二、百分之七、百分之十二及百分之十七；
- ✎ 個人基本免稅額及已婚人士免稅額分別提高至十萬八千元及廿一萬六千元，增幅為百分之八；
- ✎ 以一個四人單收入家庭為例，年入達到二百八十七萬一千元（增幅為一百三十三巴仙），才需按百分之十五的標準稅率繳稅；按薪俸稅標準稅率繳稅的人士將由七萬一千減至一萬人；整體而言，百分之九十九薪俸稅納稅人可減少繳稅；
- ✎ 為自住物業業主提供為期五年，每年十萬元的按揭利息稅項扣減；
- ✎ 《強制性公積金》計劃實施後，僱員供款可以扣稅，最高扣稅額為每年一萬二千元；
- ✎ 調高煙草、燃油及甲醇製品稅率百分之六；
- ✎ 將「放棄舊車計劃」延長四年，放棄車齡達十年或以上的舊車車主，可繼續享有首次登記稅寬減優惠；
- ✎ 資本稅從價稅率由零點三巴仙減至零點一巴仙，每宗個案的稅項上限為三萬元；股票交易印花稅亦由零點三巴仙減至零點二五巴仙；
- ✎ 遺產不超過七百五十萬元者無需繳稅；總值一千零五十萬以上的遺產，最高稅率減至百分之十五，其餘稅率亦相應調低；
- ✎ 酒店房租稅由百分之五減至百分之三；由九八年七月六日起，飛機乘客離境稅由一百元減至五十元；
- ✎ 差餉徵收率由百分之五減至百分之四點五，有關稅率將於下年度再作檢討；
- ✎ 凍結大部分政府收費。

（資料來源：香港總商會；羅兵咸會計師事務所）

“Business and the Budget” gives positive response

The expert panel in the Chamber's annual “Business and the Budget” review of the Budget contents gave almost – but not quite – unanimous support to the initiatives taken in the first full Budget of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Panel members this year were Mr Roddy Sage, Chairman of the Chamber's Taxation Committee and Senior Tax Partner of KPMG Peat Marwick; Mr Rod Houng-Lee, Senior Tax Partner of Price Waterhouse in Hong Kong; and the Chamber's Chief Economist, Ian K Perkin.

Mr Perkin gave a brief run-down of the Budget contents and the potential business and economic impacts of the Budget (see accompanying article this issue) and then Mr Sage and Mr Houng-Lee took over to examine the Budget contents in greater detail.

Mr Sage said the Budget contents had surprised all most everyone. He said that he had himself been expecting only modest changes to personal tax allowances, another large surplus and an explanation as to why the fiscal reserves needed a further boost.

He pointed out that the fiscal surplus of \$77 billion achieved in the 1997-98 financial year was three times higher than any previous surplus and gave the Financial Secretary scope for some concessions while still producing a \$10.7 billion surplus in 1998-99. It had enabled him to give a little to everyone.

“The cost of what the Financial Secretary has done at around \$13 billion is something like four per cent of his fiscal reserves and therefore hardly a dent in his reserves,” Mr Sage said.

On salaries tax relief for mortgage interest payments, Mr Sage pointed out that in the 1997-98 Budget, the Financial Secretary had said it would be “wrong in principle” to create a general tax concession for this purpose.



Chief Economist, Ian Perkin, hails the Budget outcome

首席經濟學家洗柏堅高度評價預算案內容。



Tax Committee Chairman and KPMG Tax Partner, Roddy Sage (left), gives a considered view. Price Waterhouse Partner, Rod Houng-Lee (right), found the Budget positive, but irritating.

稅務委員會主席兼畢馬域會計師行稅務合夥人薛樂德 (左) 作仔細分析。羅兵咸會計師行合夥人梅德勝 (右) 讚許預算案內容，但他之前所作的預測卻全盤失準。

商界對預算案反應良好

對 於特區首份財政預算案，列席「商界與預算案」研討會的專家幾乎一致讚好。

研討會講者包括總商會稅務委員會主席兼畢馬域會計師行高級稅務合夥人薛樂德先生；羅兵咸會計師行高級合夥人梅德勝先生；及總商會首席經濟學家洗柏堅先生。

會議開始，首先由洗柏堅簡介預算案重點及其對商界和經濟的影響（今期另有專文報導），再由薛、梅二人詳細探討預算案內容。

薛樂德表示，預算案內容屬大多數人意料之外，他本人便一直預測財政司長會繼續編製龐大的盈餘預算，為增加儲備提出種種解釋，而個人免稅額亦只會輕微調整。

他說，九七至九八財政年度的盈餘達七百七十億，較以往高出三倍，即使財政司長推行若干稅務減免措施，九八至九九年度的盈餘仍可達到一百零七億，給予全體市民一些優惠，自然不成問題。

「推行減免措施的代價約為一百三十億，只是財政儲備的百分之四，影響微乎其微。」

薛樂德指出，財政司司長去年發表預算案時曾經說過，提供按揭利息扣稅優惠在原則上並不正確；到了今年，他卻說優惠不會對樓價產生不良影響，助長市場炒風。

薛說，政府不少收入均與土地有關，這包括賣地收益（及補地價）、地產公司繳交的利得稅、地產業僱員繳納的新俸稅及樓宇交易印花稅。

「物業交易是政府極重要的收入來源，地產市道一旦逆轉，會大大影響政府的收入和儲備水平。」

他說，利得稅減幅雖然有限，但總括來說，總商會的游說工作十分成功。

「我們會再接再厲，爭取進一步降低利得稅稅率。」此外，預算案對「利潤來源」作了更詳盡的解釋，又建議為納稅人提供預

But this year, the Financial Secretary said he could now afford to give a mortgage relief concession without adversely affecting property prices and increasing speculation in the property market.

Mr Sage also pointed out that a substantial share of the Government's revenue now comes from land, through land sales (land premium income), profits tax from property companies, salaries tax from people employed in the property sector and stamp duty on property transactions.

"The SAR is extremely dependent on property transactions for its revenue, and any downturn in this area would cause a significant impact on the Government's revenue and its reserves," he said.

Mr Sage said the Chamber had been extremely successful in its lobbying of the Financial Secretary (see separate article in this issue), although it only received a small part of its actual request for a profits tax cut.

"We will certainly push harder for further reductions," he said. He also applauded the Financial Secretary's efforts to improve clarity in the tax system including explaining the source of profits" system and the extension of the advance opinion or clearance system on source of profits.

Mr Sage welcomed the changes to the depreciation allowances systems, although he believed the Government could have gone further; the reductions in the accommodation and airport taxes; and the Government's cross-broader taxation agreement with the Mainland as far as double taxation is concerned.

On the other hand, he expressed disappointment that the Government could not allow Group tax relief between group companies and relief for borrowings from overseas companies in the same group. "All I can say is that the Taxation Committee of the Chamber will continue to push for these changes," he said.

Mr Houng-Lee said his first reaction to the Budget was one of irritation because the Budget proved everything he had said about it before hand was wrong. "It is frankly very little comfort that no-one else got it right either," he said.

"My second reaction was one of stunned surprise at the range and breadth of the concessions he offered. "But my third, and more considered reaction was that the range of concessions, particularly the business concessions, sent a very positive message to the market.

"The problem is that the dollars he has put into business pockets and the dollars he has put into individual pockets are, in fact, for less than the actual positive message that has gone out," he said. "He (the Financial Secretary) has got a big bang for his buck."

Mr Houng-Lee said the process of the passage of Budgets in Hong Kong has now changed, with Financial Secretaries now having to be aware of the need to ensure they are passed by the legislature.

"The Financial Secretary not only had to listen to what Legco members were telling him about community concerns, he had to reflect them in his Budget proposals," he said.

"If he did not reflect those in his Budget proposals then he had to be able to explain very clearly why. This is why, I think, we have this huge number of concessions, particularly in the salaries tax area."

Mr Houng-Lee agreed that buoyant property revenue was the key to the 1997-98 Budget surplus of \$77 billion, along with huge increases in stamp duty revenue both on stock exchange turnover and property transactions.

He said property company profits tax payments also accounted for 34 per cent of total profits tax and this could be important in determining overall revenues in the coming 1998-99 fiscal year.

"In conclusion, I think that basically I am very positive about the Budget," Mr Houng-Lee said. "The size of the concessions and the breadth of the concessions send a very powerful message to the community.

"That message has more to do with the economy than anything else, because when you get right down to it the dollars involved in the concessions are very small," he said. ■

先裁定利潤來源地的服務，使現行稅制更加清晰。這些措施均獲薛樂德讚賞。

薛歡迎政府提高折舊免稅額，削減酒店房租稅及機場離境稅，並與內地制訂避免雙重課稅的協議，但對於第一點，他認為目前的優惠仍未足夠。

預算案也有好些令他失望的地方。舉例說，政府不設集團公司稅務減免，亦不容許香港公司向境外聯營公司支付的借貸利息扣稅。他說：「稅務委員會將繼續跟進，促請當局修例。」

對羅兵咸會計師行合夥人梅德勝來說，預算案給他的第一個感覺並不愉快，原因是他之前所作的預測全盤落空，第二個感覺卻是為減稅的幅度和範圍吃了一驚，但經過細心思考後，他卻認同減稅措施，特別是跟商界有關的建議，對市場有強烈的利好作用。

他說：「減稅措施對市場意義重大，但真正為市民和商界節省的金錢並不如想像中多。財政司司長付出的代價可謂物有所值。」

梅德勝指出，通過預算案的程序已經改變。財政司司長必須確保預算案獲得立法機關支持。「財政司司長不但要聽取立法會議員的意見，而且要在預算案內反映社會的訴求，否則，他便需要清楚解釋原因。因此，今次預算案提出了大量減稅建議，薪俸稅方面尤其明顯。」

梅德勝同意，龐大賣地收益是令上一財政年度盈餘高達七百七十億的關鍵，此外，股票及樓宇買賣印花稅亦為政府帶來不少進賬。

去年，地產公司繳納的稅款佔整體利得稅百分之三十四，而且很可能影響九八至九九財政年度的整體收入。

梅總結說：「我認為預算案內容正面，各項減稅措施有助增強市民信心，但措施真正涉及的金額非常有限。」 ■



Chamber Director, Eden Woon, welcome guests to "Business and the Budget"

翁以登總裁歡迎與會者到場。

General Committee member, Peter Barrett, asks a question of the panellists

本會理事畢烈在台下提問。



Good response to Chamber requests

The Financial Secretary, Sir Donald Tsang Yam-Kuen surprised everyone with his 1998-99 Budget by responding to community with a broad range of taxation and other concessions.

As a result, the Chamber was gratified to see that many of its requests to Government in its pre-Budget submission and its Profits Tax Review submission being granted, either fully or in part.

In a letter to the Chamber Director, Dr Eden Y Woon, the Secretary for the Treasury, Mr K C Kwong, said "many of the Chamber's ideas have been taken on board in the Budget".

"The list reflects how successful you have been in securing through the Budget significant improvement for the community," he said. "It is clear that your efforts have borne fruit."

Details of the Chamber's requests to Government and how they were met are listed below :

<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Budget Response</u>	<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Budget Response</u>
I. Salaries tax			
(a) Standard rate			
Do not propose any reduction in the tax rate for the time being. But with the emergence of economic conditions more favourable to raising Government revenue, Government should seek to reduce the tax rate in the near future	Met. We have not proposed to reduce the standard rate.	(3) Allow a 100% deduction of expenses incurred on computer hardware and software or treat them as expenditure on plant and machinery.	Met
(b) Marginal tax rates, tax bands			
Increase the marginal band widths and lower the marginal tax rates. But the changes should not be too substantial or otherwise the tax net, which is already narrow, will be further reduced.	Met. We have proposed to increase the marginal bands to \$35,000 and reduce the marginal tax rates from incremental steps of 6 per cent to 5 per cent. We have also proposed to reduce the top marginal tax rate to 17%. Our proposal does not affect the tax net.	Rebuilding allowance	
		(1) Extend the 20% initial allowance and the 4% annual allowance for industrial buildings to commercial buildings.	Partly met. We have proposed to double the annual depreciation allowance for commercial buildings from 2% to 4%.
		(2) Write-off all leasehold improvements over the period of the lease, but not over a period in excess of 5 years.	Met. We have proposed to allow capital expenditure on refurbishment for businesses to be amortised over five years.
(c) Certainty			
		Provide assistance to taxpayers who seeks a tax ruling from the Inland Revenue Department. The rulings should also be published. The ruling service should be provided on a user pays basis.	Met. We have proposed to introduce an advance ruling service on source of profits on a full cost recovery basis.
II. Profits tax			
(a) Standard rate			
Reduce the tax rate by 1.5% to 15% which is in line with the salaries tax standard rate. If the reduction could not be achieved in one year, Government should set a clear timetable for the tax rate to be reduced to 15%.	Partly met. We have proposed to reduce the corporate profits rate from 16.5% to 16%.	III. Stamp duty on stock transfers	
		Reduce the duty rate from 0.3% to 0.2%.	Partly met. We have proposed to reduce the duty rate to 0.25%.
(b) Permitted deduction/depreciation			
Depreciation allowance			
(1) Allow a 100% depreciation/deduction for expenses on capital expenditure with an acquisition cost under \$10,000.	Partly met. We have proposed to allow 100% immediate write-off for capital expenditure on plant and machinery specifically related to manufacturing and on computer hardware and software.	IV. Betting duty	
		No increase in betting duty.	Met.
(2) Retain the 60% initial allowance but adopt a single pool of annual allowance of 30%.	Partly met. We have retained the 60% initial allowance and the 10% - 30% annual allowance.	V. Miscellaneous taxes	
		Air passenger departure tax	
		Reduce air passenger departure tax from \$100 to \$50.	Met.
		Hotel accommodation tax	
		Reduce hotel accommodation tax from 5% to 2.5%.	Largely met. We have proposed to reduce the tax rate to 3%.
		Motor vehicle first registration tax	
		No increase in first registration tax.	Met.

本會建議獲廣泛採納

在剛公布的特區首份財政預算案中，曾蔭權先生以一系列稅務減免措施回應社會各界的訴求，為香港市民帶來驚喜。

總商會曾就預算案內容及利得稅檢討致函特區政府，對於其中多項建議獲當局採納，我們自然感到欣慰。

在一封致翁以登總裁的函件中，庫務局局長鄭其志先生指出：「財政預算案在多方面均採納了總商會的建議。貴會以此造福社群的努力已取得豐碩成果。」

以下詳列了本會對政府的建議，以及這些建議獲採納的情況：

總商會的建議

預算案的回應

I. 薪俸稅

(a) 標準稅率

不建議在現階段降低標準稅率，但一待經濟環境好轉，政府可從其他途徑增加收入，便應考慮減稅。

採納。並未提出降低薪俸稅標準稅率。

(b) 邊際稅率及稅階

擴闊稅階，調低邊際稅率，但改動不應太大，以免進一步收窄稅網。

採納。建議把邊際稅階幅度擴闊至 \$35,000；調低邊際稅率，把稅階的遞升率由 6% 減至 5%，使最高邊際稅率減至 17%，但這一系列建議不會收窄稅網。

II. 利得稅

(a) 標準稅率

削減 1.5% 至 15%，與薪俸稅標準稅率看齊，如不能在一年內達成，政府應制定清晰的時間表，逐步將其減至 15%。

部分採納。建議將公司利得稅從 16.5% 降至 16%。

(b) 註銷優惠 / 折舊免稅額

折舊免稅額

(1) \$10,000 以下的資本開支 / 購置成本可全數註銷。

部分採納。與製造業有關的工業裝置及機械開支可享有 100% 即時註銷優惠；建議同樣適用於電腦硬件和軟件。

(2) 保留初期折舊免稅額為 60%，但將往後每年給予不同工業裝置及機械的折舊免稅額劃一為 30%。

部分採納。初期折舊免稅額仍維持在 60%，年度免稅額則介乎 10% 至 30%。

總商會的建議

預算案的回應

(3) 全數註銷購置電腦硬件及軟件的開支，或將其等同工業裝置及機械支出。

採納。

建築物

(1) 將適用於工業樓宇的 20% 初期折舊免稅額及 4% 年度免稅額擴展至商業樓宇。

部分採納。建議將商業建築物的年度折舊免稅額由 2% 提高至 4%。

(2) 將所有與改善租賃物業有關的開支在租約期內攤銷，這段時間不應超過 5 年。

採納。建議將翻新工程的資本開支在 5 年內攤銷。

(C) 清晰的稅制

協助納稅人申請稅務裁決，並公開有關結果，裁決服務開支應由用者自付。

採納。按收回全部成本的收費原則，提供預先裁定利潤來源地的服務。

III. 股票交易印花稅

將股票交易印花稅由 0.3% 減至 0.2%。

部分採納。建議減至 0.25%。

IV. 博彩稅

維持不變。

採納。

V. 其他稅項

機場離境稅

機場離境稅由 \$100 減至 \$50。

採納。

酒店房租稅

由 5% 減至 2.5%。

大致採納。現建議減至 3%。

汽車首次登記稅

不提高汽車首次登記稅。

採納。



THE CHAMBER IN ACTION

Eden Woon Reports

March

Chamber Budget Input Brings Positive Results

If you glance at another part of this issue of the Bulletin, you will see that the 1998-1999 SAR Budget contains quite a large number of the Chamber's inputs. These inputs were collected from our Taxation Committee, our Economic Policy Committee, our SME Committee, other concerned members, and of course, from our General Committee. Our Chief Economist compiled all of them into submissions which were provided to the government from October through February. Therefore, the fact that our concerns were largely reflected in the Financial Secretary's Budget speech is a tribute to all those in the Chamber who contributed and is a testament to one of the key ways the Chamber serves its members. We certainly hope that this Budget will boost confidence and stimulate the economy, and help bring better economic times to our members.

Let me remind you again that those employees from our member companies who wish to be a candidate for one of the 12 positions allotted to the Chamber in the SAR election committee must register by March 20 with the government. If there are more than 12 candidates, then all those who had registered as authorized representatives in the Chamber constituency will vote on April 2 for 12 Chamber representatives to sit on the Election Committee.

Meanwhile, for the Chamber General Committee, six incumbent members are up for re-election: **David Eldon, Hari Harilela, Daniel Koo, Denis Lee, Brian Stevenson, and Henry Tang.** Daniel Koo, after 18 years of dedicated service on the General Committee, has decided not to run for re-election. We thank him for his contributions through

the years. The others will seek re-election. *If you are interested in being a General Committee member and want to run in the election to be conducted at our Annual General Meeting on April 28, please contact me.* You have until April 2 to formally register with the Chamber as a candidate for the GC. The General Committee, as you know, is the most important committee in the Chamber, providing vision and strategy for the Chamber, and guidance for the work of the Chamber staff.

Finally, let me urge you to sign up for either Chamber study missions abroad or Chamber meetings with visiting international businessmen/officials. The latter are especially good and a very inexpensive way to learn about foreign business opportunities and also tell the world about Hong Kong. ■

預算案廣泛採納本會意見

翻閱本期《工商月刊》時，您會發現特區首份財政預算案大量採納了總商會的建議。這些建議分別來自總商會屬下的稅務委員會、經濟政策委員會、中小型企業委員會和其他關心預算案的會員，當然，理事會亦有參與其事。建議由首席經濟學家輯錄成多份文件，在去年十月至今年二月期間提交政府。我們的意見獲財政司司長廣泛採納，既是對總商會內所有出力者的一份嘉許，也是本會有效服務會員的一種明證。希望財政預算案能提高港人信心，刺激經濟增長，為會員帶來更光明的經濟前景。

在此提醒大家，假如會員有意派出代表，競逐總商會在立法會選舉委員會內的十二個席位，必須於三月二十日或之前向政府登記。若候選人超過十二位，則已登記為總商會功能界別「獲授權代表」的人士，須在四月二日的預選中投票，選出十二位代表進入選舉委員會。

理事會方面，今年將有六位理事的席位需要重選，他們是**艾爾敦、夏利萊、古勝祥、李榮鈞、施文信及唐英年**。擔任理事十八年之久的古勝祥先生已決定不再競選連任，對於他多年來的貢獻，我們深深

感激，至於其他五位，則仍會角逐連任。如您有意參與在四月廿八日週年會員大會上舉行的理事會選舉，請和我聯絡，截止參選日期是四月二日。眾所周知，理事會是總商會內最重要的架構，負責制訂整體發展方向和策略，以及為商會職員提供工作上的指引。

最後，假如您仍未報名參加我們籌辦的海外考察團，或為到訪外商/外國官員而設的聚會，敬請立即行動！透過這些活動（尤其是後者）會見海外來客，所費無幾，但卻是開拓海外業務、推廣香港的好機會。 ■

商會動態

經濟及立法事務部

工作摘要

雖然適值農曆新年，該部卻因政府提早在二月十八日公布特區首份財政預算案而十分忙碌。預算案公布前，該部先為總商會就其中的重要事項草擬公開聲明，對於意見獲當局大量採納，本會自然感到鼓舞（本刊另有專文報導預算案內容）。

翌日，該部在公共關係經理的協助下，舉行一年一度的「商界與預算案午餐會」。講者包括本會首席經濟學家、稅務委員會主席薛樂德先生，及羅兵咸會計師事務所稅務合夥人梅德勝先生。研討會吸引了約七十位人士出席及大批傳媒採訪。

月內，該部繼續監察立法會選舉的有關安排，及總商會所屬功能界別 - 商界(第一)功能界別的參選情況。首席經濟學家應邀出席不同場合，就財政預算案及其他經濟課題致辭。除上述的預算案研討會外，他亦應香港管理專業協會、澳洲 Lend Lease Group、太平洋會、永道會計師行及亞世達信託有限公司的邀請發表演說。

期間，該部忙於接待來自荷蘭、法國、德國、澳洲、日本、英國及美國的銀行家和經濟學家，以及回應大量本地及海外傳媒對預算案內容及其他重要經濟課題的查詢。

該部屬下的委員會在月內舉行了兩次會議。

經濟政策委員會

委員會於二月五日開會，由主席鮑磊先生主持，話題圍繞財政預算案。二月廿三日，委員會與服務業聯盟屬下的統計諮詢委員會召開聯合會議，討論已公布的財政預算案，並邀得特別嘉賓 - 政府經濟顧問鄧廣堯先生及庫務局的郭立誠先生列席。在二月五日的會議上，成員討論了來年的特別經濟計劃，並從區內及全球形勢出發，展望經濟前景。此外，第三季的本地生產總值數字亦在討論之列。

法律委員會

二月十九日，主席顧歷謙先生主持會議，討論美國法庭對港商的司法管轄權，以及本會就有關問題致函政府一事；此外，成員曾就《公司條例檢討》、本會擬為此提交的建議書，以及《工商月刊》未來刊載法律性文章一

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

ECONOMIC AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS DIVISION

General Remarks

Despite the early Lunar New Year break, the month under review was an extremely busy one for the Division because of the equally early Budget announcement from the SAR Government. In the lead-up to the Budget announcement on February 18, the Division arranged statements for the Chamber on key Budget issues. Afterwards, the Chamber broadly welcomed the Budget contents many of which had been recommended by the Chamber in its pre-Budget submission (see separate report in this issue).

The Division also organised, with the help of the Manager, Public Relations, the Chamber's annual "Business and the Budget" luncheon on February 19. The luncheon was addressed by the Chief Economist, Chairman of the Tax Committee, Mr Roddy Sage, and Price Waterhouse Tax Partner, Mr Rod Houg-Lee. The well-attended luncheon involved some 70 participants and a large media contingent.

During the month, the Division also continued to oversee arrangements for the forthcoming elections for the Legco, and the

Chamber's constituency, the Commercial (First) Functional Constituency. The Chief Economist had a busy round of speaking engagements during the month, giving presentations on the Budget and other economic topics. Apart from the Budget luncheon, there included addresses to the Hong Kong Management Association, the lend lease group from Australia, the Pacific Club, Coopers & Lybrand and Acceptor Corporation.

There was also a busy visitor schedule during the month with bankers, economists and others from the Netherlands, France, Germany, Australia, Japan, the UK and the US. Local and international media inquiries were also extremely heavy, due to Budget inquiries and requests regarding other significant economic events.

There were two Committee meetings during the month.

Economic Policy Committee

The Economic Policy Committee met on February 5 under the chairmanship of Mr Martin Barrow, with the prospects for

Farewell for Mr Ugai

One of the Chamber's greatest supporters from Japan is to retire and return to his home country. Mr T Ugai, Secretary General of the Hong Kong Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the senior member of the Asia Committee, will return to Japan on mid March. To appreciate for his continued support to the Chamber, the Asia Committee hosted a cocktail reception on February 12 to farewell him and to welcome his successor, Mr Hiroshi Matsui. Mr Andrew Yuen, Chairman of the Asia Committee praised Mr Ugai for his efforts in promoting networking opportunities for the Chamber members with the Japanese business community in Hong Kong.



Mr Hiroshi Matsui (right), the new Secretary General of the Hong Kong Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry

香港日本人商會議所新任事務局長松井弘志（右起第一人）



Mr Andrew Yuen thanks Mr T Ugai (middle) for his past support to the Committee
袁耀全感謝鶴飼先生（中）對委員會的支持

臨別依依

亞洲委員會資深會員、香港日本人商會議所事務局長鶴飼敏哉先生將於三月退休返國。為答謝他長久以來對總商會的支持，亞洲委員會特別在二月十二日為他舉行餞別酒會，並歡迎鶴飼的繼任人松井弘志先生。席上，委員會主席袁耀全盛讚鶴飼對聯繫商會會員及本地日本商界的傑出貢獻。

the Budget session of the Legco being a major topic of discussion. A joint meeting of the Economic Policy Committee and the CSI's Statistical Committee was also organised for February 23 to discuss the Budget outcome. Special guests at that meeting were the Government Economist, Mr K Y Tang, and the Finance Bureau's Mr Martin Glass. The February 5 meeting also discussed special economic projects for the year ahead and the general outlook for the economy, given regional and global events. The meeting also discussed the third quarter Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures.

Legal Committee

The Legal Committee met on February 19 under Chairman, Mr Tim Gallie. The meeting discussed matters of US jurisdiction concerning Hong Kong companies and the correspondence the Chamber has instituted with the Government on the issues involved. It also discussed the Companies Ordinance Review and the Chamber's proposed submission, as well as future legal articles for The Bulletin magazine. It examined the Legco Bills gazetted since its last meeting and sought members views on whether there was a need to look at the MPF enabling legislation. The next Legal Committee meeting is scheduled for April 16.

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DIVISION

TRADE COMMITTEES

Americas

The Consul General of Chile, Mr. Hernan Brantes and Mr. Marco Blavia, Director of Iquique Chamber of Commerce and Mr. Luis Unanue, General Manager of the Free Zone of Iquique visited the Chamber on February 4. The objective of the visit was to strengthen the trade links between Hong Kong and Chile and to discuss business cooperation opportunities in the Free Zone arising from the expansion of the Port of Iquique.

Asia

The Asia Committee held its regular meeting on February 12 at which members discussed, among other things, the proposed missions to India and Vietnam. The Committee also proposed to host a lunch reception, jointly with the Americas Committee, at which Mr. Armando Jarque, Consul General of Mexico in Hong Kong will be invited to speak. His planned topic is the Mexican experience in recovering from the financial and currency crisis that struck the country a few years ago.

Immediately following the February 12 meeting, the Committee hosted a cocktail

Motorola Chief at PBEC meeting

The Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) Hong Kong, China Committee hosted a breakfast meeting for Mr Gary Tooker, Chairman of PBEC and Chairman of Motorola, Inc (who was on an Asian tour) on February 16 at the Island Shangri-La Hotel. Mr Tooker was joined by the Secretary-General of PBEC, Mr Robert Lees, who was also touring the region at the time, and PBEC Vice-chairman, Dr Helmut Sohmen. While in Hong Kong, Mr Tooker took time to meet with members of PBEC Hong Kong, China. Attended by twenty members, the breakfast meeting went well. An exchange of views between the Chairman and members on the Asian currency crisis and its impact on business in the region dominated discussions at the meeting.



Motorola and PBEC Chief, Mr Gary Tooker (centre) flanked by Mr Douglas Fergusson (right), Mr Michael Sze (far left) and PBEC Vice-chairman, Dr Helmut Sohmen.

摩托羅拉兼太平洋地區經濟理事會主席圖克先生(中)與弗格森先生(右)、施祖祥先生(左一)及理事會副主席蘇海文博士(左二)。



Dr Helmut Sohmen, PBEC Vice-chairman and incoming PBEC Chairman, introduces Mr Tooker.

將繼任理事會主席的蘇海文博士介紹圖克先生。



PBEC Secretary General, Mr Robert Lees with Chamber Director, Dr Eden Woon (right), and Mr Barry Cook.

太平洋地區經濟理事會秘書長李斯先生、本會總裁翁以登博士(右)及高保利先生。

摩托羅拉首腦出席太平洋地區經濟理事會會議

二月十六日，太平洋地區經濟理事會中國香港委員會主辦早餐會，嘉賓是理事會主席兼摩托羅拉集團主席圖克先生。早餐會假港島香格里拉大酒店舉行，陪同圖克先生出席者，有同時到訪亞洲的理事會秘書長李斯先生，以及理事會國際副主席蘇海文博士。留港期間，圖克先生曾與理事會中國香港委員會成員會面。出席早餐會的會員有二十位，他們借此機會與主席交流意見，重點是亞洲金融風暴對商界和區內的影響。

reception to farewell Mr. Ugai, Secretary General of the Hong Kong Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry and to welcome his successor, Mr. Hiroshi Matsui.

China

The China Committee annual delegation visited Beijing from January 18 to 20. This was the first Chamber delegation to Beijing after the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China. The purpose of the visit was to maintain goodwill and discuss relevant business and economic development issues with senior central government officials. The delegation, led by Mr. Tony Fung and Dr. Lily Chiang, respectively Chairman and Vice-Chairman

of Committee, met with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, and State Administration of Taxation and General Administration of Customs. Over the two days of meetings, a wide range of subjects were covered including China's accession to the World Trade Organisation, opening of the tertiary sector, double taxation, exemption of duties on import of capital goods, customs policies on free trade zones and foreign investment policies.

On February 10, the Chamber Director, Dr. Eden Woon met Mr. Luo Zhaoci, Deputy Director-General, Guangzhou Municipal Commission for Foreign Economic Relations & Trade (COFERT) and his colleagues. The meeting discussed

arrangements for a seminar on "Investment Policies in Guangzhou" to be co-organised by the Chamber, Guangzhou Municipal Board of Investment and COFERT Guangzhou.

A seven-member delegation from Shaanxi paid a courtesy call to the Chamber on February 10. The delegation was led by Mr. Li Jinjiang, Director of Shaanxi Association for Friendship with Chinese Overseas.

Europe

On January 16, a German delegation led by Dr. Arend Oetker, Vice President of the Federation of German Industries (BDI) and Head of the KonsuGerma Exhibition Committee, met with the Chamber Director, Dr. Eden Woon. The delegation was promoting the German Consumer Goods Exhibition to be held in Shanghai from April 27 to May 2, 1998.

HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL

Preparations for the 11th visit by US Congressional Staffers have begun. The staffers are scheduled to visit Hong Kong and Southern China from April 12 to 18. The Chamber and the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce are the financial sponsors for the visit. Other business associations in Hong Kong will provide hospitality programmes for the staffers.

On January 22, Mr. George Fierheller, Chair of the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance (GTMA), Canada, met with Mr. Sidney Fung, Assistant Director for International Business. They exchanged views on the ways to promote closer cooperation between GTMA and the Chamber.

Hong Kong Taipei Business Cooperation Committee (HKTBC)

HKTBC hosted a breakfast meeting on February 4 at the Hong Kong Club in honour of Ambassador Darryl Johnson, Chief US Representative to Taiwan. At the meeting, Ambassador Johnson outlined his thoughts on Taiwan and its relationship with the mainland China and the region.

Pacific Basin Economic Council

Copies of the Administrative Barriers to Trade report were received and distributed to all PBEC Hong Kong member companies. Copies also went to the Secretary for Trade and Industry, members of ABAC in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation.

The first quarterly luncheon meeting hosted by PBEC Hong Kong's Vice-Chairman and Chairman of PBEC IGM 1999 Steering Committee, John Strickland, took place on February 2. These working luncheons are means by which members get

事交換意見。委員會檢討了自對上一次會議後在憲報刊登的立法會條例草案，並就是否需要討論強制性公積金主體法例徵詢各成員的意見。下次會議訂於四月十六日舉行。

國際商務部

委員會動態

美洲委員會

二月四日，智利總領事布蘭特斯先生、伊基克商會總裁布拉維亞先生，及伊基克自由貿易區總經理烏納努埃先生到訪，希望藉此加強智利與香港的貿易聯繫，並商談隨著伊基克港擴建，雙方在自由貿易區合作經營的可能。

亞洲委員會

委員會於二月十二日召開例會，討論組織考察團到印度及越南的建議。委員會亦提議與美洲委員會合辦午餐會，邀請墨西哥駐港總領事主講，與會員分享該國數年前從經濟及貨幣危機中復蘇的經驗。

同日，委員會舉行酒會，送別香港日本人商工會議所事務局長鶴飼敏哉先生，同時歡迎他的繼任人松井弘志先生。

中國委員會

委員會於一月十八至二十日訪問北京。此乃總商會在香港主權回歸後首度訪京，目的

是維繫雙方的友好關係，以及與中央政府高層官員商討各項商業及經濟發展事宜。訪問團由委員會主席馮永祥先生及副主席蔣麗莉博士率領，先後會晤外經貿部、港澳辦、國家稅務總局及海關總署官員，在兩日的會議中廣泛討論了多項問題，包括中國加入世貿、開放第三產業、雙重徵稅、豁免資本貨物入口稅、自由貿易區的關稅政策及外商投資政策。

二月十日，翁以登博士會見廣州市對外經濟貿易委員會副局長羅兆慈先生及隨行的代表團，商談「投資廣州新紀元」研討會的細節。研討會由香港總商會、廣州招商局及廣州市對外經濟貿易委員會聯合主辦。

二月十日，一行七人的陝西省考察團到訪，團長是陝西省海外聯誼會會長李錦江先生。

歐洲委員會

一月十六日，德國工業聯盟副會長兼 KonsuGerma 展覽委員會負責人厄特克爾博士率領代表團到訪，由翁以登總裁接待。代表團此行是為了宣傳在四月廿七日至五月二日假上海舉行的「德國消費品展」。

香港國際委員會

委員會已為美國國會議員助理第十一次訪問香港及華南地區開展籌備工作，日期是四月十二至十八日，本會及中華總商會為是次行程的贊助機構，本港其他商界組織將為他們安排各項活動。

Mazda Motors presents Expo prize

The Lucky Draw Grand Prize presentation ceremony for the Chamber's Shopping Expo 98 was held on February 26. Grand prize winner was Mr Cheng Chi Ho. He received a Mazda 323 4-door Sedan worth HK\$100,000 sponsored by Mazda Motors (Hong Kong) Limited.

The prize was presented by Mr Paul Ko, Sales Manager of Mazda Motors (Hong Kong) Limited and Mrs Connie Kwok, General Manager of Chamber Services Limited.

The Lucky Draw results were published in the South China Morning Post, Hong Kong Standard, Apply Daily and Sing Tao Daily.

購物博覽送出萬事得名貴房車

二月廿六日，香港商展會購物博覽 98 舉行幸運大抽獎頒獎典禮，頭獎得主鄭志豪先生獲萬事得汽車（香港）有限公司送出萬事得 323 四門名貴房車一部，價值十萬港元。負責頒獎的是該公司營業經理高玉森先生，及總商會服務有限公司總經理郭陳相燕女士。

抽獎結果已刊登於南華早報、英文虎報、蘋果日報及星島日報。



together and be brought up-to-date on the progress of the IGM.

BUSINESS POLICY DIVISION

COALITION OF SERVICE INDUSTRIES

Hong Kong Awards for Services

Coalition Secretary General Dr W K Chan attended a meeting of the Services Promotion Strategy Group chaired by the Financial Secretary on January 16 to report on the Hong Kong Awards for Services 1997 scheme. The Awards Scheme was highly regarded by the Financial Secretary and the SPSC. On February 12 a meeting of the Organising Committee of the Hong Kong Awards for Services: Innovation was held to evaluate the 1997 scheme and to plan for the 1998 Award. The first batch of sponsorship letters for the Awards Scheme was dispatched in January.

Services Support Fund

Dr Chan attended a meeting of the Vetting Committee of the Services Support Fund on January 22 in which the operation of the Fund was reviewed and discussed. Thirty academics from the territory's seven universities attended a meeting with members of the Coalition on February 6 to exchange views on cooperation between academics and the business sector. It was agreed following the meeting that the Coalition would create a simple "bulletin board" on its Homepage as a focal point for exchange of topics of interest to the two sectors.

Other services promotion initiatives

Tripartite Forum

Following its successful conclusion, the full report of the Tripartite Forum is now being prepared. A special supplement will be published in "The Servicing Economy" Newsletter.

Assistance for professional associations

On February 10 an informal meeting was held between the HKCSI, the Business and Services Promotion Unit of the Financial Secretary's Office, and Mr P C Lau of the Institute of Surveyors on progress of the Joint Professional Centre proposed by nine professional bodies whom Mr Lau represented. Separately, the Coalition has conducted a survey among small business associations on the desirability and feasibility of establishing a joint business sector for these organisations.

Business Park

The Coalition convened an informal meeting on February 10 with the BSPU, Industry Department, the Hong Kong Article Numbering Association and the Logistics Association to exchange views on the government study on business park.

Travel/tourism

On February 11 the Travel Industry Core Group met over lunch with Mr Joe Wong of Economic Services Bureau to discuss the tourism policy of the SAR.

Information technology and telecommunications

The Information Services Committee met on February 3 with Mr Geoffrey Woodhead of Economic Services Bureau to discuss progress of telecommunications and information technology policies. The meeting was the last to be chaired by Mr Henry Goldstein, who stepped down after the meeting and was succeeded by Mr Tony Au who was unanimously elected Chairman. In response to the government policy statement "Liberalisation of Hong Kong's External Telecommunications" announced on January 20, the Coalition issued a press release welcoming the liberalisation measures. Dr Chan also attended on behalf of the CSI a meeting of the Economics Services Panel on February 9 on the subject. Dr Chan attended a seminar organised by the Central Policy Unit on "Making IT work for Education" on January 23.

Hong Kong Franchise Association

CD-ROM and training courses

The first version of the first ever CD-ROM on franchise training has been released. The first round of tutorial training making use of the CD-ROM has started on February 12. There will be five tutorials in this first training course.

SME

The Committee met on January 21 to discuss arrangements for the annual Chamber Spring Dinner on February 21 as well as items relating to the cost of doing business in Hong Kong for SMEs. A press briefing was held on 13 February to publicise the Committee's paper calling for a freeze on government fees and charges. Chamber representatives to the event were Ms Phyllis Kwong, SME Committee Chairman, Mr Joe Tam, SME Committee Vice Chairman, Mr Denis Lee, General Committee Member and Government SME Committee Chairman, and Dr Eden Woon, Chamber Director.

A training course called "Setting up a business in the PRC and its tax implications"

一月廿二日，加拿大大多倫多市場聯盟主席菲耶黑勒先生與國際商務部助理總裁馮棟澤會晤，就如何促進雙方合作交流意見。

香港 - 台北經貿合作委員會

二月四日，委員會在香港會所舉行早餐會，邀請美國在台協會台北辦事處處長張戴佑先生致辭，講述對台灣、兩岸形勢，以至台灣與區內關係的見解。

太平洋地區經濟理事會

有關消除行政障礙的報告書已印刷完成，並送交香港委員會全體公司會員、工商局局長、亞太經合商業諮詢委員會香港區成員及太平洋經濟合作香港委員會。

本季首個午餐會於二月二日舉行，會議由理事會香港委員會副主席兼一九九九年國際年會指導委員會主席施德論先生主持。會員可藉這些機會聚首一堂，了解籌備國際年會的最新進展。

工商政策部

香港服務業聯盟

香港服務業獎

聯盟秘書長陳偉群博士於一月十六日出席服務業推廣策略小組會議，匯報九七年香港服務業獎的情況。會議由財政司司長主持。獎勵計劃極受財政司司長及服務業推廣策略小組重視。二月十二日，「香港服務業獎：創意」籌備委員會召開會議，一方面檢討去年的成績，另一方面則定出今年的計劃，而第一批致贊助商的邀請信已於一月寄出。

服務業支援資助計劃

一月廿二日，陳偉群博士出席服務業支援資助計劃評審委員會的會議，檢討及商談計劃的運作情況。二月六日，三十位來自本地七家大學的學者與聯盟成員會晤，就學術界與私營環節的合作問題交換意見。會後，雙方同意在聯盟的網頁上設立簡單的「資料報告板」，「張貼」雙方關注的熱門事項，方便交流。

其他推廣活動

三方論壇

隨著三方論壇圓滿結束，有關報告亦已接近完成；《服務港》通訊將出版特刊，報導論壇情況。

was held on January 15 and attracted six participants.

OPERATIONS DIVISION

Membership

The annual membership renewal for this year is about to be completed. Renewed members are eligible to vote at Chamber's Annual General Meeting on April 28. Some 45 members and guests attended the January Dinner Club meeting held on January 20.

Human Resources

A half day training course on "Professional Telephone Skills" was held on 11 February 1998 and 26 participants attended.

Information Technology

A preliminary version of the Chamber Web Site is now ready for soft-launching. Membership enquiry, trade enquiry and information services will be developed soon as the main features of the Site are complete. Members are now encouraged to communicate with the Chamber through email at enquiry@hkgcc.org.hk for general enquiries and individual staff's first name at hkgcc.org.hk for specific enquiries.

Administration

There were 8 tenders announced for Government Supplies Department, and eight tenders for five other Government departments in the Daily Bulletin under the Phonafax. Eight Race Meetings were organized during the month with a total of 466 participants.

A roundtable luncheon was held on January 21 at which Mr. Ian Christie, Chief Operating Officer of Acceptor Trust, explained the "Uses and Benefits of Offshore Companies and Trusts" to 34 participants. The February issue of the Discount Club Newsletter, announcing 14 offers, was published to all Chamber members.

Events

A small luncheon was held on January 19 for Dr Charles M Vest, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The topic of his speech is *Building for the 21st Century: The Importance of Long Term Investment in Education, Innovation & Cooperation among Industry, Academia and Government*. Twenty five persons by invitation attended the luncheon.

The Chamber's January Subscription Luncheon was held on January 22 with Executive Director of the Hong Kong Tourist Association Mrs Amy Chan as guest speaker. She addressed the audience on "Hong Kong Tourism: A Vision for the Future." The luncheon was well-attended by 220 persons. ■

為專業團體提供的支援

二月十日，聯盟與財政司司長辦公室屬下的工商服務業推廣署，及香港測量師學會的劉炳章先生舉行非正式會議，討論成立聯合專業中心（暫譯）的進度。建議由劉氏所代表的九個專業團體提出。另外，聯盟進行了一項以小型商界組織為對象的調查，了解他們是否渴望成立聯業組織，以及此建議的可行性。

商業園

二月十日，聯盟與工商服務業推廣署、工業署、香港貨品編碼協會及 Logistics Association 舉行非正式會議，就政府進行的商業園研究交流意見。

旅遊業

二月十一日，旅遊/招待核心小組與經濟局的黃智祖先生舉行午餐會，討論特區的旅遊業政策。

資訊科技及電訊業

二月三日，資訊服務委員會與經濟局的胡翰德先生會晤，討論制訂電訊及資訊科技政策的進度。這是高盛德先生最後一次主持會議，其後，主席一職將由在選舉中獲一致支持的區煒洪先生接任。一月廿日，政府公布「開放香港對外電訊服務」政策聲明，聯盟隨即發表新聞稿，表示支持。二月九日，陳偉群博士代表聯盟出席經濟事務委員會以此為題的會議。一月廿三日，陳博士出席由中央政策組主辦、題為「讓資訊科技為教育：美國經驗」的研討會。

香港特許經營權協會

「特許經營指南電腦光碟」及培訓課程

首張有關特許經營培訓的光碟已經面世，而利用光碟輔助教學的第一輪導修課程已於二月十二日開課，共分五節。

中小型企業委員會

委員會於一月廿一日舉行會議，討論二月廿一日春茗聯歡的細節安排，以及與本地中小型企業經營成本有關的問題。二月十三日，委員會舉行新聞簡佈會，公開致政府的意見書內容，促請當局凍結各項收費，出席者包括中小型企業委員會主席鄺家賢女士、副主席譚耀祖先生、理事會成員兼政府中小型企業委員會主席李榮鈞先生，及本會總裁翁以登博士。 ■

一月十五日，六位學員參加一個由該部主辦的課程，題目是「大陸外商投資之成立手續及稅務會計實務」。

營運部

會員動態

本年度的續會程序快將完成，辦妥續會手續的會員，可在四月廿八日舉行的週年會員大會上投票。約有四十五位會員及嘉賓出席在一月廿日的 3288 晚飯會聚會。

人力資源

在二月十一日開課的「專業電話應對技巧課程」，吸引了二十六人參加。

資訊科技

總商會網頁的初版已經完成，隨時可按部推出，只待網頁的主要功能設置妥當，會員即可透過網頁查詢會籍、貿易及其他資訊。歡迎會員透過電郵與我們聯絡，如屬一般查詢，電郵地址是 enquiry@hkgcc.org.hk；如屬專門問題，商會職員都有以自己名字為首的電郵地址（名字+hkgcc.org.hk），會員可直接與他們聯絡。

行政

電話傳真系統提供了有關政府物料供應處（八項）及另外五個政府部門（另八項）的投標資料。月內共有八次賽馬聚會，參加者達四百六十六人。

該部於一月廿一日舉行小型午餐會，邀請亞世達信託有限公司營運總監祈仕德先生，向三十四位參加者講解離岸公司的好處與稅務安排。《會員優惠折扣計劃》的二月號通訊已分發予全體會員，今期刊載的折扣優惠多達十四項。

活動點滴

一月十九日，美國麻省理工大學校長維斯特博士主持一個小型午餐會，講解長線投資教育和創意的重要，以及商界、學術界和政府應如何攜手合作，迎接廿一世紀的來臨，有廿五位嘉賓應邀出席。

一月份的大型午餐會在廿二日舉行，演講嘉賓是香港旅遊協會總幹事陳鄭綺艷女士，她以「香港旅遊業前瞻」為題，吸引了二百二十位人士出席。 ■

CHAMBER FORECAST

Mar 19, 23 & 30

**Computer based Franchise Training
特許經營培訓課程**

Conference Room, The Hong Kong General Chamber of
Commerce
(Enquiries: Marina Wong, Tel 2823 1250)

March 25, 10 am - 2.15 pm

**Seminar & Luncheon:
Hong Kong Property Market: What Lies Ahead
Lunch Speaker: Ms Rosanna Wong, JP
Chairman, Hong Kong Housing Authority**

**香港地產市場前瞻研討會
午餐會主講嘉賓：香港房屋委員會主席王葛鳴女士**

Ballroom, Island Shangri-La Hotel
(Enquiries: Rammy Chan,
Tel 2823 1225)

March 27, 9.30 am - 12.15 pm

**Seminar:
Investment Policies in Guangzhou**

廣州投資新紀元研討會

Room 407, Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre
(Enquiries: Phoebe Lee, Tel 2823 1239)

April 28, 5 pm - 7 pm

**The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
Annual General Meeting
All members are welcome**

**香港總商會週年會員大會
歡迎所有會員參加**

Ballroom, Island Shangri-La Hotel
(Enquiries: Stephen Wong,
Tel 2823 1288)

Outbound Mission

April 21-22	Hong Kong Coalition of Service Industries Mission to Beijing
May 3-6	Chamber Delegation to Dalian
May 14-15	Study Mission to Pearl River Delta (East)
May 16-27	Business / Investment Mission to Central and South America: Chile / Peru / Mexico
May 22-27	Pacific Basin Economic Council International General Meetings 1998 in Santiago, Chile

Chamber Forecast (Cont'd)

COMING EVENTS

Mar 6	Visit of Governor John Kitzhaber (Oregon, USA) to Hong Kong
Mar 9	Briefing on May 98 Legislative Council Election & Election Committee Subsector Elections
Mar 10	Roundtable Luncheon: What to do in case of Fire
Mar 10, 17, 24 Apr 7, 14	Training Courses: Management Update on Labour Laws
Mar 13-14	Workshop: Six Thinking Hats
Mar 16	Roundtable Luncheon: "Sweden – As a Distribution Gateway to Scandinavia"
Mar 16	Seminar: Motivation of Success
Mar 18	Workshop: Office Manner
Mar 19	Roundtable Luncheon: Is Hong Kong Still Competitive – In What Ways and How?
Mar 19, 23 & 30	Computer based Franchise Training
Mar 20 & Mar 25	Workshop: Dr Daniel Goleman's "Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace" Dr Daniel Goleman's "Emotional Literacy"
Mar 23, 25 & 30	Seminar: Performance Management by applying NLP, EQ & AQ
Mar 24	Training Course: Time Management for Executive & Business Owners
Mar 25	Roundtable Luncheon: Business Fortune for the Year of the Tiger
Mar 25	Seminar: Hong Kong Property Market: What Lies Ahead
Mar 26	Workshop: Mind Mapping for Business Application Programme
Mar 27	Seminar: Investment Policies in Guangzhou
Mar 27-28	Lateral Thinking Workshop

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Mar 3	Americas Committee
Mar 12	General Committee
Mar 16	Europe Committee: "Sweden – As a Distribution Gateway to Scandinavia." (All members are welcome)
Apr 28	Annual General Meeting
May 14	Shipping Committee
May 19	HKGCC Council

(Regular committee meetings open to respective committee members only, unless otherwise specified.)

THE HONG KONG GENERAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

香港總商會

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1998

一九九八週年會員大會

28 APRIL 1998

一九九八年四月廿八日

- This year's Annual General Meeting of the Chamber will be held at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, 28 April 1998 in the Ballroom of the Island Shangri-la Hotel.
本年度會員大會已定於四月廿八日(星期二)下午五時假港島香格里拉大酒店大禮堂舉行。
- SIX members of the General Committee are required to stand for re-election this year. They are Mr David Eldon (Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd), Mr Hari Harilela (Harilela's), Mr Daniel Koo (Shui Hing Co Ltd), Mr Denis Lee (Kingscore Industrial Ltd), Mr Brian Stevenson (Ernst & Young) and Mr Henry Tang (Peninsula Knitters Ltd).
今年，六位理事的席位需要重選，分別是艾爾敦先生(香港上海匯豐銀行)、夏利萊先生(夏利萊集團)、古勝祥先生(瑞興百貨公司)、李榮鈞先生(勁億實業有限公司)、施文信先生(安永會計師事務所)及唐英年先生(半島針織廠有限公司)。
- Mr Daniel Koo, a long standing member of the General Committee with a tremendous record of service to the Chamber, has indicated he wishes to retire from the Committee and will not stand for re-election.
其中，服務本會多年的資深理事古勝祥先生已決定不再連任。
- All FIVE other members required to stand again this year have indicated they intend to nominate for re-election to the General Committee.
其餘五位皆表示有意連任。
- Any other Chamber members intending to nominate for election to the General Committee should contact the Chamber Director, Dr Eden Y Woon, on telephone 2823-1211 or facsimile 2527-7886, **BEFORE APRIL 2**.
有興趣參與角逐理事職位的會員，請於四月二日前與總裁翁以登博士聯絡，電話及傳真分別是2823 1211及2527 7886。

Occupational Safety & Health for Good Business

13-14 March 1998 (Friday-Saturday), 9:00am - 5:00pm
Hongkong International Trade and Exhibition Centre,
1 Trademart Drive, Kowloon Bay.

Conference and Workshop on Implementation of the New Occupational Safety & Health Ordinance

OSH Exhibition for Non-industrial Sector

Open Invitation

Hong Kong is entering into a new era with the enactment of the new Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (OSHO) in May 1997. How could the employers and management of the non-industrial sector discharge their responsibilities in complying with the new law?

Conference on Occupational Safety and Health for Good Business

13 March 1998 (Friday)

Programme

Opening Ceremony to be officiated by Dr the Honourable S. Y. Chung, GBM, JP, Convenor of the Executive Council

- **The New Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance : The Government's Development of Compliance Standards and Enforcement Strategy**

Dr LEE Kai-fat, JP, Deputy Commissioner for Labour (OSH), Labour Department, Hong Kong

- **UK Health and Safety at Work : An Overview of the UK Experience**

Mr Richard Hillier, Director, Resources and Planning Directorate, Health & Safety Executive, UK

- **Good Health is Good Business : The UK Experience in Developing Programmes to Tackle Occupational Health**

Dr Peter Graham, Director, Health Directorate, Health & Safety Executive, UK

- **Promotion of Occupational Safety and Health for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises — Canadian Experience**

Mrs Maureen Shaw, President & Chief Executive, Industrial Accident Prevention Association, Ontario, Canada

- **Occupational Health and Enforcement, Including the Work of HSE's Employment Medical Advisory Service**

Dr Tony Leach, Head of Employment Medical Advisory Service, Health & Safety Executive, UK

- **Occupational Health and Safety in the Public Sector**

Mrs Anne Sharp, Head of Services Sector, Health & Safety Executive, UK

The Occupational Safety and Health Council and the Labour Department are proud to bring you the "Occupational Safety & Health for Good Business" Conference and Workshop on 13th & 14th March 1998. Experts from the U.K., Canada and Hong Kong will share their valuable experiences in introducing good safety & health practices with special reference to the non-industrial sector. You are welcome to join any of the five parallel workshops tailor-made for these trades: banking, retail, hospital, education and hospitality services. At end of the 2-day programme, you will gain important insight on how good safety and health practices can improve productivity for your organization.

In conjunction with the conference and workshops, an exhibition on occupational health and safety products for non-industrial sector will be held concurrently. Equipment such as in-door air quality monitoring, ergonomically designed furniture and accessories for offices, non-slippery flooring material for non-industrial sectors will be on display.

Language

English (Simultaneous interpretation for Cantonese will be provided at the Conference and the Forum)

Workshop on Local Experience in Managing Safety and Health for Non-industrial Sector

14 March 1998 (Saturday)

Programme

- **Workshop 1 (Financial Institution)**

Health, Fire and Safety — The HongkongBank Experience

Speaker : Mr Lawrence K T HO, Assistant Manager, Fire & Safety, The Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd

- **Workshop 2 (Retail Industry)**

Good Health & Safety Practices for Retailing

Speaker : Mr Irvin TSE, Operations Manager, Marks & Spencer (Hong Kong) Ltd

- **Workshop 3 (Education Establishment)**

Development of a University Health & Safety Programme

Speaker : Mr Y. K. KAM, Head, Health & Safety, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

- **Workshop 4 (Health Care Services)**

Approach and Strategy to Implement an Occupational Safety and Health Management System in the Hospital Authority

Speaker : Mr Kenneth Woo, Senior Executive Manager, Business Support Services, Hospital Authority

- **Workshop 5 (Hospitality Services)**

Safety & Health Issues in the Hotel Industry and Inaugurate Experience

Speaker : Mr Daniel Leung, Human Resources Manager, The Kowloon Hotel

Forum on managing safety and health in non-industrial sector

Enrolment Form

Please enrol the following participant for the Conference and Workshop:

Name in English (Mr/Ms/Mrs)

Position

Name of Company

Tel.

Fax

Nature of Business

Financial Institution

Retail Industry

Educational Establishment

Health Care Services

Hospitality Services

Other

Address

Contact Person

Please complete the enrolment form and send with a crossed cheque of HK\$ 980 per person made payable to "Occupational Safety and Health Council" to 14/F, L & D House, 2-4 Cameron Road, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon. Enquiries could be made to tel: 2739 9377, fax: 2739 9779 or Email: oshc@oshc.org.hk

Organizers:



**Occupational Safety & Health Branch
Labour Department**



OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH COUNCIL

Candidates for Election Committee can now apply

Under the new electoral arrangements set down in the Legislative Council Ordinance, the Commercial (First) Functional Constituency (i.e. the Chamber Constituency) has the responsibility to elect 12 members of the 800-member Election Committee on Thursday, April 2 this year. This Committee will, in turn, elect 10 members of the First SAR Legco on Sunday, May 24.

Anyone closely associated with your Chamber member company could have the right to stand as a candidate for one of the 12 places allotted to the Chamber for election to the 800-member Election Committee. Nomination forms for candidates will soon be available and must be submitted between March 13 and 20.

Should you, or anyone from your Chamber member company, wish to be a

candidate for the Election Committee Commercial (First) Functional Constituency sub-sector election they should contact the relevant Returning Officer at the Registration and Electoral Office to obtain the relevant nomination forms. The office is located on the 10th Floor of Harbour Centre, 25 Harbour Road, Wanchai and contact numbers for the Office are 2891-1001 (telephone) or 2891-1180 (fax).

To be able to stand for the Election Committee, there are some general requirements for candidates. Under these requirements, intending candidates must have reached 18 years of age; be both registered and eligible to be registered in a geographical constituency; be both registered and eligible to be registered as a voter in the Commercial (First) Functional Constituency or be able to satisfy the

Returning Officer that they have a substantial connection with the Commercial (First) functional constituency sub-sector; and, finally, not be disqualified from standing for legal or other reasons outlined in the Legislative Council Ordinance. Candidates are also required to fulfil certain other nomination requirements and to a lodge a deposit upon being nominated.

As far as the May 24 direct election to the Chamber's Functional Constituency is concerned, candidates are expected to nominate in the period April 9-to-24. In the meantime, any general inquiries on election procedures relating to the Chamber's functional constituency can be directed to the Chamber's Economic and Legislative Affairs Division on 2823-1242 (telephone) or 2527-9843 (fax). ■

選舉委員會候選人須知

根據《立法會條例》的新選舉安排，商界（第一）功能界別（即香港總商會）須於本年四月二日（星期四）選出八百人選舉委員會中的十二名成員，再由選舉委員會於五月二十四日（星期日）選出特區首屆立法會十名議員。

任何與總商會會員公司有「密切聯繫」的人士，都可能有權成為候選人，競逐總商會在八百人選舉委員會中的十二個席位。候選人提名表格將於短期內派發，但須在三月十三至二十日填妥交回。

如您或公司內任何人士，有意成為選舉委員會商界（第一）界別分組選舉的候選人，應向選舉事務處索取提名表格。該處的地址是灣仔港灣道25號海港中心10樓，電話及傳真是2891 1001及2891 1180。

競逐選舉委員會的席位，候選人必須符合若干條件。這包括候選人必須年滿十八歲；已登記及有資格登記為地方選區選民；

已登記及有資格登記為商界（第一）功能界別的選民／或能向選舉主任充分證明其人與商界（第一）功能界別分組有「密切聯繫」；以及未因《立法會條例》列明的法律或其他原因而喪失

參選資格。此外，候選人亦須同時符合其他提名條件，並於獲提名後繳交選舉按金。

至於總商會功能界別選舉，候選人應於四月九日至二十四日宣佈參選意向。現時，如對總商會功能界別選

舉的程序有任何疑問，請直接聯絡本會經濟及立法事務部，電話及傳真是2823 1242/2527 9843。 ■

請把候選人提名表格於
三月十三至二十日填妥交回

Please return the
nomination forms for
candidates between
March 13 and 20

Beijing visit covers wide range of business issues

The China Committee's first delegation to Beijing since the return of Hong Kong sovereignty to China met with senior officials to discuss a wide range of issues of interest to the local business community. The 27-member delegation led by Committee Chairman, Mr Tony Fung, was in Beijing from January 18 to 20.

The main aims of the visit were to maintain goodwill and to discuss with senior central government officials relevant business and economic development issues and problems encountered by Hong Kong companies operating in the mainland.

The delegation, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, met with officials from the Ministry of Finance; the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office; General Administration of Customs; State Administration for Taxation; State Administration for Foreign Exchange and State Administration for Industry and Commerce.

Key issues discussed by the delegation included:

State-Owned Enterprises

In the past 20 years of opening, major steps have been taken to attract foreign



Mr Tony Fung presenting a souvenir to Mr An Min, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, the host organisation for the delegation

馮永祥向外經貿部部長助理安民致送紀念品，該部是代表團的接待單位。



Delegation members ready for another meeting 代表團準備開會

中國委員會訪京收穫豐盈

一月十八至二十日，中國委員會在香港回歸後首度訪問北京。代表團一行二十七人，由委員會主席馮永祥先生率領，期間獲多位高層官員接待，討論了一系列本港商界深感興趣的問題。

這不僅是一次友好訪問。團員也希望藉著這次機會，與中央政府高層官員討論香港公司在內地遇上的商業和經濟問題。

這次的接待單位是對外貿易經濟合作部。此外，代表團亦拜會了財政部、港澳辦、海關總署、國家稅務總局、國家外匯管理局及國家工商管理總局的官員。

雙方討論的重要事項包括：

國企改革

過去二十年，內地曾推行多項吸引外資的重要措施，但國企改革的進度卻十分緩慢。十五大期間，中央政府規劃了未來的改革方略，其中一項主要目標就是深化國企改革，過程將涉及企業間的兼併、收購、重組和工人轉職。當局相信透過改革、重組和鞏固管理制度，可在三年內組成競爭力強勁的大型企業。

改革的關鍵在於如何妥善處理下崗工人的就業問題。據悉，全國一億一千三百萬工人中，最少三成需要下崗。因此，安排再培

訓及轉職計劃，以及建立良好的社會保障制度，已成為政府的首要任務。

開放第三產業

內地引引進外資時採用的「試點」計劃證明十分成功。政府已批准在十一個城市合共開設十九家合資零售店。最近，國內貿易部更頒布了《連鎖店經營管理規範意見》，歡迎包括港商在內的外商按既定法規，以試點方式開設連鎖店。現時，已有兩家公司獲准在北京經營這種業務。展望未來，相信將有更多城市和行業（如批發及特許經營）會以試點方式開放予外商參與。

旅遊服務是另一個行將開放的行業。除批准合資旅行社在國家級旅遊區開業外，當局更計劃容許一至兩家合資旅行社在一個城市內經營。外經貿部及國家旅遊局將制訂詳盡法規，交國務院審批。

保稅區

截至九六年底，保稅區的數目已達十五個，除鹽田及珠海外，其他均曾通過驗收程序。海關總署暫時不會開闢新的保稅區，但會集中資源，改善現有保稅區的管理。為了方便區內企業經營，該署採取了下列措施：

investment, but the pace of reform of State-owned enterprises has always been slow. At the 15th National Congress, the central government mapped out the strategies for future reforms and opening up. The deepening of the reform of State-owned enterprises has been an important objective. The reform process would involve mergers, acquisitions, restructuring and re-employment. Through reform, reorganisation, transformation and reinforcement in the management system, it is expected that highly competitive conglomerations could be formed within three years.

The major challenge to the reform is the settlement of redundant employees. It was reported that at least 30 per cent of the nation's 113 million industrial workers might become redundant. Arranging retraining and re-employment programmes and establishing a sound social security system have become the major tasks of the government.

Opening of Services Sector

The experimental approach adopted by the mainland for foreign investment has proved a success. In the retail sector, 19 joint venture retail stores were approved to be set up in 11 cities (one or two in each city). Recently, the Ministry of Internal Trade has also promulgated "The Management of Chain Stores Operation". Foreign investors, including those from Hong Kong, were welcome to set up experimental chain stores according to the policies and regulations. Two experimental chain stores have already been approved to be operated in Beijing. With further opening, more cities and commercial sectors, such as wholesaling and franchising, would be available for experiment.

Another sector to be opened will be the travel services sector. Joint venture travel agents are now allowed to be set up in State resort areas. The government is planning to approve one to two joint venture travel agents to be established in an urban area. Detailed regulations would be formulated by MOFTEC and the State Bureau of Travel and Tourism subject to the approval by the State Council.

Free Trade Zones

By the end of 1996, 15 free trade zones had been established. Besides the zones in Yantian (Shenzhen) and Zhuhai, all the free trade zones had gone through acceptance tests. Instead of approving more free trade zones, the General Administration of Customs will now

concentrate its efforts on the management of the existing zones. To give enterprises more convenience in operating in the zones, the Administration was taking steps to strengthen the management system in the following areas:

1. The existing free trade zones were built adjacent to, but separate from port areas. The Administration will now consider ways to connect the zones with the ports.
2. Enterprises within the zones were granted export rights for products produced by the enterprises themselves or products produced by enterprises within the zone. The Administration is investigating, with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, the possibility of giving more autonomy to the enterprises in terms of their trading rights.

The Administration is also discussing with the State Administration for Taxation ways to solve the tax refund problems.

Asian Financial Crisis

Although the recent Asian financial crisis had caused some adverse effects to the economy of Hong Kong, it was properly handled by the Hong Kong SAR government. At a meeting with the banks, insurance companies and securities companies in Beijing, Vice Premier Zhu Rong Ji commented that the Hong Kong SAR government had handled the crisis well. This was due to its well-established economic structure and a very low ratio of unhealthy investments and bad loans. The financial monitoring system in Hong Kong is better than other areas and foreign reserves very strong. The central government would continue to adopt a hands-off policy and continue to support the policies of the Hong Kong SAR government.

RMB Devaluation

The State leaders have said many times that RMB will not be devalued. In recent years, the RMB has appreciated against the US dollar. It showed that the supply of foreign exchange in the mainland well exceeded demand. But maintaining a strong RMB currency might have an adverse effect on exports. The central government would adopt measures to maintain a steady growth of foreign trade volume. In 1997, without devaluing RMB, the total foreign trade volume increased to over US\$300 billion. ■



Mr Duanmu Jun (left), Deputy Director, General Administration of Customs

海關總署副署長端木君 (左)

1. 現有保稅區雖然毗鄰港口，但兩者並不互通，總署正研究連接保稅區與港口的的方法。
2. 現時，企業有權出口本身或區內其他公司的製品。總署正著手與外經貿部研究擴大企業貿易自主權的可能。

此外，海關總署也在與國家稅務總局商討如何處理因退稅引起的問題。

亞洲金融風暴

最近的亞洲金融風暴的確對香港經濟帶來一定衝擊，但特區政府已作適當處理。朱鎔基副總理在北京與銀行、保險公司及證券公司代表開會時曾經表示，特區政府在危機中表現出色，這與香港經濟基礎穩固，失當投資及壞帳比率偏低有關。香港坐擁龐大儲備，其金融監管制度亦較其他地區優勝。因此，中央不會干預香港事務，只會繼續支持特區政府的施政。

人民幣貶值

國家領導人曾多次強調人民幣不會貶值。近年，人民幣兌美元的匯價持續上升，顯示外匯在內地供過於求。然而，人民幣的強勢可能對出口不利。中央政府將採取措施，維持外貿的穩定增長。在人民幣不貶值的情況下，中國在九七年的外貿總值仍超過三千億美元。 ■



Mr Tony Fung and Mr Chen Zi Ying, Deputy Director Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office

馮永祥與港澳辦副主任陳滋英

Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce China Activities Calendar

香港總商會中國活動日誌

OUTGOING MISSIONS 訪問團

3-6 MAY CHAMBER DELEGATION TO DALIAN 5月3日-6日 總商會大連訪問團

Dalian is one of the principal port cities in China and a major open coastal city in the Bohai economic ring in northeastern China. The city government is pursuing a programme to make the city the "Hong Kong of northeastern China". The delegation will call on the mayor of Dalian and other senior officials. Visits to economic development zones and the Dalian bonded zone will be arranged.
大連是中國一個重要的港口城市，亦是一個主要的沿海開發城市。大連市政府正在有計劃地發展大連成為「東北之香港」。訪問團將拜會大連市市長及其他高級官員，並會安排參觀開發區及大連保稅區。
(Enquiries 查詢: Ms Phoebe Lee 李若梨小姐 - Tel 電話: 2823 1239)

14-15 MAY STUDY MISSION TO PEARL RIVER DELTA 5月14日-15日 珠江三角洲考察團

A regular Chamber mission to Pearl River Delta. The mission will visit Shenzhen and Guangzhou and call on senior provincial and municipal officials.
商會經常舉辦到珠江三角洲的考察團。是次行程將包括深圳市及廣州市。考察團將有機會拜訪廣東省、深圳市及廣州市的高層領導。(Enquiries 查詢: Ms Phoebe Lee 李若梨小姐 - Tel 電話: 2823 1239)

SEMINAR 研討會

27 MAR INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN GUANGZHOU 3月27日 廣州投資新紀元

Room 407, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre 香港會議展覽中心407室
Organisers: HKGCC; Guangzhou COFERT; Guangzhou Municipal Board of Investment
主辦單位: 香港總商會、廣州市外經貿委、廣州市招商局

Officials from Guangzhou municipality will introduce the latest investment, tax and customs policies for foreign investors and will explain the detailed administrative procedures. Participants will be given the opportunity to discuss with the officials on practical business issues.

廣州市的有關官員將來港介紹國家最新的經貿、稅務及海關政策，並解釋這些政策在廣州市的實施細則。參加者可與來港官員討論實際的商業問題。

(Enquiries 查詢: Ms Phoebe Lee 李若梨小姐 - Tel 電話: 2823 1239)

CHAMBER CO-ORGANISED INVESTMENT FAIR 商會協辦之投資洽談會

25-28 MAR '98 HEBEI PROVINCE (HONG KONG) INVESTMENT FAIR 3月25日-28日 '98 河北省 (香港) 投資項目洽談會

Hong Kong Exhibition Centre 香港展覽中心
Organiser: The People's Government of Hebei Province 主辦單位: 河北省人民政府

60 projects for international cooperation and 30 technical renovation projects of existing enterprises will be introduced. The list of projects is available on the Chamber Phonafax system (File No.: 678). Detailed project description can be obtained from the Chamber.

洽談會將介紹60個對外經濟技術合作項目及30個利用外資改造現有企業重點項目。項目清單可於總商會電話傳真系統索取(檔案: 678)，項目詳細資料可向總商會索取。

(Phonafax system enquiries 電話傳真系統查詢: Ms Shirley Tong 湯小姐 - 2823 1208)

(Project details enquiries 詳細項目資料查詢: Ms Phoebe Lee 李若梨小姐 - 2823 1239)

(Investment Fair enquiries 洽談會查詢: China Resources Advertising & Exhibition Co. Ltd. 中國廣告展覽有限公司 - 2827 9908)

New business opportunities with Taiwan

Chief US Representative in Taiwan, Mr Darryl Johnson, addressed the Chamber on the outlook for the Taiwan Business Environment

With the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China, Hong Kong and Taiwan now have a new relationship. The Chamber believes that there now exist more opportunities than ever for business and investment cooperation between Hong Kong and Taiwan and across the strait through Hong Kong. In response to this new opportunity for increased economic exchanges, the Hong Kong Taipei Business Cooperation Committee (HKTGCC), a committee of the Chamber under the chairmanship of Mr. Paul Cheng, will organize more functions for its members during 1998, in addition to the annual joint visits with the Federation of National Industries of Taiwan which have been held successfully since 1992. The first such function was a well-attended breakfast meeting held on February 4 at which Mr. Darryl Johnson, Director of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), was the guest speaker.

At the meeting, Mr. Johnson outlined his thoughts on Taiwan and its relationship with mainland China and the region. He told the gathering that the NT dollar has been relatively immune from the recent economic and financial crisis that struck other Southeast Asian countries. He explained in detail the economic fundamentals that make the Taiwan economy strong and why Taiwan can maintain a relatively stable currency. A large balance of payments surplus, small external public debt, and a huge foreign exchange reserve (at US\$83 billion) are the contributing factors that help stabilize the exchange rate of the NT dollar. Mr. Johnson added that unlike Japan and Korea, the driving forces of the Taiwan economy are those small and medium enterprises which have a high degree of flexibility in terms of their ability to adapt to changes.

Although Taiwan has the financial resources and is willing to provide



Mr Paul Cheng, Chairman of HKTGCC presents a souvenir to Mr Darryl Johnson
港台經貿合作委員會主席鄭明訓向張戴佑致送紀念品

assistance to its neighbouring countries that suffered in the recent economic turmoil, the government is still looking for a mechanism whereby financial resources can be made available to the recipient countries.

開拓台灣商貿新天地

美國在台協會負責人張戴佑分析當地營商環境

香港回歸祖國，特區與台灣的关系也翻開新的一章。總商會相信，無論是港台之間的直接商業合作，還是透過特區進行的兩岸投資活動，都會愈趨頻繁。一九九二年，總商會贊助成立港台經貿合作委員會，每年與對口組織台灣工業總會舉行兩次聯席會議。在鄭明訓先生領導下，委員會今年將舉辦更多活動，協助會員掌握新的發展機會。二月四日，美國在台協會台北辦事處處長張戴佑先生應邀在一個早餐會上致辭，為委員會在年內的一系列活動揭開序幕。

會上，張戴佑首先講述自己對台灣、兩岸形勢，以至台灣與區內關係的見解。在最近的亞洲金融風暴中，相對於其他東南亞國家，新台幣所受的衝擊明顯較小，這背後的原因何在？對此，張有十分詳盡的解釋。他說，台灣擁有巨額國際收支盈餘，外債水平偏低，加上八百三十億美元的龐大外匯儲備，凡此種種，皆有助維護新台幣的穩定。

此外，台灣與日、韓不同的地方，是經濟發展主要由中小型企業帶動，靈活性強，面對轉變時有較佳的應變能力。

台灣雖坐擁充足財政資源，樂意向受金融風暴影響的鄰國施以援手，但援助形式未定，政府仍在尋找一套適當的機制。

張說，台灣在九七年的整體貿易總值高達二千三百六十億美元，增長接近一成，貿易盈餘亦有約七十七億美元。港、台貿易頻繁，香港更一直是台灣的第二大出口市場。

過去十年，當地的高科技工業和服務業發展蓬勃。現時，台灣是世界第三大資訊科技產品製造商，生產全球約三分之二電腦底板、滑鼠及彩色顯示器。政府致力推動高科技工業的發展，而且以成功設立科學工業園為榮。以著名的新竹科學園為例，它為工業

家提供了全面周到的支援。另一所規模更大的科學園已在台南附近動工，涉及的海外投資高達五百億美元。

由於政府給予外商多重優惠，配合全面的工業和技術支援，不少美國商人對投資台灣態度積極。當地美國商會更認為「台灣為跨國企業提供了十分理想的營商環境。」

經濟上，台灣以「亞太營運中心」為主要目標，期望成為區內的製造業、空運、航運（發展高雄港為境外轉運中心）、電訊、金融及傳媒樞紐。張在會上簡介了外商在這方面的投資機會。近年，銀行業、航運業及空運業均發展迅速，但在兩岸關係未見改善的情況下，當地亦有部分外國公司質疑「亞太營運中心」的拓展潛力。

談到兩岸關係，台灣在內地的總投資高達三百五十億美元，地位僅次於香港。張戴

Turning to Taiwan's external trade, Mr. Johnson said that the overall trade in 1997 registered a healthy growth of almost 10 per cent to US\$236 billion with a trade surplus of about US\$7.7 billion. Hong Kong is one of the major trading partners to Taiwan and has been consistently the second largest export market for Taiwan.

On the technology side, Mr. Johnson noted that high tech and service industries have been growing tremendously in the last ten years. Taiwan now is the third largest info-technology producer in the world. For instance, about two-thirds of world's computer motherboards, colour monitors and "mouses" come from Taiwan. Taiwan prides itself as one of the few places in the world that has successfully set up high-tech or science-based industrial parks. Hsin Chu Science Park has been a frequently mentioned industrial park providing comprehensive support services to industrialists. A new and much larger science park near Tainan is being established with a total foreign investment of US\$50 billion.

With the various incentives currently in place in attracting foreign investment and the industrial and technological support given by the Taiwan government, many American businessmen have taken a positive view on doing business in Taiwan. The American Chamber of Commerce in Taiwan has in fact judged that Taiwan offers

他表示，不少本土和外國商人均力促政府將兩岸關係「正常化」，改善營商氣氛。部分台灣商界領袖也呼籲當局營造較開放的兩岸投資環境。因此，他認為「汪辜會談」大有在短期內復開的可能，建立直接航空聯繫將是議程之一，而且有機會在九八年年底前實現。

他指出，關於加入世貿一事，美國將於二月與台灣經濟部部長**王志剛**舉行新一輪會談。雖然農產貿易及金融服務等重要問題仍有待解決，但台灣加入世貿對美國有利，相信後者會支持早日達成協議。 ■



Breakfast meeting with Mr Darryl Johnson
早餐會情況

a very business friendly environment for multinational companies to operate.

Mr. Johnson also outlined the business opportunities for international investors in the six operations centres which the Taiwan government has identified as the major economic objectives to develop the island as an Asia-Pacific Regional Operations Centre (APROC). Specifically, they are manufacturing centre, air transportation centre, sea transportation centre with Kaohsiung as an off-shore transshipment centre, telecommunications centre, financial centre and media centre. It is noted that banking, shipping and airfreight are the industries which enjoyed significant growth in recent years. However, Mr. Johnson said that some foreign companies in Taiwan doubt that the APROC concept will fulfill its potential without cross-Strait relations being improved.

Turning to cross-Strait relations, Mr. Johnson said that Taiwan is the second largest investor in China after Hong Kong, with a total investment valued at US\$35 billion. He added that there is a great deal of foreign and local business pressure in Taiwan to "normalize" or to improve the climate for cross-Strait business. Some business leaders in Taiwan have been quite vocal in advocating the creation of a more open cross-Strait business environment. Mr. Johnson believed there are good chances for



Mr Darryl Johnson (left) with Mr Paul Cheng and Dr Eden Woon

左起：張戴佑、鄭明訓、翁以登

resumption of the "Wang-Koo" dialogue in the near future. He added that direct air links between the mainland and Taiwan could be one of the items on the agenda for the bilateral talks, once they resume. He thought that direct air links could be introduced even before the end of 1998.

On Taiwan's membership application for WTO, Mr. Johnson said that US is expecting another round of negotiations with Wang Chih-kang, Taiwan's Minister for Economic Affairs in February. Although there are critical issues yet to be resolved in the forthcoming bilateral negotiations, such as agricultural trade and financial services, US supports Taiwan's accession to the WTO on its merits. ■

Hong Kong-Taipei Business Cooperation Committee 香港 — 台北經貿合作委員會

In response to the increasingly important trade, investment and tourist links between Taiwan and Hong Kong, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce took the initiative to sponsor the establishment of the Hong Kong-Taipei Business Cooperation Committee (HKTBCC) in March 1992. 一九九二年三月，香港總商會贊助成立香港-台北經貿合作委員會，以配合兩地日趨緊密的貿易、投資及旅業往還。

The Committee is a non-profit making and self-supporting organization whose membership is open to all Hong Kong business establishments. 委員會屬自負盈虧的非牟利組織，所有香港公司均可申請成為會員。

Its objectives are to foster friendship and understanding between the two business communities and promote trade, investment, tourism and related economic cooperation.

該會以促進兩地商界的友誼和了解為宗旨，並致力加強雙方在貿易、投資、旅遊業及相關領域的合作。

A counterpart organization was established in Taipei by the Federation of National Industries of Taiwan.

委員會的對口組織由台灣工業總會在台北成立。

Companies interested in joining the HKTBCC as members are most welcome to contact the Secretary, Ms. Kathleen Wong at Tel.: 2823 1232. 有意加入者，請與委員會秘書王凱玲小姐聯絡，電話是 2823 1232。

Hong Kong paper leads way on trade barriers

A new paper from the Pacific Basin Economic Council has made wide ranging recommendations aimed at reducing administrative barriers to trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

The PBEC Working Committee on Administrative Barriers to Trade was formed in November 1995 as part of "PBEC 2000: Five Year Development" plan to address the issue of reducing administrative barriers to trade in the region. Hong Kong and New Zealand Committees were the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee respectively. Mr Martin Barrow, Director of Jardine Matheson Ltd was Chairman of the Committee.

The Working Committee decided that a research study on administrative barriers to trade in the region was needed to find out the difficulties faced by companies doing business in the Asia Pacific region. This was approved by the Board of Directors at the 29th International General Meeting held in Washington in 1996.

The City University of Hong Kong was commissioned to undertake the study entitled "Administrative Barriers to Trade in Goods and Services" which identifies the non-tariff barriers, encountered by individual business operating in the region.

Based on the findings of the study, a set of policy recommendations are proposed to reduce such barriers.

After almost two years of work, the report on the administrative barriers in the region was produced and adopted by the PBEC Board of Directors as PBEC's position statement on administrative barriers to trade at the Mid-term Meeting in November 1997.

Administrative barriers to trade are a form of non-tariff barrier and can include direct restrictions on trade, or problems arising from trade regulations, their interpretation or application. They can be restrictions on market access, restrictions on personnel movement and a lack of transparency in regulatory information which indirectly prohibit or restrict trade and foreign investment.

Apart from studying trade regulations and other published information on administrative barriers to trade, the Committee sent questionnaires to individual PBEC member companies to obtain first hand information about the administrative barriers faced by the business community in the PBEC economies. The results of this survey form a major component of the report.

Business Impact

The Committee concluded that administrative barriers to trade have a significant impact on companies doing business in the Pacific Basin region. About one-quarter of the survey respondents indicated that they spent more than 5 per cent of their operating cost in dealing with administrative barriers in 1996. Around one-half of the respondents estimated that their profit would be increased by more than 5 per cent. These cost and profit figures may be downward biased, however, because firms tend to choose to operate in markets with less administrative barriers.

In the survey, firms were further asked whether they have ever deferred or abandoned plans for expansion because of the awareness of administrative barriers in some PBEC economies. More than a quarter of the firms indicated that they had made such a decision. Moreover, 11.4 per cent reported that they had withdrawn from a particular market because they found that administrative barriers in this PBEC economy were too excessive.

These results provide clear evidence that the presence of administrative barriers have has made a significant number of

香港報告書力倡銷除貿易障礙

太 平洋地區經濟理事會在一份新發表的文件中提出了多項建議，旨在銷除有礙區內貿易發展的種種行政關卡。

理事會根據「邁向公元二千年：五年發展計劃」，於一九九五年十一月成立「銷除貿易行政障礙工作委員會」，專責研究有關問題。委員會由香港及紐西蘭分任正、副主席，港方負責人為怡和控股董事鮑磊先生。

委員會認為必須進行研究，以深入了解商界在亞太區營商時遇上的困難。一九九六年，太平洋地區經濟理事會在華盛頓召開第廿九屆國際年會，並通過上述建議。

委員會隨即委聘香港城市大學開展一個名為「商品及服務貿易行政障礙」的研究，找出商界面對的非關稅障礙，再根據調查所得，提出相應建議。

約兩年後，研究報告完成，並於一九九七年十一月的中期會議上獲採納為理事會在有關問題上的立場聲明。

所謂行政障礙，既包括對貿易活動的直接限制，亦涉及因詮釋或執行貿易法規而引起的問題；形式方面，可以是限制開放市場和人材自由轉移，也可以是監管法規欠缺透明度，間接阻礙貿易及外商投資。

除了研究各地貿易法規及已公開的有關資料，委員會更向理事會個別公司會員發出問

卷，調查商界在各成員國內遇上的行政障礙，所得結果為研究報告提供了大量有用的資料。

對商界的影響

委員會得出的結論是，行政障礙對在亞太區營商的企業影響深遠。四分一回覆的公司表示，在九六年，用以應付行政障礙的開支佔營運成本百分之五以上；約一半公司估計，假如沒有行政障礙，它們的利潤會增加逾百分之五。商界傾向在較少行政障礙的地區經營，因此，上述數字可能已是較保守的估計。

調查過程中，公司亦被問及有否因為部分理事會成員國的行政障礙，推遲甚至放棄拓展計劃？結果，超過四分一表示有這種情

firms in the Pacific Basin region defer/abandon their expansion plans and even withdraw totally from a market. The negative impact of administrative barriers makes the need to remove excessive barriers an urgent one, if PBEC economies are to continue to enjoy high growth rates.

Top-Ten Barriers

The ten most often reported barriers are (in descending order):

- Restrictions on foreign ownership;
- Inconsistency/confusion in regulations;
- Difficulties in obtaining visas;
- Inconsistency/confusion in implementation of regulations;
- Officially sanctioned monopolies/cartels;
- Excessive documentation requirements;
- Lack of publicity of regulations;
- Restrictive property rights and commercial presence;
- Unfair tax treatment; and
- Quota on number of foreign/local workers

Policy Recommendations

Based on the survey results and the research on various policy initiatives at APEC and WTO, the Committee recommends that the governments of the PBEC economies adopt the following

況；此外，更有百分之十一點四鑑於理事會個別成員的行政障礙過多，因而退出有關市場。

證據清楚顯示，亞太區內不少公司因行政障礙而推遲或放棄其拓展計劃，甚至全面退出市場。如理事會成員希望經濟繼續高速增长，必須儘快行動，銷除行政障礙帶來的負面影響。

十大行政障礙

十種最常見的行政障礙順序為：

- 限制外商擁有權；
- 法規內容互相矛盾、含糊不清；
- 申領簽證困難；
- 法規執行情況不協調；
- 政府支持以壟斷/同業聯盟方式經營；
- 對商業文件的要求過於繁複；
- 沒有公開法規內容；

initiatives to reduce administrative barriers to trade.

If recommended implementation time limits exceed WTO time limits, WTO standards govern.

Measures to Enhance Market Access include increase foreign firm's participation in the following sectors: telecommunications, insurance, tourism, retail trade, business/professional services, freight and passenger transport (Restrictive property rights & commercial presence); improve the competitive environment in APEC region (officially sanctioned monopoly/cartel); provide an open investment regime (Restrictions on foreign ownership); reduce documentation requirement (Excessive documentation requirement); and fair tax treatment (unfair tax treatment).

Measures to Promote Mobility of Business Personnel include promote business travel (difficulty in obtaining visa) and loosen quota on foreign personnel (quota on number of foreign/local workers).

Measures to Improve Transparency of Trade Regulations include publicise regulations (lack of publicity of regulations); enhance transparency of customs rules and procedures (inconsistency/confusion in regulations); and mutually recognise standards and conformance (inconsistency/confusing implementation).

Measures to Enhance Good Trade

- 限制外商購置物業及經營；
- 不公平稅務待遇；及
- 實施外地/本土工人配額。

建議摘要

委員會參考上述調查結果，以及亞太經合組織和世界貿易組織的政策後，向理事會成員提出了一系列銷除行政障礙的建議。如有關執行期限長於世貿的建議，則以後者為準。

開放市場方面，委員會建議：容許外商進一步參與電訊、保險、旅遊、零售、商業/專業服務、貨運及客運業（限制外商購置物業及營商）；改善亞太經合組織成員地區的競爭環境（政府支持以壟斷/同業聯盟方式經營）；開創自由的投資環境（限制外商擁有權）；簡化對商業文件的規定（對商業文件的要求過於繁複）；以及給予外商公平稅務待遇（不公平稅務待遇）。

促進商業人材交流的措施包括鼓勵商務旅遊（申領簽證困難），以及放寬聘請外籍僱員的配額限制（實施外地/本土工人配額）。

Policies and Practices, include promote domestic education and dissemination of information related to administrative barriers to trade and ensure participation of business in trade policy and trade policy making.

The Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) is an association of business leaders from 20 economies throughout the Pacific. For the last 30 years, PBEC has encourage open trade and investment in the Asia Pacific region and believes that both PBEC and APEC share a similar vision for continued development into a free trade area in the 21st century.

At its Steering Committee Meeting in Osaka in November 1995, PBEC identified the reduction of administrative barriers to trade in the region as one of the key business issues to be put forward to APEC leaders. With the successful reduction of typical trade barriers such as tariffs and quotas, countries are now in a position to turn to administrative barriers.

The problem seems particularly prominent for the Pacific region, given the diverse character of APEC and the different levels of development in legal, regulative and administrative systems in APEC member economies. In order for business to effectively expand trade in the region, APEC economies must make all related regulations and guidelines uniformly clear and accessible to business. ■

提高貿易法規透明度的措施計有：公開法規內容（沒有公開法規內容）；提高海關規定及程序的透明度（法規內容互相矛盾、含糊不清）；統一標準及執行規定（法規執行情況不協調）。

此外，委員會亦建議加強教育和促進資訊流通，加深人們對貿易行政障礙的認識，並鼓勵商界積極參與制訂貿易政策，建立良好榜樣。

太平洋地區經濟理事會由二十個太平洋地區的商界領袖組成，過去三十年來，不斷致力改善區內的貿易及投資環境。理事會與亞太經合組織的共同目標，是在亞太區全面推動自由貿易，邁向廿一世紀。

在九五年十一月的大阪指導委員會會議上，理事會將銷除區內貿易行政障礙列為向亞太經合組織領袖提出的主要商業問題之一。隨著關稅及配額等典型貿易障礙逐步清除，現在應是處理行政障礙的適當時刻。

亞太經合組織成員背景各異，法律、監管制度及行政系統的發展有快有慢，要促進區內貿易的發展，各成員必須訂制清晰的法規和指引，好讓商界充分掌握。 ■

"Stateless" ruling in US a concern to local companies

The US Supreme Court's recent decision to reject the appeal in the *Matimak* case was met with growing consternation in Hong Kong. Now that the appellate process has been exhausted, certainly in so far as *Matimak* is concerned, this may be an appropriate moment to take stock of its implications. It should first be noted that the implications may well be of concern to a wider forum, not just to those in Hong Kong.

It will be recalled that the US Court of Appeal for the Second Circuits by a majority decision of 2-1 ruled that *Matimak*, a Hong Kong corporation, was "stateless" and as such was not entitled to the protection of the US federal courts. The US legal concept of *alienage jurisdiction* which allowed foreigners to sue a US party in a federal court was not available to a "stateless" foreign corporation or citizen. In order for a foreign entity to be recognised for the purposes of *alienage jurisdiction*, it had to be either a corporate or individual citizen of a foreign state which has been granted *formal* or *de facto* recognition by the executive branch of the US Government.

In the case of *Matimak*, which was a case decided before the 1 July 1997 reversion of sovereignty of Hong Kong from Britain to China, there was obviously no formal recognition of Hong Kong as a "foreign state" and hence the position depended on whether there was any *de facto* recognition. Hong Kong maintained some independence in its economic and diplomatic relationships but it was a British Dependent Territory. In matters of defence and foreign affairs, it remained dependent upon the British Government. The US State Department also no longer urged treatment of Hong Kong as a *de facto* foreign state, reversing a policy in the past. *Matimak* was therefore not corporate citizen of a foreign state and was therefore "stateless".

So what are the implications? It will be useful to first identify the entities likely to be affected by the ruling. These should include the following :-

- HKSAR corporations
- Holders of BDT and BNO passports
- Corporations incorporated/domiciled in and citizens of jurisdictions with limited autonomy, including British Dependent Territories and colonies.
- Those nations with bilateral or organisational ties and agreements with the US on trade/investment matters

The Special Position of Hong Kong

Let us first examine the special position of Hong Kong. Entities here that will be affected by the *Matimak* decision as it stands will be Hong Kong incorporated companies, Hong Kong operated companies but domiciled or incorporated in other limited autonomy jurisdictions or British Dependent Territories or colonies and holders of BNO and BDT passports.

As far as the US judicial position is concerned, this will need to await the outcome of a post-reversion test case on a HKSAR entity. The legal avenue there may no doubt be to try to distinguish the position of pre-and post-reversion Hong Kong and/or to have the principles which went to support the *Matimak* decision challenged and overturned by the Supreme Court itself in another case. A reversal on principles, which may be unlikely, will need a decision of the US Supreme Court in a future case which may well take years to get there. Can the position really be distinguished bearing in mind that the autonomy of the HKSAR and most matters like its legal own regime have not changed much from pre-reversion Hong Kong?

There is concern that the US courts may be necessarily take the view that the position on this has changed even though sovereignty over Hong Kong has now reverted from Britain to China of which the HKSAR is now an "inalienable part". In considering this, it needs to be

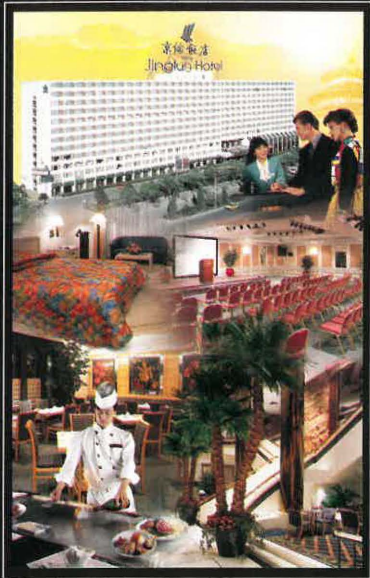
borne in mind when examining the test for *de facto* recognition of the *foreign entity*, the *Matimak* ruling considered the degree of autonomy of the foreign entity itself to be highly relevant, and not whether that entity came under the sovereignty of some independent sovereign nation. Certainly, it will be an issue highly susceptible to legal argument.

It seems therefore the prudent thing to do meanwhile will be to see if at the political level, the US State Department can be persuaded to accord the HKSAR *de facto* recognition as a foreign state for the limited purpose of *alienage jurisdiction*. Indeed, in the case of *Shamir v. Ambassador Factors Corporation et al*, which came in the wake of the *Matimak* decision, the US District Judge dismissed the non-federal claims on the basis that a Hong Kong-based party might be unable to establish diversity jurisdiction but gave leave to the Hong Kong plaintiffs to replead upon showing they "... are citizens of a nation of a nation officially recognised by the US Department of State as a foreign state."

Many Hong Kong entities, as well as Hong Kong operated corporations incorporated or domiciled in British Dependent Territories or colonies, carry on trade and have commercial and financial transactions with US parties day-to-day, often of a substantial nature. The effect of the *Matimak* decision may well be that such Hong Kong entities will not be afforded legal protection or access to the US federal courts and hence contracts could become **unenforceable** in those courts against the US parties. This will be the direct result of the *Matimak* ruling.

It could perhaps be argued that based on the rationale in the *Matimak* ruling, the reverse would also be true if a US party were to sue or to try to enforce the contract against the Hong Kong entity in a federal court. In other words, can the decision be relied upon as a defence by a Hong Kong party sued by a US citizen in the federal courts? There is so far however no express decision on this and another case will have to come up in the US for a


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LEGAL ISSUES

decision on it. However, the US courts may not necessarily hold the reverse to be true if the *Wharf* case (see below) is anything to go by.

Either way it is an unsatisfactory legal environment in which to dictate commercial activities between Hong Kong and US entities. Contracts will need to be carefully vetted particularly provisions on legal aspects like jurisdiction, etc. to see if the effects of the *Matimak* ruling can as far as possible be negated or minimized. Legal suits may of course already be pending between HK and US parties to which *Matimak* type of challenges may be made and those already determined could be open to review or appeal.

The *Matimak* ruling does not however deprive a "stateless" foreigner from pursuing his rights in a state court in the US. This however may be subject to a number of possible uncertainties or shortcomings as to jurisdictional limits, impartiality, parochialism, etc. The concept of alienage jurisdiction it needs to be borne in mind was developed in the US precisely because it was thought that it provided foreign citizens a neutral forum in a federal court rather than a state court that might be perceived as biased in favour of its own citizens and would avoid entanglements with foreign states and sovereigns.

International Legal, Trade and Relations Issues

The British Government was sufficiently concerned to file an *amicus curiae* brief to support *Matimak's* appeal before the US Supreme Court. Britain still has a number of colonies or British Dependent Territories in a similar position as pre-reversion Hong Kong. The *Matimak* ruling will mean that these colonies and BDTs will now be treated differently notwithstanding they enjoy the protection of British sovereignty. Many big US and European multinationals, as well as Hong Kong entities, have corporations domiciled in such territories, for example Bermuda.

Matimak will also have complex implications on International Laws and Conflict of Laws which will be too complicated for discussion here. The US District Court's recent decision to exercise extra-territorial jurisdiction and powers in the *Wharf* case in Denver can only serve to heighten these concerns. In that case, it was contended by *Wharf* that Hong Kong was the proper jurisdiction for the dispute as the commercial and

legal matters affecting the transactions arose in Hong Kong but the US District Court nevertheless exercised its jurisdiction over the dispute and adjudged it in favour of the US plaintiff. Having done that, it then ordered *Wharf* to turnover its Hong Kong assets to the plaintiffs in the US to satisfy the judgment sum and also ordered financial institutions with a US presence to cease to do business with *Wharf* in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the world. In effect, this obviates the need for the US plaintiff to sue on the US judgement and enforce it in the Hong Kong courts and hence deprives the Hong Kong defendant of its rights to challenge the US judgement and its enforcement in Hong Kong on the ground of lack of jurisdiction and/or such other grounds that may be available to it under Hong Kong laws. It may be noted with some irony that this seems a rather extreme reverse of the *Matimak* situation.

There will also be international trade and relations implications. It may be said that the *Matimak* ruling in effect undermines the provisions of the *United States - Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992*. That provides for direct bilateral ties and agreements between the US and Hong Kong. Provisions were negotiated for the promotion and protection of investments, one of which terms should provide both national treatment and most favoured nation treatment by each party to investors from the other party. The other foreign relations issue concerns the so called *TRIPS Agreement* under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation (of which both the US and the HKSAR are members). The *TRIPS Agreement* requires WTO members to accord most favoured nation treatment as well as access to "civil juridical procedures" to other WTO members concerning the holding and enforcement of intellectual property rights.

It will be readily apparent from the discussion above that the implications will not necessarily be limited to Hong Kong. The *Matimak* ruling in effect undermines the bilateral ties and agreements between the US and Hong Kong and the WTO *TRIPS Agreement* so that other nations who are parties to such types of ties or agreements with the US should view the matter with some concern. If the US courts were to continue to exercise extra-territorial jurisdiction and powers, other nations and their citizens who have commercial or other dealings with the US should find these concerns further heightened. ■

– K. Y. Lim, Johnson Stokes & Master

Loop-holes may end for Hong Kong residents

Tax loop-holes enjoyed by Hong Kong residents with investments in the UK and British nationals living abroad will soon be tightened according to Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer. Gordon Brown, the new Labour Chancellor, made the clearest possible statement of intent in his "mini-budget" which he presented to the British parliament on the 25th November stating: "Since the last budget, the Inland Revenue have been carrying out a wide ranging view of tax avoidance. This has identified many areas where there may be scope for tightening the law and closing loop-holes. Action on some of those areas will be announced in the next Budget".

Measures which are known to be currently under consideration include changes to the law of domicile, which governs liability to UK Inheritance Tax (IHT). These changes will effect the liability of long term British expatriates to world-wide inheritance tax and will also effect the liability of Non-UK nationals who are UK tax resident.

Under the current legislation, British expatriates living abroad are still liable to UK IHT on their world-wide estate but have the chance to rid themselves of this liability by claiming that they have established a non-UK domicile. It is thought that changes to the law and practice in this area may mean that in future UK nationals remain liable to UK IHT for as long as they hold UK nationality. Foreign nationals who reside in Britain for even quite lengthy periods of time may continue to be taxed as non-domiciled

individuals and pay UK tax only on income arising in the UK and foreign income remitted to UK. By remitting only capital to the UK it is possible for a wealthy foreign national to live in the UK virtually free of UK tax. Changes under consideration may make it much easier for foreign nationals to pick up a UK domicile which would then make them liable to tax on their world-wide income and capital gains and bring them fully in to the UK IHT net.

Howard Bilton, Director of tax planning specialist Sovereign Trust International, warns: "long-term UK expatriates and foreign nationals planning to pick up UK residency should review their financial affairs as a matter of urgency. Under current legislation there are tremendous opportunities for effective tax planning but many of these opportunities may disappear in the March budget."

Sovereign Trust International urge UK expatriates to make formal application claiming a change of domicile while this procedure still exists. They suggest that creative use of a properly structured offshore trust can be extremely effective in sheltering assets from UK IHT by those intending to reside in Britain who may be in danger of unwittingly picking up a UK domicile. Those who currently have a UK domicile can use trust structures but only once they have successfully claimed a foreign domicile.

It is generally agreed that the current IHT regime is more lenient than at any time since its introduction and the changes

which are most certainly on their way will be intended to raise more revenue and may include: (a) a lowering of the IHT nil rate band; (b) an increase in the rate of IHT; (c) the introduction of anti-avoidance provisions which aim to eradicate the existing loop-holes and exceptions; (d) changes the law of domicile which make it more difficult or impossible for UK nationals living abroad to lose their UK domicile and also make it easier for foreign nationals living in the UK to pick up a UK domicile.

Mr Bilton commented that "many long-term UK expatriates do not realise that they remain liable to UK IHT until the UK Revenue agree otherwise IHT planning is an area which often gets neglected because people prefer not to think about their own death. As the law stands at the moment, there are so many exemptions and loop-holes that IHT raises very little revenue for the UK government and is something of a voluntary tax payable only by those who fail to take proper precautions. Both the previous Conservative and the present Labour Governments have indicated they want to change this. The ways in which they can do this have already been well debated so we can be relatively certain that changes are on their way".

UK expatriates and those intending to reside in the UK at any stage in the future should make an urgent review of their financial affairs and initiate appropriate planning as a matter of urgency. Any delay now could prove extremely costly. ■

英國修例防止香港居民逃稅

對於在英國投資的香港居民，以及長期居於海外的英國國民來說，現時藉稅網漏洞而享有的「優惠」可能很快便會消失。十一月廿五日，執政工黨財政大臣**白高敦**向國會提交其「小型預算案」時清楚表明：「政府公布對上一次財政預算案後，稅務機關便著手檢討逃稅問題，發現在多方面均有收緊現行法例、堵塞漏洞的需要。新措施會跟下一次預算案同時宣佈。」

據悉，英國政府正考慮推行多項新措施，堵塞稅網漏洞，當中包括修改「居籍法」。該法例一直是英國用以評定遺產稅 (IHT) 的基準。有關修訂將影響須繳納全球

產業遺產稅而又長期居於海外的英國僑民，以及在當地納稅的非英國國民。

根據現行法例，英國僑民仍須就全球產業繳納遺產稅，但他們只需申報本身為非英國居籍人士，便可逃離稅網。有鑑於此，英國政府希望透過修改「居籍法」，把持有英國國籍的人士納入稅網。以往，外籍人士不論在英國居留多久，往往會被列為非居籍人士徵稅，而他們也只需就英國本土賺取的收入，以及匯返當地的海外收入向英國政府繳稅；然而，如這些外籍人士只把資金（而非收入）匯返英國，那麼，即使他們坐擁豐厚家財，亦有可能無需繳付分文。修訂法例

後，英國政府將擴大遺產稅的稅網，把更多居英的外籍人士列為英國居籍人士，向他們的全球收入及資本收益徵稅。

稅務計劃專業顧問 - 皇家國際信託主席**侯活比頓**忠告說：「長期居於海外的英國國民和計劃在英居留的外國國民，應趕快檢討本身的財政狀況。在現行法例下，他們仍有機會好好籌劃稅務安排，但在三月份預算案公布後，這些機會將隨之消失。」

該公司又呼籲在海外居住的英國國民，在新例未實施前正式申請轉換居籍，並建議那些計劃移居英國，不知不覺間被列為英國居籍人士的準英國僑民，適當地運用離岸信

(轉下頁)

THE LATE BILL BLAAUW

Hong Kong's popular "Mr Toys" and long-time Chamber stalwart, Mr A C W "Bill" Blaauw, passed away rather suddenly on Boxing Day during a trip to New Zealand over the Christmas – New Year break. He will be sadly missed by all at the Chamber, particularly members of the three Committees he served for so long and so well – the Europe Committee, the America's Committee and the SME Committee.

A long-time resident of Hong Kong, Bill first arrived in the territory from the Netherlands in October 1947, last year celebrating his 50th year of local residency. He was a great supporter of Hong Kong, proud to call the territory "home" and prouder still to witness the smooth transfer of sovereignty to China last year. In 1989, Bill was made an Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau by Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

From 1947-to-1950, Bill worked as a shipping clerk for the Java-China-Japan Line, but by 1950 he had moved into the import-export business and by 1957 he was specialising in the toys business, an area of activity he was to make his own. At the time of his death, Bill was Chairman of Blaauw International Enterprises and Kenfair International, managing director of Mecco Development and a director of Mecco Holdings. He was also a non-

executive director of Playmates Properties Holdings, Playmates Toys Holdings and Shui Hing & Co.

During his years in Hong Kong, Bill also undertook a wide range of community and voluntary service. He was a past chairman of the Hong Kong Sea School and a member of the School's Board of Management, founder member of the Hong Kong Toy Council, a member of the Toys Advisory Committee and also held many other posts. Apart from his work on the Chamber's Europe and Americas Committees, he was also an active Rotarian, a former Chairman of the Dutch Association and a Hong Kong International "Ambassador". He had been a member of the Southern District Board, the Government Rent Tribunal and the Auxiliary Marine Police.

Bill was a founder-member and former Commodore of the Aberdeen Boat club, a member and former Commodore of the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, as well as being a voting member of the Hong Kong Jockey Club and the Hong Kong Club. He was also an active member of many other clubs and associations. Bill is survived by his wife, Andrin, and three sons and three daughters, all of whom were born in Hong Kong. ■

Vale Bill Blaauw

包偉能先生與世長辭

聖誕及新年期間，有「玩具先生」稱號的包偉能先生不幸在前赴澳紐途中與世長辭。包氏為總商會資深會員，長期服務歐洲委員會及美洲委員會，貢獻良多，今不幸猝逝，本會上下同感惋惜。

一九四七年十月，包偉能初次從荷蘭踏足香港，去年剛好是他居港五十週年紀念。他熱愛香港，以此為家，而且以能見證香港回歸感到驕傲。

一九四七至五零年間，包偉能在爪哇-中國-日本船公司任職船務文員，五零年投身出入口業務；五七年開始創立自己的玩具生意。逝世前，包氏為 Blaauw International Enterprises 及 Kenfair International 主席、德寶貿易及德寶投資集團董事。此外，他亦是

彩星地產集團、彩星玩具集團有限公司及瑞興百貨有限公司的非執行董事。

包偉能居港期間，積極參與公益及義務工作，曾出任香港航海學院主席、該校校董會成員、香港玩具協會創會會員、玩具業諮詢委員會成員。他不但積極參與本會歐洲及美洲委員會的工作，更兼任香港國際委員會「大使」。此外，包曾擔任南區區議員及政府租務審裁處審裁員，並在香港輔助水警服務。

包為香港仔遊艇會創會會員及前執委會主席；皇家香港遊艇會會員及前主席；香港賽馬會及香港會所可投票會員。他也是不少會所及組織的活躍成員。包氏遺下夫人及三子三女，子女均在香港出生。 ■



The late A.C.W. "Bill" Blaauw
包偉能

英國稅務 (續)

託方式，避免名下資產被納入英國遺產稅的稅網；不過，對於現時擁有英國居籍的人士來說，他們必須成功申請海外居籍，才能運用同一方法籌劃稅務。

一般認為，英國現行的遺產稅稅制十分寬鬆，因此，政府希望引入各項修訂，增加稅收，預期的新措施包括：(1) 降低免繳稅遺產的上限；(2) 提高遺產稅稅率；(3) 引入新規定，堵塞法例漏洞，杜絕現有的逃稅行為；(4) 修改居籍法，令在海外居住的英國國民難以或無法脫離英國居籍，並使更多在英國居住的海外國民成為英國居籍人士。

侯活比頓表示：「不少長期在海外居住的英國國民並不知道，除非取得英國稅務局同意，否則必須繳納英國遺產稅。人多避談死亡，因此往往忽略為遺產稅早作綢繆的重要。現行法例漏洞頗多，英國政府的遺產稅收入微薄，可以說，只是那些沒有採取適當預防措施的人才須繳納遺產稅。前執政保守黨及現任工黨政府曾表示有意修例，修改方案已經過多番辯論，事情相信勢在必行。」

居於海外的英國國民及計劃移居英國的人士，應趕快檢討本身的財政狀況，並著手安排稅務，若有任何遲疑，代價將十分沉重。 ■

Continued growth gives industry confidence

All sectors of the local insurance industry continued to record good growth during 1997 with business receipts in the whole sector up 10 per cent in the opening nine months of the year, up from seven per cent in 1996. The impact of the East Asian monetary and financial crisis would likely have affected the industry in the final quarter of the year, but more recent figures for industry performance are yet to be published.

The improvement in the industry's performance was evident in both the general and life insurance sectors doing well, although with the improvement particularly evident in the life industry.

During the year the life sector of the industry was also monitoring very closely the government's efforts to put in place a Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) for retirement saving. Legislation introducing this scheme was finally approved by the Provisional Legislative Council (PLC) at the end of February and the industry will be gearing up for this new market in the next few years.

According to the Hong Kong SAR Government's latest Economic Background report, issued with the Annual Budget, there were 215 insurance companies doing business in the SAR, down by eight on a year earlier. Within this total, 45 companies were involved in long term business, 151 in general business and 19 in composite business. There were insurance companies from 27 countries and territories with an SAR presence.

As the accompanying tables show, the industry continued to develop throughout the 1990s and total business receipts in the industry had reached HK\$46.2 billion at the end of 1995.

Over recent years, both the general and life sectors of the insurance industry have continued to expand with that expansion underpinned by the steady growth in the economy.

Although economic growth has now slowed somewhat and is expected to be only modest throughout this year, the expansion of the industry is expected to continue.

Despite fierce competition in the market, life insurance companies have gained from a growing public perception of the benefits of life coverage. Further gains are expected as a result of the MPF and the growing awareness by employees of the need to provide for retirement income.

In the general insurance business, scope for further growth will depend on continued economic expansion and greater access to the potentially lucrative china market.

The Hong Kong Government also recently announced initiatives to enhance the captive insurance company market in the SAR. ■

Insurance Industry Performance 1993-95
保險業在九三至九五年的表現

Year/Statistics 年份 / 統計數字	1993	1994	1995
Number of Establishments 營業單位數目	2,306	2,454	2,513
Number of Employees 從業員人數	25,120	29,179	31,697
Employee Compensation (HK\$ billion) 從業員薪酬 / 佣金 (以十億港元計)	5.1	6.2	7.2
Operating Expenses (HK\$ billion) 營運開支 (以十億港元計)	2.8	3.4	3.9
Business Receipts (HK\$ billion) 業務收入 (以十億港元計)	34.5	41.5	46.2

The Insurance Industry 1995
一九九五年保險業概況

Industry Section 業務分類	Establishments 營業單位數目	Employees 從業員人數	Receipts (HK\$ billion) 業務收入 (以十億港元計)	Premium (HK\$ billion) 保費 (以十億港元計)
Agents and Brokers 代理及經紀	2,361	6,893	2.90	-
General Insurers 一般保險商	109	4,656	16.95	-
Life Insurers 壽險商	42	20,149	26.35	-
Total 總計	2,513	31,697	46.2	44.0

業務持續增長 保險業前景向俏

九七年，各類保險業務均有不俗發展，整個行業在首三季的業務收入增長一成，較九六年的百分之七為高。雖然保險業在第四季表現可能受亞洲金融風暴影響，但實際數字仍有待公布。

年內，一般保險及壽險業務均有顯著增長，其中又以後者的表現最為突出。

壽險業一直密切注視政府推行《強制性公積金計劃》的進度。二月底，臨立會終於正式通過該計劃的主體法例。未來數年，它將成為業者積極進軍的新興市場。

最近隨財政預算案發表的《一九九七年經濟概況》指出，現時在香港經營的保險公司共有二百一十五家，分別來自廿七個國家或地區，較一年前少八家，其中四十五家專營長期業務，一百五十一家從事一般業務，十九家則兼營綜合業務。

從附表可見，保險業在九十年代不斷發展，而到了九五年底，整個行業的業務收入已高達四百六十二億港元。

近數年，一般保險及壽險業務隨著經濟穩定發展而不斷壯大。現時，經濟雖放緩發展，預料今年全年只可取得溫和增長，但保險業仍大有拓展潛力。

縱然市場競爭激烈，但隨著市民對購買壽險的好處認識日深，加上政府落實推行《強制性公積金計劃》，僱員認識到有需要為退休後的生活早作綢繆，壽險業依然大有可為。

至於一般保險業務的發展前景，則取決於經濟是否持續增長，以及能不能打開龐大的中國市場。

最近，特區政府亦公布了一系列措施，以推動本地專屬保險業務的發展。 ■

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Property headed for gentle second half recovery?

With the East Asian regional crisis stabilising, lower interest rates and a good Budget just announced, the local real estate sector is looking for a local market recovery as the year progresses. This follows the downturn in the local property market in the second half of the last year as the regional currency and liquidity crisis hit home in Hong Kong in the latter half of last year.

New supply will probably keep the office market relatively weak throughout the year and poor domestic demand is continuing to effect the retail sector, while industrial demand remains flat. But with developers re-arranging their supply pipeline and lower interest rates anticipated, the residential market is looking for some improvement as the year progresses.

Much will depend, however, on the ability of the economy to pick-up in the latter half of the year in line with the Budget forecast of 3.5 per cent growth, and no further regional financial fallout. In its own recent Economic Background report,

the Hong Kong Government said "the residential property market went from buoyancy to consolidation over the course of 1997."

Planned developments of residential property, as indicated by building plans with consent to commence work, declined markedly in the second half of 1997, in line with the marked correction in the market.

Nevertheless, with a substantial increase in the first half of the year, planned developments of residential property still registered a sharp rise, by 99 per cent in terms of units and 62 per cent in terms of usable floor area in the first eleven months of 1997 over a year earlier. On the other hand, planned developments of commercial property, industrial property and property in the "others" category fell, by 43 per cent, 1 per cent and 28 per cent respectively in terms of usable floor area.

Flat prices escalated earlier in the year, backed by strong end-user and investment

demand along with much speculation, and against a tight supply in the short term. Market sentiment was boosted by favourable land auction results, more attractive mortgage terms offered by the banks, and enthusiastic response to the primary sales of pre-completion flats.

Market activity began to ease in the third quarter, in face of the Government's policy commitment to stabilise the market and to increase flat supply substantially in the longer term. In the fourth quarter, the residential property market came under substantial downward pressure, as the contagion of the regional financial turmoil affected the local asset markets. Local interest rates were raised by 0.75 of a percentage point in late October (and by another 0.75 of a percentage point in early January 1998).

Moreover, amidst stringent liquidity, there was a general tightening of mortgage lending by the banks. Towards the end of the year, trading in the secondary market shrank sharply, and cases involving forfeiture of deposits reportedly increased.

地產市道半年內復蘇？

受到席捲東亞的貨幣及資金危機衝擊，香港地產市場於去年下旬逆轉，但隨著區內形勢漸趨穩定，利率下調，再加上政府剛發表的財政預算案令人滿意，地產界人士預測，未來一年的房地產市道有望復蘇。

由於新樓面供應源源不絕，預期寫字樓物業市道將持續疲弱；本地消費不振，零售業連連受到打擊，商舖市道自然並不樂觀；至於工業樓宇，市場需求預料亦停滯不前。不過，隨著發展商重整供應策略，若利率一如預料般向下調整，未來一年的住宅市道可望改善。

然而，突破淡市的關鍵卻在於下半年的經濟能否逐步改善，達到預算案預測的百分之三點五增長；此外，區內亦不能出現另一場金融風暴。港府最近發表的《一九九七年

經濟概況》指出：「九七年內，住宅物業市場由市道暢旺走向鞏固期。」

獲批施工同意書的建築圖則顯示，由於市場出現顯著調整，九七下旬的住宅物業發展計劃數目亦相應大減。

不過，由於上半年的升勢強勁，住宅物業發展計劃的數目在九七年首十一個月仍有顯著增長，與一年前同期比較，單位數目錄得百分之九十九的增長，若按樓面可用面積計算，則增長了百分之六十二。另一方面，商業樓宇、工業樓宇及屬「其他」樓宇類別的發展計劃數目，按樓面可用面積計算，卻分別減少了百分之四十三、百分之一及百分之廿八。

由於短期供應緊張，自住及投資需求強勁，加上炒賣活動活躍，令樓價在九七

年上旬一度急升。此外，土地拍賣結果理想，銀行提供更吸引的按揭條件、以及市民對一手樓花開售反應熱烈，亦持續推高市場情緒。

到了第三季，隨著政府承諾穩定市場及大量增加長遠房屋供應，地產市道開始放緩。在第四季，亞洲金融風暴的骨牌效應擴散到本地資產市場，住宅物業市場面對大幅下調的壓力。本地息口更在十月底上升零點七五個百分點（在一九九八年一月初再上升零點七五個百分點）。

此外，流動資金緊張，導致銀行普遍收緊按揭貸款，到了年底，二手物業市場急劇萎縮，而訂金被沒收的個案據報亦有所增加。不過，由於發展商把部分一手開售的新建樓宇大幅削價，又提供較靈活的財務安排，認購情況因此較為理想。

Primary sales of some new developments with substantial price cuts and more flexible financing packages from developers were nevertheless better received.

Flat prices surged by 34 per cent during the first ten months of 1997 to peak in October, before dropping back from the peak by 14 per cent by December. This still gave a 16 per cent increase during the year. The rental market also softened as more flats were put out for lease when the sales market turned sluggish. In the fourth quarter of 1997, flat rentals for new leases edged down by about 1 per cent over the preceding quarter, but were still 14 per cent higher than a year earlier.

On commercial property, the sales market for office space was active in the first half of 1997, underpinned by keen investment demand and sustained economic growth. Market activity however slackened in the second half of the year, as economic growth moderated and in anticipation of an abundant supply of new office space in the near term.

The negative turn in sentiment brought about by the regional financial turmoil further dampened acquisition interest. In

the fourth quarter of 1997, prices for office space fell by about 2 per cent over the preceding quarter, and were also 2 per cent lower than a year earlier. Office rentals were generally stable during 1997. In the fourth quarter, office rentals recorded virtually no change over the preceding quarter, and were only 4 per cent higher than a year earlier.

Supply of new office space surged by 70 per cent to 456 000 square meters in 1997, following completions of several major office developments in Central/Sheung Wan, Causeway Bay and Quarry Bay. The vacancy rate edged up to 11.5 per cent at end-1997, from 11.2 per cent at end-1996.

As to shopping space, the sales market was also active during most of 1997. Trading was particularly hectic in the third quarter, induced by a surge in investment interest in this type of property. However, the market was likewise on a downturn from October. The rental market held steady during most of 1997, before easing towards the year end. In the fourth quarter of 1997, prices for shopping space fell by 3 per cent over the preceding quarter, while rentals remained generally stable. Compared with a year earlier, they were

33 per cent and 4 per cent respectively higher.

Supply of new shopping space increased strongly, by 106 per cent to 249 000 square meters in 1997. Notwithstanding this abundant supply, the vacancy rate edged down to 8.9 per cent at end-1997, from 9.1 per cent at end-1996.

The market for industrial property remained generally slack throughout 1997, in line with the continued relocation of production processes away from Hong Kong.

Supply of new flatted factory space fell by 25 per cent to 181 000 square meters in 1997. With a weak demand, the vacancy rate stayed at a high level of 10.0 per cent at end-1997, only slightly lower than that of 11.9 per cent at end-1996.

As a key indicator of property trading, the number and total value of agreements for sale and purchase of all types of property registered with the Land Registry increased substantially by 67 per cent and 142 per cent in the first three quarters of 1997 over a year earlier, before registering respective declines of 19 per cent and 18 per cent in the fourth quarter. ■

樓價在九七年十月達至頂峰，累積升幅達百分之三十四，其後從高峰滑落，到了十二月，已較最高位下跌百分之十四，總計全年，樓價仍上升百分之十六。由於物業成交淡靜，有較多單位轉售為租，租務市場亦因而放緩。在去年第四季，新租約的租金較上一季下跌約百分之一，但仍較去年同期上升百分之十四。

商業樓宇方面，寫字樓在九七上半年成交暢旺，投資需求強烈及本港經濟持續增長乃主要利好因素；到了下半年，經濟增長放緩，加上市場預料短期內有大批新高寫字樓推出，市道相應轉淡。

亞洲金融風暴令市場氣氛逆轉，進一步壓抑購買意欲。一九九七年第四季，寫字樓價格較對上一季及一年前均下跌約百分之二；租金方面，九七年全年大致平穩，第四季的寫字樓租金與上一季比較無甚變動，較一年前亦僅高出百分之四。

隨著中區、上環、銅鑼灣及鯉魚涌多幢大型商廈落成啟用，九七年的新高寫字樓供應量急升七成至四十五萬六千平方米。因此，空置率亦由九六年年底的百分之十一點二上升至九七年年底的百分之十一點五。

鋪位方面，市場在九七年大部分時間都十分活躍。在第三季，由於市場對這類物業的投資興趣激增，買賣情況尤為熾熱。然而，商鋪市道也同樣在十月出現逆轉。租務市場在九七年大部分時間保持平穩，接近年底時則略見放緩。九七年第四季，鋪位價格較上一季下跌百分之三，租金則大致穩定，與一年前比較，兩者則分別高出百分之三十三及百分之四。

一九九七年，新鋪位的供應大幅上升一點零六倍至廿四萬九千平方米。儘管供應充足，空置率仍由九六年年底的百分之九點一下調至九七年年底的百分之八點九。

由於製造業繼續遷離香港，工業樓宇市道在九七年表現呆滯。

年內，新分層廠廈的供應下跌四分一至十八萬一千平方米。由於需求疲弱，截至年底的空置率高達一成，僅稍低於九六年年底的百分之十一點九。

在土地註冊處登記的各類物業買賣合約，在九七年首三季，以數目及總值計算，分別較一年前激增百分之六十七及百分之一百四十二，但在第四季則分別下跌百分之十九及十八。 ■

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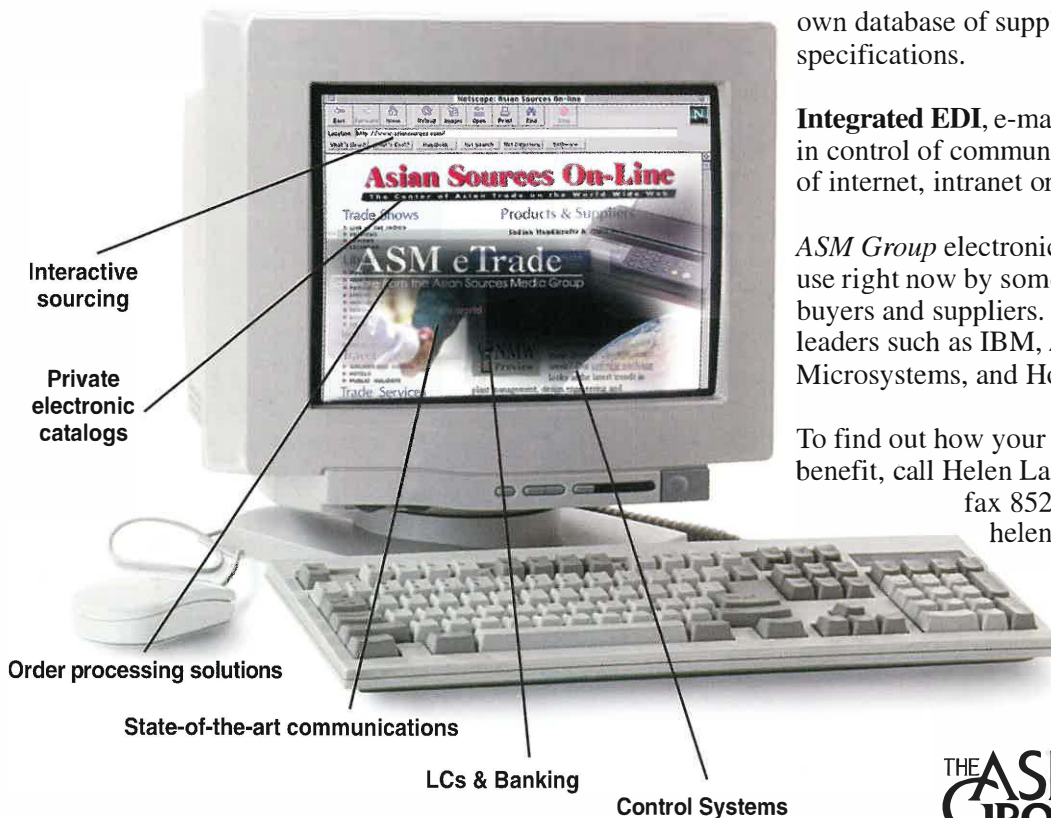
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