

Visit to Japan of Mr Donald Tsang, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR

1. Schedule

The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR, Mr Donald Tsang, spent three days between 16 and 19 February in Japan on an official visit. He paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Taro Aso, met Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Hirofumi Nakasone and attended the dinner celebrating the launch in Japan of the Hong Kong-Japan Tourism Exchange Year 2009.

2. Outcomes

- (1) Mr Tsang's trip was the first time in eight years that the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR had made an official visit to Japan (the last one was by Mr Tung Chee Hwa in March 2001). It was also Mr Tsang's first diplomatic visit overseas as Chief Executive.
- (2) The two leaders agreed to introduce a Working Holiday Scheme between Japan and Hong Kong as soon as possible.
- (3) As this year has been designated the Hong Kong-Japan Tourism Exchange Year, both parties agreed to take advantage of it by further expanding bilateral exchanges.
- (4) The two leaders agreed that co-ordinated efforts among the world's economies are needed to tackle the impact of the global financial crisis.

3. Courtesy call on Prime Minister Aso and meeting with Mr Nakasone (16 February)

- (1) Courtesy call on Prime Minister Aso
 - i. Mr Tsang highlighted the great popularity of Japanese agricultural, forestry and fisheries products in Hong Kong, which imports them in large quantities from Japan. Moreover, the number of Hong Kong people visiting Japan since the visa exemption arrangement was implemented five years ago has shown a marked increase. The ties between Japan and Hong Kong continue to grow.
Hong Kong currently faces a difficult economic situation, and Mr Tsang predicted minus growth in the coming year. The Hong Kong government believes an effective stimulus plan is extremely important, and it wishes to work together with Japan in the years to come.
 - ii. Prime Minister Aso pointed out that over 22,000 Japanese nationals live in Hong Kong, while there are more than 2,000 Japanese companies active in the SAR. The stability of Hong Kong's economy is important to the development of the Japanese economy.
He acknowledged the Hong Kong government's initiation of active measures to counter the recent financial crisis and the impact it has as an international financial centre not only on Asia's but also on the world's economy. Mr Aso hoped the two

sides could work hard together from now on.

(2) Conference with Foreign Minister Nakasone

- i. Chief Executive Tsang indicated that the Hong Kong economy faces a difficult situation at present. Despite anticipated minus growth in 2009/10, the logistics and service sectors in Hong Kong are performing powerfully. Given that Hong Kong has a sound budget and no debts, the Hong Kong government would like to co-operate with Japan and other countries in overcoming the current difficulties. In response to this, Foreign Minister Nakasone remarked that Japan regards its relationship with Hong Kong as very important. Over 22,000 Japanese nationals and over 2,000 Japanese companies are active in Hong Kong, and Japan expects that Hong Kong will continue to play a significant role as an international financial and logistics centre.
- ii. In order to enhance communication between young people from Japan and Hong Kong, Mr Nakasone and Mr Tsang agreed to launch the Japan-Hong Kong Working Holiday Scheme as soon as possible. Co-ordination at the administrative level will be accelerated.

4. Dinner reception celebrating the launch ceremony for the Japan-Hong Kong Tourism Exchange Year 2009

Mr Tsang attended the dinner reception celebrating the launch ceremony for the Japan-Hong Kong Tourism Exchange Year 2009. Ms Yoshino Kimura (Japan Tourism Goodwill Ambassador), Mr Hiroki Narimiya (Japan-Hong Kong Tourism Exchange Goodwill Ambassador 2009) and Mr Jackie Chan (Hong Kong Tourism Ambassador) were among the guests of honour at the dinner, which was marked by a very warm and cheerful atmosphere.

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