

Calendar of Events of Significance for the Hong Kong Economy in 2009

- 1 Jan The liberalisation measures under Supplement V to the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) came into effect. Hong Kong service suppliers enjoyed preferential access to the Mainland market in 40 service areas, including 29 new liberalisation measures in 17 service areas (of which 17 services liberalisation and facilitation measures were for early and pilot implementation in Guangdong Province). Moreover, the number of products with CEPA rules of origin agreed was increased to 1 537.
- 2 Jan The revised Code of Banking Practice became effective.
- 6 Jan The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$18 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.
- 8 Jan The HKMA released the report on Issues Concerning the Distribution of Structured Products Connected to Lehman Group Companies.
- 9 Jan The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo FC) approved a new commitment of \$18 billion for establishing a Research Endowment Fund for providing research funding to the University Grants Committee-funded institutions.
- 13 Jan The Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal released the 2009 Index of Economic Freedom. Hong Kong was rated the freest economy in the world for the 15th straight year, followed by Singapore and Australia.
- 16 Jan Guangdong Province promulgated “Measures of the Guangdong Province to Support Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan-invested Enterprises to Respond to the Global Financial Crisis and Expedite Restructuring and Upgrading”. There were 30 support measures including strengthening financial support, reducing or waiving certain taxes and fees, streamlining approval procedures, supporting innovation of enterprises and strengthening financial services, etc.
- 19-20 Jan The Government and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) jointly hosted a two-day Asian Financial Forum under the theme “The Changing Face of Asia”. The Forum attracted more than 1 100 participants from the financial markets and business leaders plus almost 300 journalists from 28 countries and regions.
- 20 Jan The HKMA and the People’s Bank of China (PBoC) signed a currency swap agreement with a term of three years that can be extended upon agreement by both parties. The agreement can provide short-term liquidity support up to RMB 200 billion / HK\$227 billion to the Mainland operations of Hong Kong banks and the Hong Kong operations of Mainland banks in case of need.

- 22 Jan After the third meeting of the Task Force on Economic Challenges (TFEC), the Chief Executive (CE) announced measures to cope with the expected wave of staff layoffs and company closures after the Lunar New Year, and to assist graduates entering the labour market later in the year.
- The Government auctioned the radio spectrum in the 2.5 / 2.6 GHz band for the provision of the broadband wireless services. Three successful bidders secured a total of 90 MHz of radio spectrum at a total spectrum utilisation fee exceeding HK\$1.5 billion. By using the spectrum acquired, they will be able to deploy next-generation wireless technologies for the provision of advanced and innovative high-speed multimedia services.
- 31 Jan The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) completed the first round of public consultation on the review of the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (COIAO).
- 1 Feb The Ministry of Finance (MoF) and State Administration of Taxation (SAT) raised the export tax rebate rates of 3 325 textiles and garments commodities to 15%.
- 3 Feb The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$20.4 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.
- 10 Feb The HKSAR Government and the Government of New Zealand agreed to resume negotiations on a Hong Kong and New Zealand Closer Economic Partnership (CEP) Agreement. The negotiations encompassed a wide-ranging scope with emphasis on trade and investment liberalisation and facilitation.
- 17 Feb The Government announced six selected non-profit-making organizations for the adaptive re-use of six Government-owned historic buildings under Batch I of the “Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme”.
- 19 Feb The Chief Secretary (CS) for Administration, the Vice-Governor of Guangdong Province and the Secretary for Economy and Finance of the Macao Special Administrative Region jointly chaired the Liaison and Coordinating Meeting of Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macao in Jointly Taking Forward the Implementation of "The Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the PRD 2008-2020" (the Outline) in Hong Kong. The three sides had a thorough discussion on how to implement the Outline released by the National Development and Reform Commission in early January, and reached consensus on the key cooperation areas.
- 20 Feb The Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) announced a one-off waiver of annual license fees for over 37 000 intermediaries from 1 April 2009 for one year. This measure helped relieve the regulatory cost burden of the securities industry amidst the economic downturn.

- 22 Feb The FS officiated at the kick-off ceremony of the District Cyber Centres Pilot Scheme. Announced in the 2008-09 Budget, the scheme aims to enhance the capacity of district based cyber centres to help narrow the digital divide of needy community by enhancing their access to computer facilities, Internet connectivity, training and technical support.
- 24 Feb The Secretary for Transport and Housing (STH) and the Vice Minister of Railways signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the technical arrangement for connecting the Mainland and Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen - Hong Kong Express Rail Link.
- 25 Feb The FS presented the Budget for the financial year 2009-10 to the LegCo, which gave priority to creating jobs and preserving employment.
- The FS proposed a number of one-off measures to alleviate hardship of the people of Hong Kong, including, among others, reduction of final tax in respect of salaries tax and tax under personal assessments; rates waiver; and rental reduction for most government properties and short term tenancies of government land.
- Moreover, the FS announced that the freeze on government fees and charges affecting the general public's daily lives as announced by the CE in July 2008 would be extended until 31 March 2010. The FS also earmarked \$100 million to establish the "Mega Events Fund" in order to assist local non-profit organisations to host more attractive arts, cultural and sports events over the next three years, and to further promote Hong Kong as an events capital of Asia.
- The 2008 Economic Background and 2009 Economic Prospects were published along with the 2009-10 Budget. On Hong Kong's economic outlook for 2009, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was forecast to contract by 2% to 3% in real terms as the global financial tsunami had a severe impact on world economic activity. Meanwhile, the headline and underlying Composite Consumer Price Indices (CCPI) for 2009 were forecast to increase by 1.6% and 1.5% respectively.
- 2 Mar The Trade Descriptions (Amendment) Ordinance 2008 and eight related pieces of subsidiary legislation came into effect to strengthen the protection for consumers in the retail business.
- Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) achieved a superior overall score in the category of Airports Asia & Middle East – 1 000 000 or more tonnes per year in the fifth annual survey of "Air Cargo World".
- 3 Mar The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$22.4 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.

- 5 Mar The CE and the Minister of Commerce of the Mainland China co-chaired the “Forum on Assisting Hong Kong Enterprises to Open Up the Mainland Domestic Market” in Beijing to exchange views with Hong Kong business leaders on how to assist Hong Kong enterprises in tapping the Mainland market.
- Premier Wen Jiabao delivered the “Government Work Report” at the second meeting of the 11th National People’s Congress. The Report stated that one of the key areas of work in 2009 would be to further strengthen cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong / Macao. Measures included strengthening Hong Kong’s position as an international financial centre; expediting the implementation of pilot scheme for the use of renminbi in settling cross-boundary trade transactions between the Mainland and Hong Kong / Macao; continuing to deepen and widen cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao; expediting infrastructure construction; and further opening up the Mainland’s service industry to Hong Kong and Macao.
- 9 Mar The Microsoft BizSpark Creativity Centre was established at Cyberport to provide local small and medium-sized enterprises in the creative industry with technical and business guidance.
- The Hang Seng Index (HSI) plunged to close at 11 345, the lowest in 2009, along with other stock markets in the region in the aftermath of the global financial tsunami.
- 10 Mar The European Commission (EC) published its 11th report on the HKSAR. The report recognised the substantial and pragmatic cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Hong Kong, which has been enhanced in new areas of mutual interest in 2008. It re-affirmed the role of Hong Kong as an important partner for the EU in Asia; and a platform for trade and investment intermediation between the Mainland and Europe.
- HKIA was named the World’s Best Airport among airports serving over 40 million passengers annually at the Airport Services Quality Awards 2008.
- 12-14 Mar The FS attended the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in London as member of the Chinese delegation.
- 16 Mar The multi-currency cross-border payment arrangements between the Mainland and Hong Kong took effect. These arrangements helped deepen the promotion of financial cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong and marked the introduction of a wide-ranging cross-border payment and settlement mechanism covering multiple currencies.
- 19 Mar The United Kingdom (UK) Foreign and Commonwealth Office presented to UK parliament the 24th Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong covering the period July to December 2008. The Report stated that the “One Country, Two Systems” principle had generally worked well and that the rights and freedoms promised to Hong Kong in the Joint Declaration had continued to be respected.

- 20 Mar The CE officiated at the opening ceremony of the DuPont Apollo Global Thin Film Photovoltaic Business Headquarters and R&D Centre and the Hong Kong Science Park Solar Energy Technology Support Centre at Hong Kong Science Park. The centre is the first major technology cooperation project of the "Shenzhen - Hong Kong Innovation Circle" under the HKSAR Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government in collaboration with DuPont. The centre helps establish a Solar Energy Research and Industrial Platform in Hong Kong.
- The Government announced the 2009-10 Application List for the sale of Government land, which comprises 40 residential sites, 12 commercial / business sites and 9 "hotel only" sites.
- 23-26 Mar HKTDC organised the Hong Kong International Film and TV Market (FILMART) 2009, a significant cross-media, cross-industry entertainment trade platform in Asia. HKTDC also set up the Hong Kong Animation and Digital Entertainment Pavilion and organised relevant activities to promote the digital entertainment industry at FILMART 2009.
- 24 Mar Cyberport organised the Digital Entertainment Leadership Forum 2009 to share with Hong Kong the successful experience of Wellington, New Zealand in creative industries, and to explore potential collaborations and partnerships with creative professionals from New Zealand and around the world. On the same day, Hong Kong and New Zealand entered into closer ties by signing a MOU on digital entertainment creative business collaboration between Cyberport, Internet Professional Association Limited, Wellington City Council, and New Zealand Institute of Screen Innovation Limited.
- 26 Mar The HKMA announced that it would continue to conduct foreign-exchange swap and term repo under its market operations to provide Hong Kong-dollar liquidity assistance to licensed banks, if needed, after the five temporary measures for providing liquidity assistance introduced on 30 September 2008 expired on 31 March 2009. At the same time, arrangements for obtaining liquidity at the Discount Window would return to the position before the introduction of the five temporary measures, including the reinstatement of the HIBOR leg to the calculation of the Base Rate. The narrower 50-basis point spread over the federal funds target rate would be retained.
- 27 Mar MoF and SAT announced that with effect from 1 April 2009, the export tax rebate rates of 3 802 commodities including textile products and garments, light industries, electronic information, etc. would be raised.
- 31 Mar The third meeting of the "Steering Group on Shenzhen - Hong Kong Cooperation in Innovation and Technology" was held in Shenzhen. The meeting agreed on an action plan under the "Shenzhen - Hong Kong Innovation Circle" for the coming three years. The action plan comprised 24 cooperation projects on various technology areas.

The Government extended the Information and Consultation Agreement (ICA) with The Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited (Towngas) for a period of three years with effect from 3 April 2009. The ICA was first signed in April 1997 to increase transparency in the Towngas' tariff setting mechanism and provide justification in the event of tariff adjustments, and had been extended four times since then.

- 1 Apr The one-year multiple-entry Individual Visit endorsement for eligible Shenzhen permanent residents to visit Hong Kong was implemented by the Mainland.
- 2 Apr The HKMA participated in the G20 London Summit.
- The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre atrium link expansion was completed, adding an additional 19 400 square meters of exhibition space capable of accommodating about 1 000 standard exhibition booths.
- 3 Apr After the fourth meeting of the TFEC, the CE announced that the Government would study how to nurture development in six economic areas to tap economic opportunities in the medium to long term, namely, Testing and certification; Medical services; Innovation and technology; Cultural and creative industries; Environmental industry and Educational services.
- 16 Apr A MOU on Cooperation in Wine-related Businesses was signed with Australia, covering wine-related trade and tourism, investment, education, combating counterfeits, wine auctions, storage, and reduction of trade barriers through minimum routine certification requirements.
- 20 Apr The SFC signed a MOU with the State Securities Commission of Vietnam. The MOU established a framework for mutual assistance and facilitates the exchange of information between the two regulators.
- 21 Apr The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$15.4 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.
- 22 Apr The Court of Appeal delivered a unanimous judgment to allow the SFC's appeal in the PCCW privatization proceedings and made it clear in its landmark ruling that share splitting for the purpose of manipulating the outcome in a scheme of arrangement is a form of abuse.
- 23 Apr Biotech Centre opened at the Hong Kong Science Park. The 200 000 square-foot centre incorporates two dedicated life science buildings, which provide cutting-edge equipment and wet laboratory facilities for shared use, technical engineering support and an SME centre. The opening of the new centre represents another milestone of the Hong Kong Science Park's drive to help Hong Kong become a hub for innovation in biotechnology in the PRD region.
- 27 Apr The Hong Kong Deposit Protection Board published a consultation paper on a review of the Deposit Protection Scheme.

At the third meeting of the Hong Kong – Shenzhen Joint Task Force on Boundary District Development, the HKSAR and Shenzhen Governments came to the initial view that higher education could be the leading land use in the Lok Ma Chau Loop, complemented with high-tech research and development facilities as well as cultural and creative industries.

The Airport Authority announced a relief package of HK\$450 million to assist airlines and other airport operators amid the economic downturn.

1 May The first imported case of human swine influenza infection was confirmed in Hong Kong. The Government raised the response level from “serious response level” to “emergency response level” under the Emergency Preparedness for Influenza Pandemic in Hong Kong.

3 May The ASEAN + 3 Finance Ministers announced Hong Kong’s participation in the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation. This can strengthen Hong Kong’s regional financial cooperation with other economies.

4 May The Census and Statistics Department launched a new Annual Earnings and Hours Survey which aims to provide comprehensive data on the level and distribution of wages of employees in Hong Kong as well as their employment and demographic characteristics to support analyses related to Statutory Minimum Wage and other studies on labour-related topics.

7 May The Government, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Housing Society and the Urban Renewal Authority, launched the “Operation Building Bright” to provide subsidies and one-stop technical assistance to owners of old and dilapidated buildings to help them carry out repair and maintenance works.

9 May The HKSAR Government and the Central Government signed Supplement VI to the CEPA. Under the new Supplement, Hong Kong service suppliers enjoyed preferential access to the Mainland market in 42 service areas, including 29 new liberalisation measures in 20 service areas.

11 May Three universities in Hong Kong were named the first, second and fourth in the Asian University Rankings 2009 run by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).

12 May The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$24.1 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.

Total exports of goods plummeted by 22.2% in real terms in the first quarter of 2009 over a year earlier, marking the sharpest contraction since the second quarter of 1954.

13 May The Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department, the Civil Aviation Administration of China and the Macao Civil Aviation Authority signed a Cooperation Arrangement on Mutual Acceptance of Certificates of Airworthiness in Macao. The arrangement will shorten the time required in the transfer of aircraft registration within the region.

- 14 May A MOU on Cooperation in Wine-related Businesses was signed with Italy, covering promotion of trade in wine and related food, wine-related tourism, investment, education and combating counterfeits.
- 15 May The Government released the GDP figures for the first quarter of 2009. The Hong Kong economy contracted sharply by 7.8% in real terms in the first quarter over a year earlier, due to an unprecedented fall-off in world trade as triggered by the deepening global recession. The FS noted that the challenging economic environment would continue to affect people throughout the community, and announced to implement a new package of measures to relieve hardship, stimulate economic activity and assist those in need.
- In the May update of the economic forecast for 2009, the forecast growth rate in real terms of GDP was revised downward to -5.5% to -6.5%. Meanwhile, the forecast rates of increase in the headline and underlying Composite CPI were likewise revised downward to 1% and 0.9% respectively.
- 15-18 May The CEDB, in collaboration with FDC, organized the “Celebrating 100 Years of Hong Kong Cinema” event which marked the 100th anniversary of Hong Kong films in Cannes, France.
- 22 May The LegCo FC approved funding support of \$9,046.5 million and \$621.9 million respectively for the HKSAR’s contribution to the detailed design and construction of the HZMB Main Bridge and the detailed design and site investigation for the HZMB Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities.
- The SFC signed and exchanged a Side Letter to the bilateral MOU with the Taiwan Financial Supervisory Commission (Taiwan FSC). The Side Letter would facilitate cross-listing of exchange-traded funds (ETF) in the two markets.
- 25 May The Noah’s Ark in Ma Wan, the world’s only full-size replica, was opened to the public.
- 26 May The FS announced the details of a further package of relief measures totaling around \$16.8 billion, including, among others, further waiver of rates and reduction of salaries tax and tax under personal assessment, extension of rental reduction for government land and properties, rent waiver for public housing, extra payment of Comprehensive Social Security Allowance, Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance, as well as waiver of licensing fees, to alleviate the burden of the people of Hong Kong and certain sectors that were most seriously affected by the economic downturn and human swine flu.
- The HKMA and De Nederlandsche Bank N.V. (DNB) jointly announced the signing of a MOU for a liquidity arrangement to be applied for non-routine situations. Under the arrangement, Dutch banks operating in Hong Kong or Hong Kong banks operating in the Netherlands could approach the HKMA or DNB to ask for liquidity assistance if needs arise.
- 27 May A MOU on Cooperation in Wine-related Businesses was signed with Hungary, covering wine-related trade and tourism, investment, education and combating counterfeits.

- 31May-10 Jun The FS led a business delegation to Moscow and St. Petersburg to meet business and political leaders to exchange views on the global economic crisis and promote the business opportunities that were available in Hong Kong. The FS also visited Stockholm and London to update the business and political leaders of the latest development in Hong Kong after the business mission.
- 1 Jun MoF and SAT raised the export tax rebate rates of over 2 600 commodities, including mechanical and electrical products, toys and furniture, etc.
- The Government Wi-Fi Programme completed the installation of Wi-Fi facilities at 350 premises, marking the achievement of the planned implementation target. Free Wi-Fi Internet access was made available to citizens in all districts.
- The Planning Department and Civil Engineering and Development Department jointly commissioned the “Planning and Engineering Study on Development of Lok Ma Chau Loop” to formulate a comprehensive plan for the development of the Loop, with a view to developing a sustainable, environmentally friendly, energy efficient and people oriented community.
- 2 Jun The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$46.1 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.
- 5 Jun The LegCo FC approved the injection of an additional \$1 billion into the SME Export Marketing Fund (EMF) and the SME Development Fund, and increasing the total loan guarantee commitment of the SME Loan Guarantee Scheme from \$12.6 billion to \$20 billion in support of SMEs. The scope of reimbursable items under the EMF was also expanded to provide greater flexibility to SMEs in their export promotion activities.
- 9-10 Jun The CE attended the Fifth Pan-PRD Regional Cooperation and Development Forum in Nanning, to strengthen Hong Kong’s relations with the provinces in the Pan-PRD region.
- 15 Jun The Government extended the application period of the \$100 billion Special Loan Guarantee Scheme (SpGS) from 15 June to 31 December 2009 and implemented a series of enhancement measures to better support local enterprises. The Government’s guarantee ratio was increased from 70% to 80%. The maximum amount of loan that each enterprise might obtain was doubled from \$6 million to \$12 million. The maximum guarantee period was also extended from three years to five years.
- 19 Jun The State Council announced that the provisional export duties for certain commodities would be rescinded with effect from 1 July 2009. These products included wheat, rice, soybean and related grain flour, sulphuric acid and steel wire, etc.
- 22 Jun After the TFEC held its final meeting, the CE announced that the Government would pursue a series of proposals to develop the six economic areas identified at the previous meeting.

The public consultation on the review of the Trustee Ordinance and related matters commenced. Reforming the trust law will boost Hong Kong's trust-services industry's competitiveness and attractiveness, and enhance the city's position as a major asset-management centre in Asia.

27 Jun HKIA won the Air Transport Research Society's "2009 Asia-Pacific Efficiency Excellence Award" for the third consecutive year.

29 Jun The HKMA and the PBoC signed a supplementary Memorandum of Cooperation to prepare for the implementation of the pilot scheme for the use of renminbi in settling cross-border trade transactions between the Mainland and Hong Kong.

The Government streamlined the control arrangements for Hong Kong's textiles exports to the EU and dispensed with the Production Notification and Textiles Trader Registration Scheme requirements for such exports.

30 Jun The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$45.1 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.

1 Jul The Government waived the licensing fees for travel agents for one year to help the trade overcome the impact of the global economic downturn and human swine flu.

The Agreement on Mutual Exemption of Visa Requirements signed by the HKSAR and the Russian Governments came into effect. HKSAR passport holders may visit Russia visa-free for a stay of up to 14 days. Likewise, Russian nationals can also enjoy 14 days' visa-free access to Hong Kong.

The number of products with CEPA rules of origin agreed was increased to 1 565.

1-14 Jul The HKSAR Government and the Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination jointly organised an "Exhibition on Hong Kong's Participation in the World Expo 2010 Shanghai China" from 1 to 14 July in Shanghai.

2 Jul The HKSAR Government and the Government of the Republic of Finland signed an Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investments in Helsinki, Finland. The Agreement provides for equal treatment of investors of both sides, compensation if investments were expropriated, free transfer abroad of investments and returns, and settlement of investment disputes in accordance with internationally accepted rules.

The Government organised a foundation completion ceremony for the Hong Kong Pavilion in the Shanghai World Expo Park. The CS for Administration and the Fulltime Deputy Director of the Executive Committee of the World Expo 2010 Shanghai China officiated at the ceremony and delivered speeches.

3 Jul The LegCo FC approved a sum of \$4,642.7 million for the reclamation and associated construction works for the Wan Chai Development Phase II. The works are targeted for completion in June 2017.

The LegCo FC also approved a sum of \$28,104.6 million for the construction of the Central – Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link.

6 Jul The pilot scheme for cross-border trade settlement in renminbi commenced operation, enabling enterprises in Hong Kong to settle trade transactions with the designated enterprises in the approved Mainland regions in renminbi.

7 Jul Hong Kong ranked the second in the Enabling Trade Index 2009 published by the World Economic Forum.

The environmental levy scheme on plastic shopping bags commenced. It is the first mandatory producer responsibility scheme implemented in Hong Kong.

8 Jul The Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes (Amendment) Ordinance 2009 was enacted by the LegCo to increase employees' control over their Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) investments and to promote greater market competition. Under the Ordinance, scheme members may transfer accrued benefits derived from their mandatory contributions made during their current employment from an employer selected MPF Scheme to another MPF scheme of their own choice at least once per year.

9 Jul The first-round public consultation on the conceptual framework for legislative proposals to enhance the anti-money laundering (AML) regulatory regime in respect of the financial sectors and introduce a licensing regime for remittance agents and money changers. The proposals will enhance the integrity of the AML regime of Hong Kong in line with international standards.

10 Jul The LegCo FC approved a sum of \$702 million for the Food and Health Bureau for implementing the first stage of the territory-wide patient oriented electronic health record (eHR) Programme, aiming to have the eHR sharing platform as an essential healthcare infrastructure ready by 2013-14 for connection with all public and private hospitals.

The fourth meeting of the Hong Kong - Guangdong Expert Group on Cooperation in Informatisation was held at Cyberport to further enhance cooperation in informatisation between the two places.

13 Jul The HKMA issued a circular requiring all authorized institutions to step up their security controls over their Internet banking services.

HSBC Bank (China) Company Limited issued floating rate renminbi bonds totalling RMB 1 billion in Hong Kong to institutional investors.

14 Jul The sixth meeting of the “Guangdong - Hong Kong Expert Group on Cooperation in Innovation and Technology” was held in Guangzhou. The meeting agreed to carry out more in-depth and comprehensive collaboration and exchanges in technology.

The Hong Kong – Shenzhen Joint Working Group on the Regulation of Shenzhen River held its 18th meeting in Shenzhen. The meeting reviewed the progress of the works under the Regulation of Shenzhen River Stage 3 and endorsed the first stage findings and recommendations of the planning and feasibility study on the Regulation of Shenzhen River Stage 4.

Construction of the West Island Line commenced.

14-16 Jul The FDC organised a film cooperation business matching in Beijing under the “Hong Kong Film New Action” programme to help Hong Kong’s new generation directors to promote their film projects to the Mainland investors and producers.

20 Jul The Board of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCA) announced the appointment of three Conceptual Plan Consultants and a Project Consultant to take forward the masterplanning of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD).

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate soared to a peak of 5.4% in the second quarter of 2009, before coming down gradually since the third quarter.

21 Jul The Forum on the Implementation of the Outline by Hong Kong and the Nine PRD Municipalities was held in Hong Kong. The Forum enabled the industries in Hong Kong to have a better understanding of the implementation of the Outline by the nine PRD municipalities. It also offered them the opportunity to have direct exchanges with the governments of Guangdong and the nine municipalities, and to explore possibilities of strengthening cooperation on the foundation of the long-term Hong Kong - Guangdong cooperation and the Outline.

The Taiwan FSC approved the offering of the first Hong Kong ETF, W.I.S.E. CSI 300 China Tracker, in Taiwan and its application to the Taiwan Stock Exchange for listing.

21 - 23 Jul The 14th Executives’ Meeting of East Asia-Pacific Central Banks Governors’ Meeting was held in Hong Kong with the participation of 11 member central banks and monetary authorities.

22 Jul The HKMA, Bank Negara Malaysia and the Monetary Authority of Singapore announced the establishment of a tripartite working group to map out a coordinated strategy for the scheduled exit from the full deposit guarantee by the end of 2010 in their respective jurisdictions.

The SFC, the HKMA and 16 distributing banks of the Lehman Brothers Minibonds reached an agreement in relation to the repurchase of Lehman Brothers Minibonds from eligible investors. The repurchase scheme enabled customers who hold Lehman Brothers Minibonds to receive a substantial return of their capital.

- 23 Jul The Bank of East Asia (China) Limited issued renminbi retail bonds totalling RMB 4 billion in Hong Kong.
- The Government published the "Air Quality Objectives Review" to seek public views on a proposal to update the existing Air Quality Objectives and develop a long-term air quality management strategy for better protection of public health.
- 24 Jul The scheme of the South Island Line (East) was gazetted under the Railways Ordinance (Cap. 519).
- 28 Jul The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$40.7 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.
- The SFC released its Fund Management Activities Survey, which showed that Hong Kong's combined fund management business amounted to HK\$5,850 billion as at end-2008.
- 2 Aug In response to the measure announced by the Central Government in April allowing Mainland tour groups traveling to Taiwan by taking cruise vessels homeporting in Hong Kong, the first cruise sailing taking Mainland tour groups to Taiwan was launched.
- 3 Aug The Government announced the appointment of 12 Primary Dealers and 97 Recognized Dealers to assist in taking forward the institutional tranche of the Government Bond Programme (GBP), and the intention to appoint two Co-arrangers to help arrange and manage offerings of Retail Government Bonds under the GBP.
- 6 Aug The SFC granted authorization to the first Taiwan ETF, Polaris Taiwan Top 50 Tracker Fund, for offering in Hong Kong.
- 11 Aug The HKMA announced the commencement of operation of the CMU Fund Order Routing and Settlement Service, a new service provided by the Central Moneymarkets Unit of the HKMA to make fund order routing and settlement safer and more efficient by streamlining the processing of investment fund transactions among market participants.
- 12 Aug The OGCIO collaborated with the ICT industry to launch the Hong Kong ICT Awards 2009. The Awards aimed to recognise, promote and commend the excellent achievements to which Hong Kong ICT professionals and organisations contributed.

- 14 Aug The Government released the GDP figures for the second quarter of 2009. The Hong Kong economy rebounded in the second quarter. Following a sharp year-on-year contraction in the first quarter of 2009, real GDP registered a smaller decline of 3.8% in the second quarter. On a seasonally adjusted quarter-to-quarter comparison, the economy resumed growth at 3.3% in the second quarter, ending the contraction in the previous four quarters. The FS welcomed the rebound and pointed out that this had benefited from the Mainland regaining further growth momentum, and the confidence exhibited by the Hong Kong people also underpinned the relative stable local consumption. The FS also stated that the Government would continue to adopt the strategy of stabilising the financial system, supporting enterprises and preserving employment, and remain vigilant and make timely moves in response to the evolving external situation.
- In the August update of the economic forecast for 2009, the forecast growth rate in real terms of GDP was revised upward to -3.5% to -4.5%. Meanwhile, the forecast rate of increase in the underlying Composite CPI was kept unchanged at 0.9%, while that for the headline Composite CPI was revised downward to 0.5%.
- The OGCIO won the Hong Kong Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise (MAKE) Award 2009 organised by the Knowledge Management Research Centre of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
- Hang Seng Index ETF and Hang Seng H-share Index ETF became the first Hong Kong ETFs to cross-list in Taiwan following the co-operative deal signed between the SFC and the Taiwan FSC in May 2009.
- 18 Aug The Hong Kong Deposit Protection Board published the report on the public consultation on the first phase of the review of the Deposit Protection Scheme and the consultation paper on the second phase of the review.
- 19 Aug The CE and the Governor of Guangdong Province jointly chaired the 12th Plenary of the Hong Kong - Guangdong Cooperation Joint Conference in Hong Kong. Both sides agreed that concrete results had been attained in various major cooperation areas. Both sides also agreed to continue to follow up on the implementation of the facilitation measures and to take forward cooperation on modern services industry in Qianhai.
- The STH and the Shenzhen Mayor signed a cooperation arrangement on advancing the Hong Kong - Shenzhen Western Express Line.
- 20 Aug Underlying consumer price inflation turned slightly negative in July, and held steady at the -0.3% level from July to November.
- 24 Aug The Government announced the tendering of 2-year Government Bonds totalling HK\$3.5 billion, under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme of the GBP.

- 28 Aug The Government launched Batch II of the ‘Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme’ and invited interested non-profit-making organizations to submit applications for the adaptive re-use of five Government-owned historic buildings.
- HKSAR and Guangdong Governments jointly launched the Hong Kong – Guangdong Cleaner Production Partners Recognition Scheme to recognise the efforts and achievements of Hong Kong-owned enterprises in pursuing cleaner production.
- Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEx) launched a public consultation on a proposed framework to give Mainland incorporated companies listed in Hong Kong a choice to prepare financial statements under Mainland accounting standards and audited by Mainland audit firms which meet relevant qualification requirements.
- 1 Sep The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$21.7 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.
- 4-5 Sep The FS and the Chief Executive of the HKMA attended the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in London as members of the Chinese delegation.
- 8 Sep The World Economic Forum released its Global Competitiveness Report 2009-2010. Hong Kong ranked the 11th, same place as the last year.
- 9 Sep The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office presented to UK parliament the 25th Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong covering the period January to June 2009. The Report stated that the “One Country, Two Systems” principle had generally worked well and that the rights and freedoms promised to Hong Kong in the Joint Declaration had continued to be respected.
- The World Bank released its Doing Business 2010 Report. Hong Kong was ranked as the third easiest place to do business in the world.
- 14 Sep Hong Kong remained the freest economy in the world, according to the 2009 Annual Report on the Economic Freedom of the World jointly released by the Fraser Institute of Canada, CATO Institute of the US and over 70 other research institutes around the world.
- 17 Sep The Government established the Hong Kong Council for Testing and Certification to spearhead the development of the testing and certification industry, one of the six economic areas identified by the TFEC for promotion. The priority task of the Council is to work with the industry to formulate a three-year market-driven development plan within six months of its establishment for submission to the CE.
- 18 Sep Hong Kong retained its position as Asia’s second largest destination for foreign direct investment (FDI), according to the “World Investment Report 2009”, released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. FDI flows to Hong Kong in 2008 reached US\$63 billion. On a global scale, Hong Kong ranked the seventh in FDI inflows in 2008.

- 22 Sep The Government announced that Radio Television Hong Kong would be tasked to take up the new mission to serve as the public service broadcaster in Hong Kong, with sufficient resources provided for service enhancement to enable it to better serve the community.
- The CE in Council approved the partial uplifting of the Pokfulam Moratorium to facilitate the “preservation-cum-development” proposal for the preservation of the historic building ‘Jessville’ at 128 Pokfulam Road.
- The CE in Council also granted approval for CLP Power Hong Kong Limited to extend the contract for the supply of nuclear electricity from Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station for another term of 20 years from 7 May 2014 onwards. This provides an assurance of continued supply of cleaner electricity to Hong Kong at reasonable and affordable prices.
- The Global Financial Centres Index by the City of London ranked Hong Kong as the third most competitive financial centre in the world.
- 24 Sep Established by the Hong Kong side under the Hong Kong - Guangdong Cooperation Joint Conference, the Greater PRD Business Council released a study report in response to the Outline.
- 24-25 Sep The FS and the Chief Executive of the HKMA attended the G20 Leaders’ Summit held in Pittsburgh as members of the Chinese delegation.
- 25 Sep The fourth meeting of the “Mainland - Hong Kong Science and Technology Cooperation Committee” was held in Beijing. The two sides agreed to continue exploring measures to further promote the sharing of technology talent, information and resources in order to encourage more technology cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong.
- The SFC launched a public consultation on proposals to fine-tune the regulation of intermediaries selling investment products to the public. The proposals include the requirement of product key facts statements, introduction of cooling-off periods, disclosure of commercial interest involving in the sales process (including commissions, fees and other benefits), etc.
- 28 Sep The Central Government launched renminbi sovereign bonds totalling RMB 6 billion in Hong Kong.
- The HKMA and Bank Negara Malaysia jointly announced the signing of a MOU on cooperation in the development of the financial services industry, particularly in the area of Islamic finance.
- 29 Sep The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$23.1 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.

- 1 Oct The liberalisation measures under Supplement VI to the CEPA came into effect.
- The Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA), the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Guangdong Communications Administration signed a MOU under CEPA in Beijing, which allows Hong Kong service suppliers to distribute in the Guangdong province fixed and mobile telephone cards to be used in Hong Kong.
- 5 Oct The results of the “2009 Annual Survey of Companies in Hong Kong Representing Parent Companies Located outside Hong Kong” were published by the Census and Statistics Department and Invest Hong Kong. Of the 6 397 overseas, Mainland and Taiwanese companies representing parent companies located outside Hong Kong surveyed as at 1 June 2009, there were 1 252 regional headquarters, 2 328 regional offices and 2 817 local offices.
- 8 Oct For the preparation of the Development Plan, the WKCDA started the Stage 1 Public Engagement (PE) exercise to collect views of the public and stakeholders on their aspirations and expectations for the planning of the WKCD as a whole, as well as their requirements for the facilities in the arts and cultural venues in the WKCD.
- Three universities in Hong Kong were ranked top fifty in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2009.
- HKIA was voted the “Best Airport” for seven consecutive years in the TTG Travel Awards.
- The World Economic Forum released its Financial Development Report 2009. Hong Kong was ranked 5th among 55 economies, being the world leading financial systems and capital markets.
- 9 Oct The HKMA and the China Banking Regulatory Commission agreed to further increase cooperation on promoting integrated development of cross-border banking and effective supervision of such services.
- 12 Oct The Hong Kong Airport Authority and the Shanghai Airport (Group) Co. Ltd. signed an airport cooperation agreement. Both sides agreed to set up a joint-ventured Shanghai Hong Kong Airport Management Company Limited which would be responsible for the management of the expanded Shanghai Hongqiao Airport, and to strengthen airport cooperation between the two places.

- 14 Oct The CE announced in his Policy Address that, among other things, Hong Kong would enhance its competitiveness and continue to evolve into a high value-added, knowledge-based economy. Specifically, the flow of people, goods, capital and information would be strengthened to support the four pillar industries. Hong Kong would develop into a global financial centre, asset management centre and offshore RMB business centre attracting capital and talent from within and outside the country. A series of measures, including optimizing land use by releasing the potential of over 1 000 old industrial buildings, were introduced to promote the six industries with clear competitive advantages. Hong Kong would also strengthen its cooperation with Guangdong and enhance its exchanges with Taiwan.
- 20 Oct The CE in Council approved the implementation of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou – Shenzhen - Hong Kong Express Rail Link project.
- 21 Oct The HKMA announced the tendering of 5-year Government Bonds, totalling HK\$2 billion, under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme of the GBP.
- The Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Limited (HKMC) announced the launch of a special scheme under the Fixed Adjustable Rate Mortgage Programme to promote mortgage loans with fixed-rate periods from one to 10 years.
- 23 Oct The HKMA issued a circular to authorized institutions requiring them to lower the loan-to-value ratio for residential mortgages on properties valued at \$20 million or more from 70% to 60%, and to cap the maximum loan amount for other properties at \$12 million. The circular also reminded authorized institutions that they should be prudent in conducting valuation of properties and in calculating borrowers' debt servicing ratios.
- 28 Oct An Arrangement on Cooperation on Wine-related Business was signed with New Zealand, covering wine-related trade and tourism, investment, education and combating counterfeits.
- The Development Bureau, together with the Guangdong Provincial Department of Construction and the Secretariat for Transport and Public Works of Macao, promulgated the findings of the "Planning Study on the Coordinated Development of the Greater Pearl River Delta (GPRD) Townships". The Study suggested the formulation of a regional development strategy for coordinated development amongst the cities in the GPRD region, with a view to promoting, inter alia, economic development and strengthening the overall competitiveness of the region in the global economy.
- 28-31 Oct The Environment Bureau, together with the HKTDC, co-organised the Eco Expo Asia 2009 which attracted more than 200 exhibitors from 19 countries and regions.
- 29 Oct The HKMA consulted the Hong Kong Association of Banks and the Deposit-taking Companies Association on its draft "Guideline on a Sound Remuneration System". The consultation closed on 30 November 2009.

The Government announced to further extend the application period for the SpGS from 31 December 2009 to 30 June 2010.

The public consultation on the review of corporate rescue procedure legislative proposals commenced. A corporate rescue procedure will facilitate companies with long-term viability that are facing short-term financial difficulty to restructure their business or debts or seek a capital injection to turn the business around.

29-30 Oct The Intellectual Property Department together with the WIPO and Central Government co-organised the "World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Regional Symposium on Management of Intellectual Capital, Intellectual Assets and Intellectual Property" in Hong Kong.

30 Oct The HKSAR Government and the Government of the French Republic signed a MOU for negotiations of an Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation with Respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion.

The total gross tonnage registered under the Hong Kong Shipping Register crossed the 44 million mark.

The SFC launched a public consultation on proposal to rationalize the regulatory requirements for public offers of structured products. The proposal would transfer the public offering regime for structured products in the form of debentures from the Companies Ordinance to the Securities and Futures Ordinance. This would be complemented by a new Code on Unlisted Structured Products.

30 Oct-8 Nov The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) organised the first "Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival". The event was rated one of the "Top 10 International Food and Wine Festivals" by Forbes Traveler.

The TDC held the second Hong Kong International Wine and Spirits Fair. Relative to 2008, the number of exhibitors more than doubled from 240 to 525.

3 Nov In its Preliminary Conclusions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Article IV Staff Mission to Hong Kong welcomed the proactive and concerted policy efforts by the Government to tackle the global financial crisis, and maintained its support for the Linked Exchange Rate system.

The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$34.7 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.

4 Nov The FS announced that the HKSAR Government had reached in-principle agreement with the Mainland Customs to provide facilitation measures for wines exported from Hong Kong to the Mainland. This would help Hong Kong traders tap the growing wine market across the Mainland. The measures are expected to be rolled out in early 2010.

6-7 Nov The HKMA participated in the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in St Andrews, Scotland.

9 Nov Moody's upgraded Hong Kong's long-term foreign-currency and local-currency rating outlook to "Positive" from "Stable", with ratings at "Aa2".

The initial phase of the Mandatory Energy Efficiency Labelling Scheme had been fully implemented. The scheme required room air-conditioners, refrigerating appliances and compact fluorescent lamps to carry energy labels before they were supplied to the local market.

The SFC signed the Declaration on Mutual Cooperation on Development of Islamic Capital Market and Islamic Collective Investment Schemes with the Securities Commission of Malaysia. The declaration would provide for the mutual recognition of Islamic collective investment schemes between Hong Kong and Malaysia. It would facilitate the cross-border offering of these schemes to investors in the two markets, and foster the development of Islamic fund management in Hong Kong.

11 Nov The Pacific Economic Cooperation Council published its State of the Region Report 2009-2010. The Report recognised Hong Kong as one of the economies most highly integrated with the Asia Pacific region.

12-15 Nov The CE attended the 17th APEC Leaders' Meeting in Singapore. Leaders committed to pursue growth which is balanced, inclusive, and sustainable, to ensure a durable recovery that will create jobs and benefit the people on a broad basis. Leaders also strongly re-affirmed their commitment to achieving an ambitious and balanced conclusion to the Doha Development Agenda in 2010, and to rejecting all forms of protectionism.

13 Nov The Government released the GDP figures for the third quarter of 2009. The Hong Kong economy improved further after a strong rebound during the second quarter, leading to a further tapering of the year-on-year decline in real GDP to 2.4% in the third quarter. This was led mainly by the further improvement in the domestic sector, offsetting the drag from the weak external demand. On a seasonally adjusted quarter-to-quarter comparison, real GDP expanded further by 0.4% in the third quarter over the second quarter.

In the November update of the economic forecast for 2009, the forecast growth rate of GDP in real terms was revised upward to -3.3%. Meanwhile, the forecast rates of increase in the headline and underlying Composite CPI were kept at 0.5% and 0.9% respectively.

The CE and New Zealand Prime Minister jointly announced in Singapore the conclusion of negotiations on a Closer Economic Partnership Agreement between Hong Kong and New Zealand, which would be Hong Kong's first free trade agreement with a foreign economy. The Agreement would provide Hong Kong exporters with enhanced market access to the New Zealand market, promote bi-lateral investment flows, and bring about multiple benefits to both economies.

16 Nov The HSI rose to a 17-month high of 22 944, 102% higher than the trough in March 2009.

- 16-21 Nov ITC joined hand with the HKTDC in setting up the Hong Kong Pavilion at China Hi-Tech Fair 2009 at Shenzhen Convention & Exhibition Centre. Besides, ITC jointly set up a ‘Shenzhen - Hong Kong Innovation Circle Pavilion’ with the Shenzhen Bureau of Science Technology & Information at the fair.
- 17 Nov The CEDB released refined proposals for strengthening copyright protection in the digital environment, with a view to ensuring the copyright protection regime to remain appropriate in present-day circumstances.
- 20 Nov The HKMA took disciplinary action against a relevant individual in connection with a Lehman Brothers-related investment product.
- 23 Nov The Hong Kong - Shenzhen Joint Task Force on Boundary District Development held its fourth meeting in Hong Kong. The Joint Task Force noted the progress of the development of the Liantang / Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point and the Lok Ma Chau Loop, and deliberated on the work plan.
- 24 Nov The HKMA announced the offer of additional Exchange Fund Bills, totalling HK\$62.7 billion, to meet the increased demand for the paper by banks.
- 25 Nov The OGCIO co-organised the "Hong Kong Clean PC Day 2009" Campaign with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Hong Kong Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Centre to promote information security in the community.
- 26 Nov The Copyright (Amendment) Ordinance 2009 was passed into law. It prescribed, in new schedules to the Ordinance, the numeric limits beyond which the unauthorised copying and distribution of printed copyright works for use in business would attract criminal liability.
- 27 Nov The scheme of the Kwun Tong Line Extension was gazetted under the Railways Ordinance (Cap. 519).

The announcement of a standstill in debt payment by Dubai World triggered renewed turmoil in the financial markets around the world. HSI closed at 21 135, down 5% in a single day.
- 30 Nov The Hong Kong Deposit Protection Board published a report on the public consultation on the second phase of the review of the Deposit Protection Scheme.
- 30 Nov-5 Dec “Business of Design Week 2009”, the largest annual design event in Asia and one of the leading design events in the world, was held. Over 50 000 persons participated in the events. France was the partner country for the event.
- 1 Dec The HKSAR Government signed a Joint Declaration on Strengthening Economic Cooperation with the Government of Malaysia, aiming to encourage and promote bi-lateral economic cooperation in various areas and laid the foundation for future discussions of a bi-lateral free trade.

In response to the Government's request, the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong required developers to show the flat price per square foot / metre in "saleable area" of individual flats on the price lists of all uncompleted first-hand residential properties which were approved for pre-sale under the Lands Department's Consent Scheme as from that day.

The Government announced the "Supplementary Notes on the Implementation of Projects under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) by Hong Kong enterprises in the Mainland" to facilitate Hong Kong enterprises to participate in CDM projects in the Mainland.

3 Dec The IMF released its Staff Report on Hong Kong, welcoming the Government's efforts to sustain economic recovery and reiterating its support for the Linked Exchange Rate system.

The Airport Authority announced the extension of the 10% reduction in landing and parking charges at HKIA for three months to 31 March 2010 to further assist airlines during the economic downturn.

5-13 Dec The Hong Kong 2009 East Asian Games (EAG) was the first large-scale international multi-sport event hosted by Hong Kong. More than 2 100 athletes from nine countries and regions competed for 262 gold medals in 22 sports. As the host, Hong Kong sent a delegation of nearly 400 athletes to participate in all 22 sports and captured a total of 110 medals (26 gold, 31 silver and 53 bronze), the best ever result achieved by Hong Kong in a large-scale international sports event.

7 Dec The Hong Kong - Guangdong Joint Working Group on Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection held its tenth annual meeting in Guangzhou. The meeting reviewed progress of environmental cooperation initiatives and noted that good progress had been made on various areas. For 2010, both sides would take forward "Environmental Cooperation Agreement between Hong Kong and Guangdong", and to actively transform the PRD region into a Green and Quality Living Area.

The second-round public consultation on the detailed proposals for the new legislation to enhance the AML regulatory regime in respect of the financial institutions and introduce a licensing regime for remittance agents and money changers, after the first-round public consultation on the conceptual framework ended on 8 October 2009.

9 Dec The Government introduced the Buildings Energy Efficiency Bill into the LegCo. The Bill specified the minimum energy efficiency standards for buildings in Hong Kong by mandating compliance with the Building Energy Codes. It is estimated that for new buildings, the implementation of the proposal will result in energy saving of 2.8 billion kWh in the first decade.

11-14 Dec Cyberport organised the first ever PANORAMA – Asia Pacific Animation Challenge and Animation Camp 2009 to provide an excellent training opportunity and platform for the student talents from the region.

12-19 Dec The Secretary for the Environment attended the 15th session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as a member of the Chinese Delegation, as well as the Climate Summit for Mayors as a member of C40 Large Cities Climate Leadership Group in Copenhagen. During the meeting sessions, Hong Kong's experiences in formulating strategies and measures to tackle climate change were shared among the participants.

13 Dec A ground breaking ceremony for the expansion works of Hong Kong Disneyland was held. The expansion would enlarge the existing theme park by about 23% with more than 30 new attractions added, bringing the total number of attractions to over 100. The new attractions will open in phases and will be completed in entirety by mid-2014.

14 Dec The HKSAR Government and the Government of Japan jointly announced that the "2009 Hong Kong - Japan Tourism Exchange Year" was extended for three months until March 2010, building on the success of the promotional events in 2009. The Tourism Exchange Year aimed to promote two-way tourism and enhance cultural exchange.

As an initiative to facilitate private hospital development, the Government invited the market to express interests in developing private hospitals at four reserved sites. The invitation would be open to local and overseas interested parties until 31 March 2010.

15 Dec A pilot arrangement to allow non-Guangdong residents ordinarily residing in Shenzhen to apply for Individual Visit endorsements in Shenzhen to visit Hong Kong was implemented by the Mainland.

The construction of the HZMB Main Bridge commenced. Upon completion of the Bridge, it will enhance the further economic development of Hong Kong, Macao and the Western PRD at large. It would significantly reduce the cost and time for travellers and for the flow of goods between Hong Kong and the Western PRD.

16 Dec The LegCo passed the Public Officers Pay Adjustment Bill. Following the commencement of the Ordinance on 24 December 2009, the pay of civil servants in the upper salary band and above as well as that of certain public officers earning more than \$48,400 a month was reduced by 5.38% from 1 January 2010, subject to the proviso that their pay after reduction shall not be lower than \$48,700.

17 Dec The third annual structured dialogue meeting between the European Commission and the HKSAR Government was held in Hong Kong. The two sides had extensive exchange on a number of issues including trade, innovation and technology, creative industries, education, food and consumer safety and agreed to continue to strengthen cooperation in these areas.

The first-phase public consultation on the draft provisions of the Companies Bill commenced. The rewrite of the Companies Ordinance is a major exercise to update and modernise the legal framework for companies in Hong Kong.

- 22 Dec The HKSAR Government and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), consisting the Governments of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, agreed to commence negotiations on a Hong Kong and EFTA Free Trade Agreement in early 2010, encompass: a wide-ranging scope, with emphasis on trade and investment liberalisation and facilitation.
- 23 Dec A ground breaking ceremony of the site formation for the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal was held, signifying the commencement of works of the new cruise terminal and a milestone in the development of cruise tourism in Hong Kong.
- 28 Dec The Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the ASEAN + 3 and the HKMA announced the signing of the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization Agreement.
- 30 Dec The China Institute of City Competitiveness issued its 8th China City Competitive Rankings. Hong Kong topped the list with best comprehensive competitiveness among Chinese cities.

The Government announced the tendering of 10-year Government Bonds, totalling HK\$2.5 billion, under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme.

The SFC, jointly with HKEx and the Federation of Share Registrars, issued a consultation paper on the proposed operational model for implementing a scripless securities market in Hong Kong. The paper puts forward an operational model in building market rapport in pressing ahead an important initiative to modernize our financial infrastructure, enhance corporate governance / investor protection as well as align with international trends.

The Government announced the naming of an auditorium and a forum in the Hong Kong Science Park as Charles Kao Auditorium in recognition of the outstanding achievements of Nobel laureate Professor Charles Kao.

- 31 Dec The OFTA issued a consultation paper to solicit public views for reviewing the local access charge (LAC) regime, which governs the payment of interconnection charge by external telecommunications services providers to the local network operators for the conveyance of external telecommunications traffic.

With the completion of five more fill-in transmitting stations constructed by ATV and TVB, the coverage of digital terrestrial television (DTT) broadcasting in Hong Kong was extended from 75% to 85% of the population.

In 2009, the amount of funds raised through IPO on HKEx totalled \$248.2 billion, making Hong Kong rank first in the world.

HSI closed the year at 21 873, representing a leap of 52% over end-2008.