

SEDL visits the Hong Kong Pavilion at Posidonia

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**Attached is the welcoming remarks by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, at the cocktail reception for the Hong Kong Pavilion, Posidonia 2004 held in Greece, on 8 June 2004 (English only):**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the Hong Kong Pavilion. I am delighted to be in this wonderful country again and to participate in the Maritime Policy Forum and the Posidonia Exhibition yesterday, which allowed me the opportunity to meet the international shipping community to exchange views on the global maritime development and to provide you with an overview of Hong Kong's role as an Asian shipping centre.

Hong Kong is the world's busiest container port and a premier shipping centre. We have been blessed with a fantastic deep-water anchorage, and we are strategically located at the doorstep of southern China. Some of you may have heard that Hong Kong has signed the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement or CEPA with the Mainland of China. The objectives of this free trade pact, which has been in operation since January this year, are to strengthen trade and investment cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong. Under CEPA, Hong Kong companies and service providers can gain access to the Mainland market ahead of China's WTO time table. Hong Kong is therefore well positioned for foreign shipping companies to tap into the enormous Chinese market.

Ladies and gentlemen, our team is here to share with you our experience and expertise that makes Hong Kong an international maritime centre and your ideal partner in Asia. We are more than happy to answer any question you may have about Hong Kong or Hong Kong's maritime industry. Let me also take this opportunity to thank all Hong Kong exhibitors and the co-organizers for their efforts and support. Thank you.

End/Tuesday, June 8, 2004