

CE meets Secretary-General of ASEAN (with photo)

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, today (July 10) met with the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Dr Kao Kim Hourn, to exchange views on strengthening connections with ASEAN member states. Also attending the meeting were the Deputy Financial Secretary, Mr Michael Wong, and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau.

Mr Lee welcomed Dr Kao's visit to Hong Kong with his delegation. Noting that Hong Kong has maintained close trade and economic ties with ASEAN, Mr Lee said that ASEAN has long been Hong Kong's second-largest trading partner. Since the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Investment Agreement between Hong Kong and ASEAN, the trade and investments between the two sides have recorded significant growth with the bilateral trade in goods between Hong Kong and ASEAN amounting to US\$144.6 billion last year.

Mr Lee pointed out that Hong Kong will continue to promote the co-operation between Hong Kong and ASEAN on trade and investments. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government signed the First Protocol to Amend the FTA between ASEAN and Hong Kong early this year to update the Product Specific Rules (PSRs) of origin under the FTA to enhance the coverage of the PSRs. It enables Hong Kong businesses to more easily and effectively gain Hong Kong-originating status for an increased number of specified products, and thus enjoy preferential tariff treatment when expanding into the ASEAN market, which will help enhance the competitiveness of the products concerned and trade flows. In addition, the HKSAR Government has also enhanced people-to-people exchange and experience sharing through the Economic and Technical Cooperation Work Programme under the FTA, he added.

Mr Lee expressed his gratitude to Dr Kao and ASEAN member states again for their continued support for Hong Kong's accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). He looked forward to maintaining communication with the ASEAN Secretariat on relevant issues and soliciting support from other stakeholders for Hong Kong to join RCEP as soon as possible.

Mr Lee said that he hopes to visit different ASEAN member states in the future to further strengthen Hong Kong's ties with them, taking co-operation with ASEAN to a new level.

