

# HKETO Jakarta celebrates Year of the Dragon in Manila

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Jakarta (HKETO Jakarta) hosted a Chinese New Year dinner in Manila, the Philippines, today (March 13) to welcome the Year of the Dragon. Some 180 guests from the local government, business, academic, cultural and media sectors attended.

In her welcoming speech, the Director-General of the HKETO Jakarta, Miss Libera Cheng, said that the Philippines is one of Hong Kong's top five trading partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Bilateral trade in goods amounted to US\$13.8 billion last year, posting positive growth vis-à-vis the 2019 level, despite the impact of the pandemic, demonstrating the resilience of the economic and trade ties between the two places.

"Following the full entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement between Hong Kong and ASEAN (FTA) in 2021, Hong Kong has signed the First Protocol to Amend the FTA (the Protocol) in January this year to update the Product Specific Rules of origin under the FTA by enhancing their coverage to almost 600 categories of products. We are glad that the Secretary of Trade and Industry of the Philippines also signed the Protocol last month, thereby injecting new impetus to Hong Kong's economic and trade ties with the Philippines and ASEAN as a whole.

"The Philippines is Hong Kong's largest source of tourism in ASEAN. We received some 86 000 tourists from the Philippines in January this year, representing a remarkable increase of 25 per cent vis-à-vis the same period in 2019. The Financial Secretary has introduced a series of measures in the latest Budget to further enrich tourists' experiences and build the Hong Kong brand," she added.

Dignitaries joining the dinner included the Undersecretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Mr Jesus Domingo; the Undersecretary of the Department of Trade and Industry of the Philippines, Mr Allan Gepty; the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines, Mr Huang Xilian; the Director of Singapore of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Ms Vivienne Chee, and senior representatives from major business chambers in the Philippines.

With the support of the Airport Authority Hong Kong and airlines, the HKETO Jakarta also arranged a lucky draw session during the dinner to give out round-trip air tickets between Manila and Hong Kong.

The HKETO Jakarta will be hosting another event in Cebu, the Philippines, next Monday (March 18) to celebrate the Chinese New Year.