

Singapore ETO hosts maritime and logistics business seminar in celebration of 25th anniversary of establishment of HKSAR (with photos)

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Singapore (Singapore ETO) hosted a business seminar in Singapore today (August 18) to share with the maritime and logistics trade in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) information of the boundless opportunities offered by Hong Kong as a regional hub port with extensive connectivity and a gateway to the Mainland of China under the National 14th Five-Year Plan.

Entitled "Development of Hong Kong Shipping Registry and logistics opportunities associated with Greater Bay Area", the hybrid-mode event was well received by industry leaders and executives, attracting over 100 in-person and online participants from various companies and associations.

Addressing the audience in a virtual keynote speech, the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, said that Hong Kong is one of the world's busiest transshipment container ports, serving some 270 container ship services a week and connecting to over 600 destinations worldwide. Despite port congestion worldwide, the city's port throughput stood at around 18 million twenty-foot equivalent units in 2021.

"Despite the prolonged impact of the pandemic and international trade disputes, air cargo services at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) remain resilient. We moved around 5 million tonnes of cargo in 2021, representing a rise of around 13 per cent as compared to the 2020 figure," he added.

Highlighting President Xi Jinping's important speech delivered at the meeting celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), and his calls for "four musts" for the new administration, with one being the "must" to maintain Hong Kong's distinctive status and edge, Mr Lam showed confidence in the Central Government's continued support for Hong Kong's maritime, aviation and logistics industries.

He cited a wide range of measures taken by the authorities to further advance the maritime and logistics sectors, including smart port and green port initiatives to support port development and improve port efficiency.

"We also foster high value-added maritime services, including ship registration, ship finance, ship management, marine insurance, and maritime legal and arbitration services," he added. To this end, new tax concessions for ship agents, ship managers and ship brokers were introduced by the relevant authorities last month to encourage them to use Hong Kong as a base

to grow their businesses.

"To enhance services for owners of Hong Kong-registered ships residing abroad, we have set up Regional Desks of the Hong Kong Shipping Registry (HKSR) in seven cities around the world, including the Singapore Regional Desk which was set up in 2020," he said.

On the logistics front, to take forward the development of intermodal transshipment within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) to facilitate the flow of goods within the region, the HKIA Logistics Park will be established in Dongguan port. HKIA's three-runway system, expected to be commissioned in 2024, will also boost the city's cargo handling capacity to 10 million tonnes annually, he added.

Mr Lam's speech was followed by presentations by the Head (Transport, Infrastructure and Advanced Manufacturing) of Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK), Mr Benjamin Wong; the Regional Head (Singapore), HKSR, Marine Department, Mr Philip Ho; and the Chairman of the Promotion Sub-committee under the Hong Kong Maritime Arbitration Group (HKMAG), Captain Lee Fook-choon. They briefed the audience on different topics, including opportunities offered by Hong Kong's shipping and logistics sectors for businesses in ASEAN; support rendered by the HKSR for owners of Hong Kong-registered ships residing in Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and India; and the advantages of using Hong Kong as the seat for maritime arbitration.

Several industry players then joined the three speakers in a panel to discuss their experiences of using Hong Kong as a platform to grow their businesses. They were the Deputy Chief Financial Officer of Orient Overseas Container Line, Mr Michael Fitzgerald; the Executive Director, Global Business Development of LF Logistics, Mr Simon Oxley; and the Chief Executive and General Manager of China Merchants Insurance Co Ltd, Ms Sigorney Lau. They discussed a wide range of issues including the challenges presented by disruptions in supply chains under the epidemic, the enormous business potential offered by the GBA as the world's ninth largest economy, the unique advantages of using maritime insurance and arbitration services in Hong Kong, and career prospects and talent attraction in the maritime industry.

After the business seminar, participants at the scene joined a networking session to further establish ties and exchange views with the speakers as well as other industry players.

Co-organised with InvestHK, the Marine Department and the HKMAG, the business seminar was the ninth event held by the Singapore ETO this year to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR. The Singapore ETO will continue to host events under the theme of "A New Era – Stability • Prosperity • Opportunity" to invite a wide spectrum of the community to celebrate this momentous occasion.

