

Editorial

This book celebrates the 15th anniversary of Hong Kong's reunification with the Motherland, an occasion of great importance in Chinese history. This reunion was achieved after an immense amount of hard work by many people, some of whom you will meet in the pages of this work. Without the dedication, foresight and patience of the key players, under the wise leadership of Mr. Deng Xiaoping, the outcome might have been very different, coming as it did at a very critical moment in China's rise to its present eminence among nations.

It took two years for the Chinese and British negotiating teams to thrash out the Sino-British Joint Declaration which provided a sound basis for the amicable resolution of a knotty problem left by history. This was followed by the enactment of the Basic Law which fleshed out the Motherland's promises of "One Country, Two Systems, with a high degree of autonomy and Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong."

Since that historic night of June 30 - July 1 1997 when the National and Special Administrative Region flags were run up the flagpoles, Hong Kong has grown in stature and solidified itself as a capitalist haven with the freest economy in the world, maintained its separate links in world organisations like the WTO, the WHO, the International Olympics Council, the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation, the International Labour Organisation, the World Intellectual Property Organization and many other international bodies under the name of "Hong Kong, China". Foreign consulates have grown to 112 along with many other international organisations such as the European Union, the International Refugee Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and so on.

Since the Handover Hong Kong's economy has been trending upwards but not before several economic crises of a global nature took a heavy toll. The Central People's Government responded by introducing the Individual Visit Scheme which, in effect, allowed tens of thousands of Mainlanders to visit the city as individual travellers rather than in tour groups. This led to millions flooding into Hong Kong, and using the city as the gateway to the outside world. Hong Kong's benefit from this scheme was instantaneous. Coupled with benefits from the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) which opened Mainland doors to Hong Kong's services industries and allowed individuals to set up retail businesses on the Mainland, the city was revitalised within a short period, far ahead of other cities and countries hit by the Asian financial crisis, the collapse of Lehman Bros., the bursting of the dotcom bubble and the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in which Hong Kong suffered most, with severe repercussions on the tourist industry and retail business.

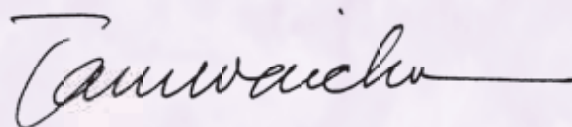
Above all, the Basic Law has secured for all in Hong Kong some of the things we hold most dear: freedom of speech, of the press, of our right to choose our leaders. There are cries to the contrary but the very fact that these loud protestations, often accompanied by demonstrations, large and small, only serve to show that freedom reigns in Hong Kong.

What of the future? Will it all come to a sudden stop when the 50-year tenure of the Joint Declaration runs out? Will Hong Kong then become an insignificant part of the Mainland? The answer lies partly in the tremendous changes which continue on the Mainland as China opens its doors to the global family, and Hong Kong's growing importance to what will emerge as the largest ever metropolis in the history of the world. This is already taking shape in the Pearl River Delta, with Hong Kong as the financial heart of this metropolis.

The future is decidedly exciting for the very young now growing up in Hong Kong.

For making this book possible special thanks are due to Ms. Cammy Chan for overseeing its production; Mr. S.K. Liu for his excellent design work, the Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre for the script on the third chapter, the members of the editorial committee for all their supports and the Hang Oi Charitable Foundation Limited for its sponsorship of the production costs.

We thank Mr. Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for his calligraphy for the title of this book, and Mr. Qiao Xiaoyang, Director of the Hong Kong Basic Law Committee for writing the Preface. Their encouragement is a source of strength to us through out this project.



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May 2012