

# Calendar of Events in 2008

## January

- 14 The Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, speaking at the opening of the Legal Year, says Hong Kong is in a strategic position to take advantage of the globalisation of legal services.
- 15 Hong Kong is named the world's freest economy by the Heritage Foundation for the 14th year in a row.  
Secretary for the Environment, Mr Edward Yau, leaves for the US West Coast for talks on how to improve air quality and tackle climate change.
- 22 The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Henry Tang, visits Tokyo to strengthen economic and cultural ties with Japan.
- 25 The Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang, leads a high-level business delegation to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to introduce Hong Kong as an international financial centre.  
Hong Kong's largest landfill gas utilisation project opens at the North East New Territories Landfill.

## February

- 1 The Government approves an emergency relief package for the Mainland's snowstorm victims.  
The Centre for Food Safety launches a rapid alert system to enhance communication with the trade on food safety warnings.  
The Legislative Council Finance Committee approves an allocation of \$1 billion to establish a Government scholarship fund for outstanding local and non-local students in public funded universities.
- 22 The Government launches a scheme to revitalise Hong Kong's historic buildings in partnership with non-profit-making organisations.
- 27 The Financial Secretary, Mr John C Tsang, delivers his Budget which adheres to three basic principles: commitment to society, sustainability and pragmatism. Duty on wine is abolished to promote Hong Kong's development as a wine-trading hub in Asia.

## March

- 1 The Ngong Ping Nature Centre opens on Lantau Island, boosting Hong Kong's green tourism credentials.

- 5 The Executive Council approves further planning and design for the Shatin-to-Central Link and the Kwun Tong Line Extension.  
The Hong Kong Police Force hosts the 20th INTERPOL Asian Regional Conference held in Hong Kong.
- 10 A Hong Kong-Shenzhen Joint Task Force on Boundary District Development is set up to oversee the planning and development of land in the boundary district.
- 11 Hong Kong hosts the World Ports Summit on port security, safety and environmental protection.
- 16 The Hong Kong Monetary Authority is recognised as Asia's leading bank regulator in the Asian Banker Achievement Awards.
- 28 Mr Simon Peh Yun-lu, Deputy Director of Immigration, succeeds Mr Lai Tung-kwok as director on his retirement.

## April

- 2 Hong Kong is selected to take part in the Urban Best Practice Area Exhibition at the World Expo 2010 Shanghai China.
- 7 The Secretary for Justice visits Shanghai and Hangzhou to promote Hong Kong's arbitration services and mutual understanding in judicial and legal matters.
- 11 The Chief Executive attends the Boao Forum annual conference.
- 14 The winning entry entitled 'Pavilion of Infinity' is announced for the design concept competition for Hong Kong's pavilion at the World Expo 2010 Shanghai China.
- 22 The Executive Council approves further planning and design for Hong Kong's section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link.
- 25 The Chief Executive leads a Hong Kong business delegation to Expo Central China 2008 in Wuhan, Hubei.  
A Commissioner for Heritage's Office is set up to assist the Secretary for Development in implementing the Government's policy on heritage conservation.

## May

- 2 The Olympic Torch Relay is held in Hong Kong with thousands of people lining the streets to cheer more than 100 torchbearers who carried the Olympic Flame.
- 5 Hong Kong and Shenzhen sign letters of intent to establish a Solar Energy Research and Industrial Platform in collaboration with DuPont.

- The official launch of the Qualification Framework marks a milestone development of a platform to promote lifelong learning in Hong Kong.
- 8 The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Henry Tang, calls for closer ties with the European Union at the start of his official visit to Europe in Brussels.
- 10 The Chief Executive officiates at the first Summit on District Administration held to exchange views with district council members on important community matters.
- 13 The Chief Executive expresses Hong Kong's deep sympathy for the lives lost in the May 12 Sichuan Earthquake and pledges Hong Kong's full support to help in rescue and reconstruction work.
- 14 The Government approves an emergency relief package for victims of the Sichuan earthquake.
- 16 Maryknoll Convent School in Kowloon Tong, built in 1937, is declared a monument.
- The Chief Executive holds talks with Singapore's Prime Minister and the Minister Mentor during a visit to the country to strengthen bilateral relations.
- 20 The Chief Executive appoints the first group of eight Under Secretaries to boost public engagement and to strengthen the government's team of political appointees.
- 22 The Chief Executive appoints the first group of nine Political Assistants to assist the Government's Principal Officials in their political work.
- 24 The Financial Secretary visits Central Europe to encourage business leaders in Slovenia, Austria and Czech Republic to use Hong Kong as a base for Asian operations.

## June

- 2 The Financial Secretary visits London for meetings with business and political leaders.
- 13 The Secretary for Education, Mr Michael Suen, attends the fourth Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation's Education Ministerial Meeting in a pledge to prepare students to face challenges of the 21st Century.
- 18 The World Economic Forum ranks Hong Kong No. 1 globally in terms of enabling trade.
- 22 Hong Kong receives a gift of Jurassic Period dinosaur fossils from the Yunnan Provincial Government.
- 27 The Chief Executive leads a Government delegation to Sichuan to discuss arrangements for helping to rebuild the earthquake-stricken province.

- 30 The Financial Secretary meets his counterpart in Macao to discuss matters of mutual interest and co-operation between the two special administrative regions.

## July

- 1 The Chief Executive, at a reception to celebrate the 11th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, says the Beijing Olympics is a golden opportunity to show to the world China's rapid development, and Hong Kong is honoured to co-host the Olympic Equestrian Events.
- 2 The Government bans the keeping of live poultry overnight at retail outlets to protect public health.
- 3 The Chief Executive attends the 10th anniversary of Hong Kong International Airport that has been named 'best in the world' for the sixth year in a row in the annual Skytrax survey.
- 6 Vice-President Xi Jinping inspects Hong Kong's Olympic equestrian venues at Sha Tin and Beas River.
- 10 The Race Discrimination Ordinance is passed in the Legislative Council to further promote equality and harmony among different races in Hong Kong.
- 11 King Yin Lei at No. 45 Stubbs Road on Hong Kong Island built in 1937 is declared a monument.
- 12 Mrs Rita Lau is appointed the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development.
- 16 The Chief Executive unveils an \$11 billion relief package to help residents alleviate the impact of rising inflation.
- 18 The Legislative Council approves the Government's proposal to inject \$2 billion into a trust fund set up for rebuilding earthquake stricken Sichuan.
- 19 The Chief Executive leads a 100-strong business delegation to Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning to explore business opportunities.
- 29 The Financial Secretary and the Mainland's Vice Minister of Commerce, Mr Jiang Zengwei, sign the fifth supplement to the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement.

## August

- 3 The Financial Secretary arrives in Melbourne for the APEC Ministerial Meeting on Structural Reform.

- 8 The Chief Executive attends the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing.
- The Chief Secretary for Administration and President of the Equestrian Committee, Mr Henry Tang, welcomes competitors and officials participating in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Equestrian Events, to be staged in Hong Kong from August 9-21, at a reception at Sha Tin Racecourse.
- 18 The Chief Executive welcomes the President of the International Olympic Committee, Count Jacques Rogge, to Hong Kong.
- 19 Hong Kong and France sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation in wine-related businesses.
- 27 The Chief Executive praises Hong Kong athletes for their performance at the Beijing Olympics at a welcome home reception.
- 28 An agreement is reached on the supply to Hong Kong of nuclear-power electricity and natural gas from the Mainland over the next two decades.
- 29 China's Olympic gold medallists arrive in Hong Kong for a three-day visit that includes a grand welcome show and sporting demonstrations.

## September

- 1 Free education in public schools, including secondary education, is extended from nine to 12 years.
- 6 The Chief Secretary for Administration attends the opening ceremony of the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing.
- The Acting Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Michael Suen, welcomes competitors and officials at Sha Tin Racecourse for participating in the Paralympic Equestrian Events to be held from September 7 to 11.
- 7 More than 1.6 million people cast their votes in the Legislative Council elections. They comprise 1 524 249 electors, or 45.2 per cent of the total electorate of the Geographical Constituencies and 127 973 electors, or 60.3 per cent of the total electorate of the Functional Constituencies.
- 10 The Chief Executive welcomes the President of the International Paralympic Committee, Sir Philip Craven, to Hong Kong.
- 18 The Chief Executive commends Hong Kong athletes on their return from the Paralympic Games in Beijing where they won 11 medals — five gold, three silver and three bronze.
- 21 The Secretary for Development, Mrs Carrie Lam, leads a Hong Kong delegation to the World Sustainable Building Conference in Melbourne

to exchange views on the latest development in green building technology and sustainable built environments.

- 23 The Harmful Substances in Food (Amendment) Regulation 2008 comes into effect to prohibit inappropriate level of melamine in food.
- 24 The Third Asia Pacific Regional Conference of the Hague Conference on Private International Law opens in Hong Kong.
- 25 The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development reaffirms Hong Kong as Asia's leading city for international business.
- 30 The Government agrees to finance the building of an international cruise terminal on the site of the old Kai Tak airport.

## October

- 1 The Chief Executive's National Day address describes 2008 as a year of joy and sorrow for the country — with the happiness of the Olympic Games tempered by the sorrow of the Sichuan earthquake tragedy.  
The International Internet Treaties take effect in Hong Kong to improve the protection of copyright and related rights associated with digital technologies.
- 6 Hong Kong continues to be a prime hub in Asia for overseas and Mainland companies managing their regional business operations, according to an annual survey released jointly by Invest Hong Kong and the Census and Statistics Department.
- 14 The Government announces two new measures to shore up confidence in Hong Kong's banking system. It will use the Exchange Fund to guarantee repayment of all deposits held in authorised institutions in Hong Kong; and set up a contingent bank capital facility to make capital available to locally incorporated banks.  
Mr Lau Kong-wah is appointed to the Executive Council.
- 15 The Chief Executive delivers his annual Policy Address in which he says Hong Kong will face the global economic turmoil squarely and seize new opportunities to turn the crisis into opportunities.  
Hong Kong's Office of the Commissioner of Insurance and the Federal Financial Supervisory Authority of Germany sign a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen supervisory co-operation and exchange of information between the two regulators.
- 23 The Government appoints members to the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Board to help promote long-term art and cultural development in Hong Kong.
- 24 The Government increases to \$1,000 the monthly Old Age Allowance paid to Hong Kong's senior citizens.

- 28 The Chief Executive appoints members of the Task Force on Economic Challenges, to tackle the problems created by the global financial crisis and to spot new business opportunities for Hong Kong.
- 29 The Government hosts the Economic Forum on the Economic Co-operation and Development for the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong to discuss the opportunities and challenges arising from the new developments in cross-strait relations.

## November

- 7 Hong Kong's Green Island lighthouse compound with its two lighthouses, built in 1875 and 1905, and its related buildings are declared a monument.
- 10 The Secretary for the Environment, Mr Edward Yau, begins a visit to Australia to exchange views on environmental pollution.
- 11 The Secretary for Justice and the Secretary for Security release the report of the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse.  
The Chief Executive in Council grants Wave Media Limited a 12-year licence to set up and operate a new 24-hour radio channel.
- 15 The Financial Secretary and the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Mr Joseph Yam, attend the G20 Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy in Washington DC as members of the Chinese delegation.
- 19 The Chief Executive meets the British Prime Minister, Mr Gordon Brown, at 10 Downing Street during his three-day visit to London. The global financial crisis was among the topics discussed.  
The 'International Arbitration — East Asia Comes of Age' conference kicks off in Hong Kong to mark the opening in Hong Kong of the Asia Office of the International Chamber of Commerce International Court of Arbitration Secretariat.
- 22 The Chief Executive appeals to world leaders at the APEC meeting in Lima, Peru, not to step back from commitments to further liberalise trade and investment.
- 24 The Secretary for Justice visits Australia to strengthen ties and promote Hong Kong as an international legal services and dispute resolution centre.
- 25 The Brazilian Government grants visa-free entry to HKSAR Passport holders.
- 26 The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, leads a delegation to Dubai to promote Hong Kong as an effective platform for investment.

## December

- 2 The Chief Executive tells guests at the Clinton Global Initiative dinner that Hong Kong has been moving gradually but surely towards low-carbon and green living on environmental initiatives.  
The 'MICHELIN Guide Hong Kong Macau 2009', the first English and Chinese version of the renowned hotel and restaurant guide, is launched in Hong Kong.
- 5 A 40-member delegation of China's Shenzhou-7 manned space mission, including astronauts Zhai Zhigang, Liu Boming and Jing Haipeng, arrives in Hong Kong for a four-day visit.  
The Chief Executive officiates at the one-year countdown to the Hong Kong 2009 East Asian Games.  
The Government's \$100 million allocation for short-term food assistance to the needy in Hong Kong is approved by the Legislative Council.
- 8 The Chief Executive announces a \$100 billion Special Loan Guarantee Scheme for enterprises and the provision of over 60 000 jobs in 2009 as part of the Government's effort to lead Hong Kong out of the economic downturn.
- 9 The International Monetary Fund commends Hong Kong's decisive actions to contain the impact of the global financial turmoil.
- 10 An international study, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2007, announces that Hong Kong Primary Four (P4) students' performance in mathematics rose to the world's top.  
The Financial Secretary leads a Hong Kong business delegation to Nanning and Hanoi.
- 19 The report on the first stage of the public consultation on healthcare reform is released.
- 23 A new code for prosecutors, entitled 'The Statement of Prosecution Policy and Practice' is released, providing for greater transparency and accountability of the actions of prosecutors.
- 24 Hong Kong introduces two new measures to provide greater convenience for Taiwan residents to visit the city from January 1, 2009. They are the lifting of the rule that restricts applications for iPermits to only two within 30 days; and extending the period of stay from 14 days to 30 for permit holders.