

London ETO starts celebrating Chinese New Year by wishing on a tree

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London (ETO), greeted the Chinese New Year (CNY) in traditional style by giving Londoners the chance to make wishes on a replica of the famous Lam Tsuen Wishing Tree in Chinatown on 6 February, the day before hosting its major London reception on 7 February.

The HKETO took part in the famous London Chinatown CNY celebration in Trafalgar Square, Chinatown and Shaftesbury Avenue – said to be the biggest CNY event outside Asia, with more than half a million people taking part - by creating ‘Hong Kong in London Chinatown.’ As well as sponsoring stage performances by local musicians and dancers, the office created a replica of The Wishing Tree, and thousands of people took part by throwing specially-made ‘wishes’ at the tree, in the hope that they would stay in the branches so that the wishes would come true.

The following day, ETO Director General Mrs Agnes Allcock welcomed over 500 friends of Hong Kong at London’s Whitehall Banqueting House with the first of the office’s series of CNY events in the countries under its purview.

Among the guests were such luminaries as former Governor of Hong Kong, Lord Wilson of Tillyorn; Lord Green, formerly Group Chairman of HSBC and currently Minister for Trade and Investment; senior diplomats, officials and leading figures in the business world. Mrs Allcock briefed them on Hong Kong's achievements over the past year, and on the key role Hong Kong can play in helping UK companies do business with China. She said that Hong Kong has weathered the global financial downturn remarkably well, with a projected GDP growth of 6.5 per cent for 2010.

She explained the crucial role of the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle in this: allowing Hong Kong to benefit from its close economic ties with the Mainland while enjoying a high degree of autonomy and maintaining its unique way of life. The result, she said, is that Hong Kong has been voted the world's freest economy for the 17th consecutive year, ranking first on the Globalisation Index 2010, and achieving the second place in the World Competitiveness Yearbook.

Mrs Allcock also highlighted Hong Kong’s growing importance as China’s global financial centre. She said “Our role in helping to internationalise the Chinese economy is increasingly important. Hong Kong has become the preferred platform for Chinese companies to go global, and for international firms to enter the China market.” The increasing availability in Hong Kong of financial services bonds denominated in Renminbi has led to many international companies using them to help support their activities in the mainland, she added.

The reception also featured a lion dance featuring two lions and traditional Chinese music. Following this event, the ETO will be organising or co-hosting receptions or trade and investment seminars in 12 cities across six countries.

In order to obtain a copy of Mrs Allcock's speech is available at http://www.hketolondon.gov.hk/news/docs/2011_Speech_DG_CNY.pdf.

Photo captions:

Wishing tree1:

Thousands of Londoners re-enacted an ancient Hong Kong tradition by throwing their colourful 'wishes' into the replica 'Wishing Tree' created by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London for the London Chinatown Chinese New Year celebration on 6 February

Wishing tree2:

By the end of the day the 'Wishing Tree' in London Chinatown was festooned with colourful 'wishes'

DG1:

Mrs Agnes Allcock, Director General of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, gave a welcoming speech at the Chinese New Year reception at the Whitehall Banqueting House in London

Toast:

Welcoming the Year of the Rabbit with a toast: Mrs Agnes Allcock, Director General of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, Ms Dawn Page, Director, UK and Northern Europe Hong Kong Tourism Board in London, Miss Lore Buscher, Regional Director Europe, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council; and Miss Mary Chow, Hong Kong's Special Representative to the European Union.

Lion Dance:

The London CNY reception ended with a loud and colourful lion dance featuring two lions.