

Hong Kong welcomes the Year of the Dragon in London with music and dance
– and a wishing tree

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The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London (London ETO) greeted the Year of the Dragon in traditional style by participating in the famous London Chinatown Chinese New Year (CNY) celebration in Trafalgar Square, Chinatown and Shaftesbury Avenue on 29 January, two days before hosting its major London reception on 31 January.

The Annual London Chinatown CNY celebration is said to be the biggest CNY event outside Asia, with more than half a million people taking part. London ETO took part in this mega celebration by creating ‘Hong Kong in London Chinatown.’

One new feature of this year’s celebration was the CNY parade on 29 January morning. London ETO’s entry was a contemporary dance troupe performing an updated version of Hong Kong’s dragon boat dance, which is traditionally performed by the women of Hong Kong’s many islands. For the parade, the dance was choreographed in a contemporary style and accompanied by music specially composed based on traditional Hong Kong folk songs.

London ETO also sponsored the Shaftesbury Avenue stage where local performers delighted the crowds, while the popular Wishing Tree was featured again at the celebration. Thousands of people threw specially-made ‘wishes’ at the tree, in the hope that they would stay in the branches so that the wishes would come true.

Two days later, Director-General of London ETO, Mrs Agnes Allcock, welcomed over 650 friends of Hong Kong at London’s Whitehall Banqueting House. This kick-started the office’s series of CNY events in the countries under its purview.

Among the guests at the reception were such luminaries as former Governor of Hong Kong and Honorary President of Hong Kong Association, Lord Wilson of Tillyorn; Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint, formerly Group Chairman of HSBC and currently Minister of State for Trade and Investment; Dr Margaret Chan, Director General of World Health Organization (WHO); senior diplomats, officials and leading figures in the business world. Mrs Allcock briefed them on Hong Kong’s achievements over the past year, and spoke of the increasing importance of the three way relationship between the UK, Hong Kong and Mainland China.

She explained the crucial role of the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle in 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. She also spoke about some of the forthcoming cultural events planned to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Hong Kong’s reunification with China this year.

Mrs Allcock highlighted Hong Kong’s growing importance in internationalising the Chinese economy. Not only has Hong Kong become the most important off-shore centre for Renminbi, the Chinese currency, but it is also becoming the preferred platform for Chinese companies to go global, and for international firms to enter the China market.

The reception also featured a lion dance, traditional Chinese music and a musical performance by 15-year old Hong Kong piano prodigy, Aristo Sham, and renowned UK violinist, Sebastian See-Schierenberg. Following this event, the London ETO will be co-hosting business seminars and receptions together with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and business associations in seven other cities across five countries.

In order to obtain a copy of Mrs Allcock's speech please email general@hketolondon.gov.hk