

Press Release

Hong Kong to welcome the Year of the Ram with traditions, festivities and fireworks

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin (HKETO Berlin) will soon celebrate the arrival of the Chinese New Year by hosting a series of receptions in central and eastern Europe from January to March. In the Chinese lunar calendar, the next year which will start on 19 February 2015, is the Year of the Ram. In Chinese astrology, Ram is a symbol of determination and initiative; and 2015 is a year of prosperity, well-being and stable economic growth, according to the fortune tellers.

Unlike the western one, the Chinese lunar calendar is based on cycles of the moon instead of the sun. In the western calendar, time is linear; in the Chinese one, cyclical. 12 zodiac animal signs form the 12-year rotating cycle of the Chinese lunar calendar, the Year of the Ram is eighth in the cycle, following the Year of the Horse. Deeply rooted in Chinese traditions but woven with a modern touch, Hong Kong is a unique and enchanting embodiment of East and West, where linear and cyclical time co-exist.

Chinese New Year is without doubt the biggest and most-adored festival of the lunar calendar, with 15 days packed full of age-old traditions, cultural festivities and family celebrations. Starting on the first day of the new year, locals flock to aromatic temples to pray for good fortune, fill themselves with auspicious foods and string up shock-red lanterns. The Night Parade, flower markets, breath-taking pyrotechnics and horse races add to the unique atmosphere. Also called the Spring Festival, Chinese New Year marks the dawn of the new season, similar to carnival in western countries. People in Hong Kong enjoy three days of public holiday with every office and bank closed – a rather unusual occasion in China's ever-bustling global financial centre.

With regard to the international financial markets, the recently opened Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect, which links the Mainland Securities Market with the rest of the financial world, reflects one of the advantages of the "one country, two systems" principle. Building on this and a number of other benefits, Ms Betty Ho, Director Hong Kong Economic and Trade Affairs (Central and Eastern Europe), hopes to further intensify Hong Kong-European relations after the festivities and strengthen Hong Kong's position as the natural bridge between Mainland China and the rest of the world: "We are committed to maintaining Hong Kong's fundamental strengths, including the rule of law, free flow of capital and

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information, a business-friendly environment, and a low and simple tax regime.”

To celebrate the arrival of the Year of the Ram with friends of Hong Kong, HKETO Berlin is hosting 11 Chinese New Year receptions in central and eastern Europe, namely Prague (21 January), Vienna (11 February), Bratislava (12 February), Ljubljana (13 February), Warsaw (17 February), Budapest (18 February), Berlin (24 February), Munich (25 February), Frankfurt (26 February), Zurich (9 March) and Hamburg (10 March).

About Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin

HKETO Berlin is the official Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government representative in commercial relations and other economic and trade matters in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland.

Photo captions:

1. Cultural performance at HKETO Berlin’s Chinese New Year Reception in Prague on 21 January
2. Lunar New Year fireworks at Hong Kong’s Victoria Harbour

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