

SCED's speech at opening reception of Hyogo Business and Tourism Centre

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Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, at the opening reception of the Hyogo Business and Tourism Centre today (November 14):

Your Excellency Governor Ido, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to join you all today for the opening of the Hyogo Business and Tourism Centre in Hong Kong. We are delighted to have you here in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong and Japan have a long history of friendship, and strong trade and investment links. Our bilateral trade has been growing steadily and moved to new heights in 2011 with a 4 per cent increase compared with a year ago, passing the HK\$450 billion mark. Besides, as at June this year, Japan was the second largest source of regional operations in Hong Kong, with 675 regional headquarters or regional offices. The re-opening of the Hyogo Business and Tourism Centre reinforces the Japanese community's confidence in Hong Kong's unique advantages as a preferred base in Asia.

Our close ties extend beyond the realms of trade and investment. This is evidenced by the enormous contribution of our local Japanese community to Hong Kong's social vibrancy and cultural diversity. Take food as an example. Hong Kong is known as a food paradise. Here you can find the best cuisine from different parts of the world, including Kobe beef. With a discerning palate, we know what is best. That is why Hong Kong remains the top destination for Japanese food exports. This is also why there are over 1,300 Japanese restaurants in town.

Tourism is also a key sector for both of our economies. Last year, we welcomed more than 1.3 million Japanese visitors, while over 365,000 Hong Kong people travelled to Japan, including Hyogo, also known as "Japan in Miniature" due to its unique scenery, cultures, and a wide variety of entertainment for all the family. The tight economic as well as cultural bond between Hong Kong and Japan has set out a solid foundation for even closer co-operation between two places.

Ladies and gentlemen, it only remains for me to wish the Hyogo Business and Tourism Centre a successful and prosperous future in Hong Kong. Thank you.

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