

Speech by Secretary for Justice at reception of 58th anniversary of the Republic of India (English only)

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Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, SC, at the Reception on the Occasion of 58th Anniversary of the Republic of India today (January 28):

Honourable Consul General [Mr L. D. Ralte], Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I have the honour to extend to you, Honourable Consul General and the people of the Republic of India our warmest congratulations on the 58th anniversary of India's Republic Day.

China and India are both ancient civilisations, and the two peoples have enjoyed friendly exchanges for over 2000 years. Today, China and India are both growing at a phenomenal pace. They are the twin growth engines of the world in the years to come. There is no better way to enhance the growth potential of the two economic giants than fostering closer cooperation.

The history of the Indian community in Hong Kong dated back to 1840s. As the Honourable Consul General has mentioned, the Star Ferry Company was started by an Indian merchant [Mr Dorabji Naorojee] who arrived in Hong Kong in 1852. Another merchant, Sir H N Mody, was the driving force behind the establishment of the University of Hong Kong. And the Ruttonjee Hospital was set up by Mr Dhun Ruttonjee as the territory's anti-tuberculosis sanatorium. And last, but certainly not the least, members of the Indian community have made valuable contributions to Hong Kong's legislature, civil service, legal, business, medical and academic fields.

The cordial relationship between Hong Kong and India has stood the test of time, and is going from strength to strength. The territory is now home to a 35,000-strong Indian community. We have about 1,500 firms operated by Indian businessmen. Their businesses range from information technology, banking, logistics and aviation to catering. The recent agreement between Hong Kong and India to further liberalise the air services between the two places will not only bring benefit to the travelling public, but will also facilitate further cooperation in trade, economic and investment sectors.

Turning to the social and cultural arenas, Indian films and performances have featured in the Hong Kong International Film Festival and various cultural programmes from time to time. There has also been an active exchange of scholars and delegations between the two places.

As you celebrate your Republic Day, may I sincerely wish the people of the Republic of India prosperity and happiness, and that the friendship between the peoples of the Republic of India and Hong Kong would be even closer. I also wish you all a healthy and fruitful Year of the Rat!

May I now propose a toast "To the People of the Republic of India".

Ends/Monday, January 28, 2008