

Welcoming Speech

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Mr. MacClancy, Mr. Leavey, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen ...
Good Morning!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Hong Kong and the e-Post Asia Seminar. Let me start the seminar by asking you a few questions.

- ◆ How many of you have chatted with your overseas business partners over the Internet several times a week, but have not yet spoken to your next door neighbor in the past 12 months?
- ◆ How many of you are not staying in touch with your friends because they are not online?
- ◆ How many of you send e-mail to a colleague who sits next to you?
- ◆ How many jokes you have heard in the past year that are delivered through e-mail instead of word of mouth?
- ◆ For those of you coming from overseas, how many of you are duty-bound to check your office e-mail everyday while operating here in Hong Kong?

Obviously I cannot check your answers to the questions I just posed. But my guess is that they should provide a clear indication on what is happening around us. The Information Age has commenced and will continue to revolutionize the process of information exchange and the ways individuals and businesses interact and communicate with each other. Governments and businesses around the world are striving to embrace the challenge to, among other reasons, maintain or enhance their competitiveness in the global marketplace.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has been at the forefront in the adoption of information technology. Our Chief Executive, Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, set out his vision of turning Hong Kong into a leading digital city in his 1997 Policy Address.

To realize that vision, the Hong Kong Government in 1998 formulated a comprehensive IT strategy known as the "Digital 21 IT Strategy" setting out the initiatives, targets and milestones on how the government, businesses, industry and academia could join hands

and co-operate to make IT a core competency in Hong Kong and help Hong Kong develop into the pre-eminent e-commerce hub for the Asia Pacific region.

A key component in implementing the "Digital 21 IT Strategy" is the provision of a secure environment for individuals and businesses in Hong Kong to conduct electronic transactions.

In this regard, Hongkong Post has played an important role by having built a local public key infrastructure (PKI) and established the first public Certification Authority (CA) in Hong Kong in January last year. My colleague, Mr. Kingsley Li, will further elaborate on our Certification Authority service in the following session this morning.

I just want to emphasize here that the proliferation of the Internet has completely transformed the way postal businesses operate around the world. With the no-boundary nature of electronic transactions, it would require considerable international cooperation among postal operators to expand their traditional role as a reliable, trusted facilitator for commerce and communications to cover both the physical and virtual worlds.

Today, many postal operators are offering more than conventional mail service. Leveraging on their well-earned reputation as a service provider in the communication and distribution industries, and their extensive delivery and retail network, they also offer hybrid mail service, logistics service, certification authority service, and secure e-mail service, as well as other electronic services. In fact, the combination of electronic and physical services enables the post to provide a reliable, trusted communications and delivery framework that facilitates companies and individuals to enjoy all the benefits of traditional postal services while participating in an emerging new world of electronic services with confidence and great convenience.

Looking positively ahead, innovation and technology are the main driving forces of economic growth and they will bring about new possibilities and opportunities, open up new markets and help reduce costs. As postal operators, we need to redefine our relevance to the business and consumer communities, and use our strengths from the traditional economy in the new network economy.

I am sure our distinguished speakers today will give you more insights in this area. May I wish you an enjoyable and fruitful "e-Post Asia Seminar."

Thank you.