



Keeping Hong Kong corruption-free

Twenty-six years after its establishment, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) continues to play a critical role in maintaining a clean government, the rule of law, and a level playing field for business in Hong Kong. Besides speaking to law enforcement agents at the Asian Organized Crime Conference in San Francisco, Mr. Tony Kwok, Deputy commissioner & Head of Operations, ICAC shared with the business community, government officials, academics and the media the secrets of ICAC's success in turning Hong Kong from a city plagued by corruption in the 1960s & early 70s to one of the least corrupt places on earth today at two business luncheons held in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Although there was public skepticism, both in Hong Kong and overseas, as to whether the ICAC could maintain its independence and effectiveness in the run-up to 1997 and beyond, the Commission's achievements and its proactive approach in detecting corruption and publicizing its successful investigative efforts in the past three years have shown that the skeptics were again wrong. Survey results by agencies, such as the Political and Risk Consultancy Limited and Transparency International, confirm that Hong Kong remains one of the world's cleanest places to do business. Opinion survey commissioned by the ICAC continues to report that the Commission has the support of 99% of the population in Hong Kong.



Deputy Commissioner and Head of Operations, Mr. Tony Kwok, shared the secrets of ICAC's success at a luncheon in San Francisco on April 26, 2000.

For companies already operating in Hong Kong or considering Hong Kong as an investment destination, the ICAC can assist them in establishing procedures and practices that would make their businesses less susceptible to the threat of corruption. The Hong Kong Ethics Development Center, formed by the joint efforts of the ICAC and various Chambers of Commerce in Hong Kong, can help companies develop their own code of ethics, which over 70% of all large companies in Hong Kong already have. The Corruption Prevention Department of the ICAC provides corruption prevention

advice on companies' systems and procedures, while the Commission's Community Relations Department is ready to send teams of officers to talk to companies' staff about ethics and corruption laws. Companies can also approach the Commission's 24-hour Report Center for assistance if they have any reasons to suspect fraud or corruption in their own operations or in their business dealings with others. Best of all, these services are all provided free of charge.

A trial judge, in his sentence of a prominent banker accused in a major corruption/bank fraud case - the Carrigan case - that had taken the ICAC 15 years to conclude, said, "The ICAC's dogged persistence in this investigation demonstrates to the people of Hong Kong and indeed the world that corruption both in the private and public sectors would be rooted out when it is discovered and at whatever cost to the society. It is fortunate for Hong Kong to have the ICAC." Few people in Hong Kong would dispute that.