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For Immediate Release

The 50th anniversary of the metal box that changed Hong Kong

Hong Kong, 26 July 2019 — Next week (Tuesday 30 July) marks the 50th anniversary of Hong Kong's container trade which transformed the economy and landscape of the city.

When the *SS San Juan* berthed at Ocean Terminal in Kowloon on the evening of July 30th, 1969, it was the first scheduled service for a container ship in Hong Kong. It marked the start of container shipping in Hong Kong and it catalysed an explosion in Hong Kong's international trade.

These modular metal boxes revolutionised the way cargo was shipped. They shortened turnaround time, reduced shipping costs and meant that goods no longer went from port to port but from factory to customer. This new form of maritime trade allowed Hong Kong to expand to become the biggest port in the world and today, its port still handles more container cargo than Rotterdam and New York combined.

Roughly 90% of dry, non-bulk manufactured goods are shipped in ocean containers, from food, drinks, clothes and essential pharmaceuticals to machine parts, electronic goods, toys, tires, and furniture. If you look around any flat, hotel, restaurant, shop, school or office in Hong Kong, the chances are that 90% of what you can see will have made at least some of its way there, in a container.

On Tuesday 30th July 2019, to mark the impact and contribution of container shipping on its 50th anniversary in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Maritime Museum will offer complimentary heritage postcards (collectors' version), featuring historic views of the port in the 1960s, for the **first 50 visitors** to the Museum on the day (while stock lasts).

A number of key shipping industry leaders and experts have remarked on the anniversary and the impact of container shipping on the city:

"Maritime activity has always defined Hong Kong and the advent of container shipping 50 years ago is a major landmark which shaped the modern city and allowed Hong Kong and China to be connected to an increasing globalized world. The commercial port gradually moved out of Victoria Harbour to a purpose-built facility to the west at Kwai Chung, changing the local landscape," says Richard Wesley, Museum Director of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum.

"This anniversary marks a major milestone in the growth of the city's economy which is based on trade and logistics. In addition to a world-class airport and road systems to support people flow, the smooth flow of goods is equally important. Hong Kong people are rightly proud of their airport but sometimes forget that 90% of all our cargo arrives by sea and less than 5% by air- without a successful container port the price of some local goods could increase 2-3 times. As a regional economic hub, the container port plays a vital role in serving businesses in Hong Kong and in the region. Our research at Hang Seng University shows that the port and logistics component contributed HK\$ 75 billion of value to the Hong Kong economy, representing 3.4% of its GDP and supporting 9,500 companies and 300,000 direct and indirect jobs which is 7.5% of the Hong Kong's

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employment total,” says Dr Collin Wong Wai-hung, Associate Professor of Department of Supply Chain and Information Management, Hang Seng University of Hong Kong.

“The decision to cater to this new system for cargo shipment made in the late ‘60s propelled Hong Kong from a quaint Fragrant Harbour into the world’s leading port in terms of volume. The following 50 years saw Hong Kong become one of the greatest success-stories the world has known. Shipping became one of the three pillars of Hong Kong’s booming economy, supplying 25% of the local population with jobs, and stocking Hong Kong’s store shelves with goods from every corner of the earth. Container shipping opened up the door for the world to explore the goods and resources of China, the world’s most populous (but at the time, mysterious) economy.” Says Roberto Giannetta, Executive Director of the Hong Kong Liner Shipping Association which represents approximately 90% of the containerized liner industry in Hong Kong.

Please click [here](#) to download the images



Image 1: First Scheduled Container Ship offloading cargo 50 years ago at Tsim Sha Tsui
Photo credits: Mr Alan Lee Goldstein



Image 2: Ships in the stream were uploaded with barges and lighters until containerization arrived in Hong Kong in 1969

Photo credits: Mr Alan Lee Goldstein

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Image 3: Director of Hong Kong Maritime Museum, Mr Richard Wesley, inside the Swire Gallery – *Making of a Modern Port*

Visitors' Information

Opening hours:	Monday – Friday from 09:30 – 17:30 Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays from 10:00 – 19:00 No tickets will be available 30 minutes before closing
Venue:	Hong Kong Maritime Museum, Central Pier No. 8, Hong Kong
Enquiries:	(852) 3713 2500
Website:	www.hkmaritimemuseum.org
Instagram:	@hongkongmaritimemuseum
Facebook:	HKMaritimeMuseum
Ticketing:	Available at reception. HKD30 for adult HKD15 for seniors / children (aged under 18) / students (aged above 18) and disabled (accompanied by a carer) Discounts are available for group visits of 20 or more.

About Hong Kong Maritime Museum

The Hong Kong Maritime Museum (HKMM) was founded by members of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association committed to helping the Hong Kong community and visitors to Hong Kong explore the city's unique maritime heritage. HKMM was named as a TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Top 10 Museum in China in 2017, and is an independent, non-profit registered charity supported by the shipping industry, the business community, private individuals and the Hong Kong SAR Government. HKMM is a cultural institution that tells the story of trade and maritime history in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta, and the vital roles ships and the sea play in our past, present and future.

The Museum opened its door to the public at Murray House in Stanley in 2005 and relocated to Central Pier No. 8 in the heart of the Central Harbour Waterfront in 2013. Today the Museum displays about 1,000 objects in 15 galleries, attracting about 130,000 visitors annually. HKMM also houses various event spaces, resource centre, a roof-top social enterprise café, and gift shop that contribute to visitors' experiences. HKMM engages with the community of Hong Kong by actively engaging in education and public programming offered to schools, adults, community groups and families. For more information, please visit www.hkmaritimemuseum.org.

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