

# RISK FACTORS

The Group's businesses, financial conditions, results of operations or growth prospects may be affected by risks and uncertainties pertaining to the Group's businesses. The factors set out below are those that the Group believes could result in the Group's businesses, financial conditions, results of operations or growth prospects differing materially from expected or historical results. These factors are by no means exhaustive or comprehensive, and there may be other risks in addition to those shown below which are not known to the Group or which may not be material now but could turn out to be material in the future. In addition, this Annual Report does not constitute a recommendation or advice for you to invest in the shares of the Company and investors are advised to make their own judgment or consult their own investment advisors before making any investment in the shares of the Company.

## GLOBAL FINANCIAL AND CREDIT CRISIS

The global markets were severely hit by the financial and credit crisis triggered in 2008 by the U.S. subprime mortgage predicament, and the magnitude and indiscriminating nature of the adverse fallout across various countries and economic sectors was unprecedented. The negative repercussions of a tight global credit market had resulted in increased stock market volatility, worsening unemployment, and a contraction of economic activities in emerging markets as well as major developed economies. Despite the recovery in the various global markets in the latter half of 2009, the economic fundamental data has yet to revive. The debt crisis in Dubai that occurred in late 2009 reflected the continuing market risks associated with the tight global credit market. The Group is a diversified infrastructure investment company with businesses in Hong Kong, the Mainland, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada and the Philippines. Any continuing adverse economic conditions in those countries and places in which the Group operates may therefore impact on the Group's financial position or potential income, asset value and liabilities.

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND INTEREST RATES

The industries in which the Group operates are affected by the economic conditions of the various places where the Group's investments or operations are located, the population growth of these places, mark to market value of securities investments, the currency environment and interest rates cycles. There can be no assurance that the combination of the above factors the Group experiences in the future will not adversely affect its financial conditions or results of operations.

In particular, income from finance and treasury operations is dependent upon the capital market, interest rate and currency environment, and the worldwide economic and market conditions, and therefore there can be no assurance that changes in these conditions will not adversely affect the Group's financial conditions or results of operations. The volatilities in the financial markets may also adversely affect the income to be derived by the Group from its finance and treasury activities.

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### INFRASTRUCTURE MARKET

Some of the investments owned by the Group (for example, gas and electricity) are subject to regulatory pricing and strict adherence must be made to the licence requirements, codes and guidelines established by the relevant regulatory authorities from time to time. Failure to comply with these licence requirements, codes or guidelines may lead to penalties, or, in extreme circumstances, amendment, suspension or cancellation of the relevant licences by the authorities.

The distribution networks of the Group's utilities investments are also exposed to supply interruptions. If a severe storm, fire, sabotage, terrorist attack or other unplanned event interrupts service, the loss of cash flow resulting from the interruption and the cost of recovery from network damage could be considerable and potentially cause poor customer perception and may also lead to claims and litigations. Moreover, some losses from events such as terrorist attacks may not be recoverable. Increases in the number or duration of supply interruptions could result in material increases in the costs associated with the operation of the distribution networks, which could have a material adverse effect on the businesses, financial conditions and results of operations of the Group.

### CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

A significant amount of capital expenditure is required for the Group to acquire new investments and to maintain the assets of its existing businesses. While the relevant asset companies have their own asset management plans, there is a risk that due to unforeseen events, capital expenditure required for the replacement of assets could exceed budgeted amounts and hence affecting the businesses, financial conditions and results of operations of the Group.

### CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS

The results of the Group is recorded in Hong Kong dollars but its various subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures may receive revenue and incur expenses in other currencies. Any currency fluctuations on translation of the accounts of these subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures and also on the repatriation of earnings, equity investments and loans may therefore impact on the Group's performance. Although currency exposures have been managed by the Group, a depreciation or fluctuation of the currencies in which the Group conducts operations relative to the Hong Kong dollar could adversely affect the Group's financial conditions or results of operations.

### STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Some of the businesses of the Group are conducted through non wholly-owned subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures in which the Group shares control (in whole or in part) and strategic alliances had been formed by the Group with other strategic or business partners. There can be no assurance that any of these strategic or business partners will continue their relationships with the Group in the future or that the Group will be able to pursue its stated strategies with respect to its non wholly-owned subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures and the markets in which they operate. Furthermore, the joint venture partners may (a) have economic or business interests or goals that are inconsistent with those of the Group; (b) take actions contrary to the Group's policies or objectives; (c) undergo a change of control; (d) experience financial and other difficulties; or (e) be unable or unwilling to fulfil their obligations under the joint ventures, which may affect the Group's financial conditions or results of operations.

## MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

The Company has undertaken mergers and acquisitions activities in the past and may continue to do so if there are appropriate acquisition opportunities in the market. Although due diligence and detailed analysis are conducted before these activities are being undertaken, there can be no assurance that these can fully expose all hidden problems, potential liabilities and unresolved disputes that the target company may have. In addition, valuations and analyses on the target company conducted by the Company and by professionals alike are based on numerous assumptions, and there can be no assurance that those assumptions are correct or appropriate or that they will receive universal recognition. Relevant facts and circumstances used in the analyses could have changed over time, and new facts and circumstances may come to light as to render the previous assumptions and the valuations and analyses based thereon obsolete. Some of these mergers and acquisitions activities are subject to regulatory approvals in overseas countries and there can be no assurance that such approvals will be obtained, and even if granted, that there will be no burdensome conditions attached to such approvals. The Company may not necessarily be able to successfully integrate the target business into the Group and may not be able to derive any synergy from the acquisition, leading to increase in costs, time and resources. For merger and acquisitions activities undertaken in overseas countries, the Company may also be exposed to different and changing political, social, legal and regulatory requirements at the local, national and international level. The Company may also need to face different cultural issues when dealing with local employees, customers, governmental authorities and pressure groups.

## IMPACT OF LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS

The local business risks in different countries and cities in which the Group operates could have a material impact on the financial conditions, results of operations and growth prospects of the businesses in the relevant market. The Group has investments in different countries and cities around the world and the Group is, and may increasingly become, exposed to different and changing political, social, legal, tax, regulatory and environmental requirements at the local, national or international level. Also, new policies or measures by governments, whether fiscal, tax, regulatory, environmental or other competitive changes, may lead to an increase in additional or unplanned capital expenditure, pose a risk to the overall investment return of the Group's businesses and may delay or prevent the commercial operation of a business with resulting loss of revenue and profit.

## IMPACT OF NEW ACCOUNTING STANDARDS

The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants ("HKICPA") has from time to time issued a number of new and revised Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standards ("HKFRS"). HKICPA may in the future issue new and revised standards and interpretations. In addition, interpretations on the application of the HKFRS will continue to develop. These factors may require the Group to adopt new accounting policies. The adoption of new accounting policies or new HKFRS might or could have a significant impact on the Group's financial position or results of operations.

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### OUTBREAK OF HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS DISEASE

In 2003, there was an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (“SARS”) in Hong Kong, the Mainland and other places. The SARS outbreak had a significant adverse impact on the economies of the affected areas. In 2009, the spread of Influenza A H1N1 also affected many areas of the world. There can be no assurance that the spread of Influenza A H1N1 will not continue and there will not be another significant global outbreak of a severe communicable disease such as avian influenza or SARS. If such an outbreak were to occur, it may have a material adverse impact on the operations of the Group and its results of operations may suffer.

### THE GROUP’S FINANCIAL CONDITIONS OR RESULTS OF OPERATIONS ARE AFFECTED BY THOSE OF THE HK ELECTRIC GROUP

The Group owns approximately 38.87 per cent of the HK Electric Group which operates in Hong Kong and has investments in different countries and places. Hence the financial conditions and results of operations of the HK Electric Group may be affected by the local market conditions and the economy of Hong Kong as well as the places where its investments are located. The Group’s financial conditions and results of operations are materially affected by the financial conditions and results of operations of the HK Electric Group. In addition, the core businesses of the HK Electric Group are different from those of the Group, and as a result, the Group is indirectly exposed to the risks the HK Electric Group is facing.

Besides, the operations of the HK Electric Group are subject to a scheme of control (“SCA”) agreed with the Hong Kong Government which provides for a permitted level of earnings based principally on a return on their capital investment in electricity generation, transmission and distribution assets. The scheme of control was renewed for a term of ten years commencing 1st January, 2009 with an option for the Government to extend the new SCA for a further term of five years. There can be no assurance that changes to or abolition of the scheme of control in the future will not adversely affect the HK Electric Group’s (and hence the Group’s) financial conditions and results of operations.

### PAST PERFORMANCE AND FORWARD LOOKING STATEMENTS

The performance and the results of operations of the Group during the past years as contained in this Annual Report are historical in nature and past performance can be no guarantee of future results of the Group. This Annual Report may contain forward-looking statements and opinions that involve risks and uncertainties. Actual results may differ materially from expectations discussed in such forward-looking statements and opinions. Neither the Group nor the Directors, employees or agents of the Group assume (a) any obligation to correct or update the forward-looking statements or opinions contained in this Annual Report; and (b) any liability in the event that any of the forward-looking statements or opinions does not materialise or turns out to be incorrect.