

The Board is responsible for maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the Group's system of internal controls. The internal controls are designed to meet the Group's particular needs and to minimize the risks to which the Group is exposed, and are designed to manage rather than eliminate the risks to achieve business objective and can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance against misstatements or losses. The Group's internal control framework covers (i) the setting of objectives, budgets and targets; (ii) the establishment of regular reporting of financial information, in particular, the tracking of deviations between actual performances and budgets/targets; (iii) the delegation of authority; and (iv) the establishment of clear lines of accountability.

Strategies and objectives of the Group as a whole are determined by the Board. Budgets are prepared annually and financial projections of the Group over a period of the next eight years are also prepared and reviewed by the Board. In implementing these strategies and achieving these objectives, each Executive Director has specific responsibilities for monitoring the conduct and operations of individual business units within the Group. This includes the review and approval of business strategies and plans, the setting of business-related performance targets as well as the design and implementation of internal controls.

Monthly financial information is provided to the Executive Directors. Variance analysis between actual performances and targets are prepared and documented in the Board paper, for discussions at Board Meetings with explanations noted for any material variances and deviations between actual performances and budgets/targets. This helps the Board and the Group's management to monitor the Group's business operations and to plan on a prudent and timely basis. Other regular and ad hoc reports will also be prepared for the Board and its various committees, to ensure that the Directors are supplied with all the requested information in a timely and appropriate manner.

To allow for delegation of authority as well as to enhance segregation of duties and accountability, a clear organizational structure exists which details different levels of authority and control responsibilities within each business unit of the Group. Certain specific matters are reserved for the Board's decision and are not delegated. These include, amongst others, the approval of annual and interim results, annual budgets, capital structure, declaration of dividends, material acquisitions, disposals and capital expenditure, Board structure and its composition and succession.

In order to better review and evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the Group's existing system of internal controls, an internal self-assessment and certification process was formulated during the financial year ended 31 December 2008. Under this process, each division of the Group was requested to assess the effectiveness of their fundamental operating controls over all aspects of their operations, financial controls, risk management controls and contingency measures. Each division of the Group then submitted to the Audit Committee a written report on the adequacy and effectiveness of its internal controls, which were discussed at the Audit Committee Meeting of 7 August 2008.

In addition to the above, the Board also monitors its internal controls through a programme of internal audits. The internal audit team reviews the major operational, financial and risk management controls of the Group on a continuing basis, and aims to cover all major operations of the Group on a rotational basis. The scope of review and the audit programme of the internal audit team, which are formulated based on a risk assessment approach and focuses on areas with relatively higher perceived risks, are approved by the Audit Committee at the end of the preceding financial year in conjunction with the Company's senior management.

The internal audit function reports directly to the Audit Committee. Accordingly, regular internal audit reports are circulated to the Audit Committee members, the Chief Financial Officer and the external auditor for their review in accordance with the approved internal audit programme.

With the amendments to the Code under the Listing Rules with effect from 1 January 2009, the Audit Committee will conduct an annual review of the adequacy of resources, qualifications and experience of staff of the Group's accounting and financial reporting function and their training programmes and budget and will inform the Board the results of such review accordingly.