

新聞稿 PRESS RELEASE

TO NEWS EDITOR
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 19, 1993

EMINENT MATHEMATICIAN RETURNS TO TEACH AT ALMA MATER

World-renowned mathematician and Fields Medallist, Prof. Yau Shing-tung, has accepted a professorial appointment at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Prof. Yau has arrived last week to take up his appointment.

Prof. Yau, 44, was born in Guangdong and attended the Pui Ching Middle School and Chung Chi College of CUHK before furthering his studies at the University of California at Berkeley in 1969. He completed his doctorate in just two years. Joining Stanford University in 1973, he quickly rose through the rank to become full professor in 1978 at the age of 29. He has been professor at the Harvard University since 1987.

His academic achievements have been numerous and extraordinary. He became well-known in 1978 when he put forward an ingenious solution to the Calabi's Conjecture which had baffled leading mathematicians for 25 years.

Prof. Yau's contributions have brought him many accolades. He was elected California Scientist of the Year in 1979, and received an honorary degree from CUHK in 1980. The next year, he was awarded the much-coveted Veblen Prize by the American Mathematical Society. In 1982, he became the first Chinese to win the prestigious Fields Medal, which is regarded as the equivalent to the Nobel Prize in the mathematical field.

In taking up the appointment, Prof. Yau will stay in Chinese University for three months every year to teach and oversee research.

Despite having stayed overseas for more than 20 years, Prof. Yau said he always felt at home in Hong Kong and therefore wished to contribute in strengthening the mathematical research in the territory.

"If Hong Kong wants to go hi-tech, the universities here must do more basic scientific research. Hong Kong is famous for its zest for making money. I think it's time that we turn our attention to basic research which is in the best interest of Hong Kong," he said.

Mathematics is the basic foundation for any kind of scientific research, Prof. Yau explained. From the design of high resolution television, cash withdrawal system of the banks, the control system for the taking off and landing of aeroplanes to the calculation of winning bets at the racetrack — all these have to rely on mathematical calculations.

Prof. Yau went to Beijing on Sunday (May 16) with his teacher Prof. Chern Shing-shen, former professor of University of California at Berkeley, for a week-long visit to explore the possibility of holding the International Congress of Mathematicians in Beijing in 1998 or 2004.

"It will be a great honour to be able to host such an important meeting. I hope the business sector will put up part of the expenses," he said.

Held every four years, the Congress gathers leading mathematicians from around the world to present their latest findings. The next meeting will be held in 1994 in Zurich, Switzerland.

Since the late 19th century, the Congress had been held in either Europe or America. Asia first hosted the meeting when delegates gathered at Kyoto, Japan three years ago -- signifying the recognition of the importance of the Asian contribution.

"I think Asia is going to play a greater part in mathematical research in the years to come, and Hong Kong will assume a key role in this respect," he said.

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For press enquiries, please contact Mrs. Shirley Kwok of the Chinese University's Information Office at 609-7294.

Note to Editor:

A photo of Prof. Yau will be available at the G.I.S. press box in the afternoon.