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新聞稿 PRESS RELEASE

The Vice-Chancellor of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Professor Charles K Kao, will be receiving two important awards later this month - the 1989 Faraday Medal awarded by the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) in UK and the International Prize for New Materials awarded by the American Physical Society.

The prestigious Faraday Medal was set up by IEE in 1922 to recognize notable scientific and industrial achievement in electrical engineering or conspicuous service rendered to the advancement of electrical science. It is awarded annually without restriction as regards nationality, country of residence or membership of the Institution. Over the last decade, the Medal has gone to eminent scientists for their contributions in fields ranging from computer programming to semiconductor integrated circuits, micro-waves, radio-wave propagation and radar systems. Awardees over the years include Professor Brian D Josephson, Nobel Laureate who is famous for his elucidation of the superconducting phenomenon now known as the Josephson Effect; and Professor Maurice V Wilkes, Fellow of the Royal Society, who is well known for his fundamental contributions in the field of computer programming and computer system reliability.

The award will be presented to Professor Kao on March 16 in London and he will be the first person of Chinese origin to have received the Faraday Medal, which is to recognize his continuing outstanding work on optical communication including early work on establishing the feasibility of optical fibre communication systems and defining the parameters involved.

On March 22, Professor Kao will be receiving yet another prize together with Dr J B MacChesney of ATT Bell Labs and Dr R D Maurer of Corning Glass Works, this time from the American Physical Society. They were the joint recipients of the Morey Award given by the American Ceramic Society in 1976 for their contributions to glass sciences. Together they will now be awarded the 1989 International Prize for New Materials for their contributions to the materials research and development that resulted in practical low loss optical fibres, one of the cornerstones of optical communications technology.

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Professor Kao is famed for his pioneering work on optical fibres. His subsequent research has helped reshape the whole of the world's telecommunications network and optical fibres now dominate all new telecommunications cable installation. Incidentally Hong Kong boasts the highest density of such cables beneath its ground and many are waiting anxiously for the result of the recent bid for cable television to come out and for an additional network to be installed for the purpose. It will make Hong Kong the most advanced communication city of the world. Professor Kao's outstanding achievements have already earned him numerous top international awards, including the L M Ericsson International Prize presented by His Majesty King Carl Gustav of Sweden, the IEEE Alexander Graham Bell Medal, the prestigious Eleventh Marconi International Fellowship, and Membership of the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Science.

In 1987 Professor Kao became the Vice-Chancellor of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. One of his first projects has been the formation of a new faculty of engineering in the University. The objective is to design a broad based engineering programme to train a new breed of engineers who can adapt to rapid changes in modern industry and to produce experts who can consult for the local community. With the introduction of engineering programmes The Chinese University of Hong Kong becomes a truly all-discipline University covering Arts, Social Science, Science, Engineering, Medicine and Business Administration. All courses are given in a bilingual environment. The University is endeavouring to link itself closely with all facets of development in Hong Kong.

March 14, 1989