

For Immediate Release

This partnership facilitates joint business expansion in China.

“la Caixa” and The Bank of East Asia Sign Business Alliance Agreement

- **The agreement establishes a framework for cooperation between the two financial institutions, following Criteria CaixaCorp’s share purchase amounting to a 4.15% stake in The Bank of East Asia, Ltd. Criteria CaixaCorp is controlled by “la Caixa” and owns the largest portfolio of investee companies in Spain.**
- **This move is part of “la Caixa’s” international expansion strategy and its interest in China, where it opened a representative office last year to enhance the services it provides to the Spanish business community in Southeast Asia.**

Hong Kong, 20th November, 2007 – The Chief Executive Officer of “la Caixa”, Juan María Nin, and Chairman & Chief Executive of The Bank of East Asia, Ltd. (“BEA”), Dr. David K.P. Li, today have signed a business alliance agreement. The agreement sets out a framework for cooperation between the two companies in China and Hong Kong, and signifies the mutual interest of both financial institutions in expanding their business potential in the region.

By entering into this agreement, “la Caixa” will be able to meet various financial needs of its customers in China and Hong Kong. Through the extensive branch network of BEA in China and Hong Kong, “la Caixa” customers can enjoy a comprehensive range of financial services, including account opening, settlement, trade finance, financing in Renminbi and in other foreign currencies.

On the other hand, “la Caixa” will support BEA’s customers in exploring opportunities and developing their businesses in Spain. The collaboration of both financial institutions will be extended to information exchange on local financial situations.

Commenting on the agreement, Dr. David K.P. Li, said, “We are very pleased to announce BEA’s cooperative relationship with “la Caixa”. “la Caixa” and BEA have been working together for a number of years and I believe that today’s announcement of our formal collaboration will further enhance the competitive position of both banks, and our value to our clients.”

According to Juan María Nin, “la Caixa” and its customers will benefit from BEA’s prestige and strengths as the largest independent local bank in Hong Kong and one of largest foreign banks in China in terms of branch coverage. This cooperation perfectly suits the values and strategies of both financial institutions, which are leaders in retail banking, and enables them to offer the best and most comprehensive range of financial services to their customers in Europe and Asia.”

About The Bank of East Asia

Incorporated in Hong Kong in 1918, BEA is dedicated to providing comprehensive retail and commercial banking services to its customers in Hong Kong, Greater China, and overseas. BEA is the largest independent local bank in Hong Kong, with total consolidated assets of HK\$343.2 billion (USD43.9 billion) as of 30th June, 2007. The Bank is listed on the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong and is one of the constituent stocks of the Hang Seng Index.

BEA currently operates more than 200 outlets worldwide, including over 130 branches and SupremeGold Centres in Hong Kong, 50 outlets in Greater China, and an extensive international network covering the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the British Virgin Islands, and Southeast Asia. For more information on BEA, please visit any BEA branch or the Bank’s homepage at www.hkbea.com.

About “la Caixa”

“la Caixa” was founded in 1904 and is the first savings bank in Europe and the third financial institution in Spain. It has assets worth €239.61Bn, 10.4 million customers, a staff of 24,000 employees and the largest sales network in Spain’s financial sector (5,282 branches and over 7,800 automatic cash points).

“la Caixa”, chaired by Isidro Fainé, recorded a net profit of €3.01Bn in 2006 while its net attributable income for the third quarter of 2007 was €1.82Bn. “la Caixa” controls Criteria CaixaCorp, which owns the largest portfolio of investee companies in Spain and a 4.15% stake in BEA. It was quoted on the Stock Exchange for the first time on 10th October, 2007.

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