

1989 SINGAPORE MASTER TAX GUIDE. By CCH TAX EDITORS. [Singapore: CCH Asia Ltd. 1989. xlvii + 784 pp. Softcover: S\$67]

ACCORDING to the foreword to the book, this book is written with the primary aim of assisting taxpayers understand their tax liabilities and entitlements. This aim of the editors is rather modest considering that accountants and lawyers alike have always found previous editions of this book a very useful guide to the current position with regards to tax matters.

This book enjoys a traditional following unsurpassed by any other in this area for the up-to-date information it provides in a comprehensive manner. The present edition is edited by the CCH Tax Editors instead of Mr Brij Soin, whose name has since become synonymous with the Master Tax Guide.

There are a few changes with regards to the contents of the book. One of these is the inclusion of the highlights of 1987/1988 tax changes – this section contains the changes in tax law as a result not only of legislative changes but also changes due to court or tribunal decisions. These changes are listed logically under separate headings with a brief description of each change and with a cross reference to the paragraph in the explanatory text in which the full explanation of this change can be located.

Another new feature is the chapter on the introduction to Singapore Income Tax. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the law of income taxation in Singapore and contains a discussion of some basic concepts in income tax law. This is of particular interest to persons who have no knowledge of income tax law or of the system of taxation in Singapore, including the legislative framework, administration and procedure, and jurisdiction of the system of income taxation in Singapore. Here again, the same system of cross-referencing is employed so that the reader may refer, if he so wishes, to the fuller text on the particular area.

There is also a new section on the various forms prescribed under different tax legislation. This section contains samples of these forms.

The main part of the book is the explanatory text which is divided into nineteen headings. There are three main classes of chapters: the first deals with the various types of entities or funds that may be taxed and under these chapters the details of tax liabilities with respect to income earned. The second class deals with the administration of taxation as well as details as to the assessment of income for tax purposes. The third class of chapters deals with the entitlements of the taxpayer and covers details of matters ranging from deductions and allowances to incentives and double taxation relief.

The chapters adhere to the format which has been so much appreciated by users of previous editions of the book. Each begins with the general concerns and progresses to the specific provisions or tax matter at hand. This makes for easy reading as the reader can start the general principles in that particular area and then move on to the specific item in which he is interested. The book also contains useful examples that show how a particular rule works and how it affects the preparation of tax returns.

Another feature of the book is the manner in which it is laid out - the editors not only contemplate the user needing answers to questions which may arise in the preparation of tax returns but also provide information on the tax consequences which may flow from decisions taken throughout the year. It must be said that all of the above add to the simplicity and easy reference of the book.

The book also contains a depreciation table, tax rate tables and a tax calendar for the convenience of the user. Another useful feature is the inclusion of checklists that show the income items and deductions that generally go into the calculation of tax.

The book is rounded off by the inclusion of not just a comprehensive index, but also a case table and a section finding list. This adds to the completeness of the book besides providing easy reference, a general feature of the book.

The 1989 Master Tax Guide is as expected – complete and easy to use. The basic features, which have been retained from previous editions, make up for a book whose title aptly describes itself. The inclusion of new features only adds to the virtues of the book. It is a good buy for any lawyer or accountant, even the layman who wishes to know more about his tax liabilities and entitlements, especially at the price at which it is presently tagged.