

Concerted efforts to make Hong Kong a healthy and safe city

The Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (February 2) has appealed for a community effort to turn all 18 districts into a healthy and safe city to tie in with Hong Kong co-hosting the 2008 Beijing Olympic & Paralympic Equestrian Events.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Building Healthy Kowloon City Association, Mrs Lam commended cross-sector collaboration in Kowloon City in promoting the healthy city initiative in the district along with other districts which have either acquired the status or are making progress towards this goal.

She said the Government fully supported the "Healthy Cities" and "Safe Communities" initiatives of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The Healthy Cities initiative was officially launched by WHO in 1986. In the Western Pacific region, the "Alliance for Healthy Cities" was launched in 2004 with support from Western Pacific Regional Office of the WHO to promote support and co-operation among member cities.

Mrs Lam said that thanks to the collaborative efforts of various sectors in the districts, Sai Kung, Kwai Tsing and Kwun Tong districts had already registered as members of the Alliance for Healthy Cities, with the first two being the founding members. Several other districts are earnestly preparing for similar registration.

The "Safe Community" initiative aims to promote a health and safety culture through close collaboration among the government, local organisations and the public. For a community to be designated as Safe Community, it must meet all the six basic criteria set by the WHO.

Mrs Lam said that of the 111 communities/districts accredited by the WHO Collaborating Centre on Community Safety Promotion, six were from Hong Kong - Tuen Mun, Kwai Tsing, Tai Po, Tsuen Wan, Sham Shui Po and Tung Chung. She hoped the excellent achievement by these districts would be a catalyst for greater community participation.

The 2008 Beijing Olympic & Paralympic Equestrian Events will be staged in Hong Kong, to be followed by the East Asian Games. To help create an Olympic atmosphere and make the occasion a great success, Mrs Lam urged all sectors of the

community including the District Councils, various government departments, local organisations, medical institutions and private organisations, as well as the public to make concerted effort to work towards the goal of striving for a healthy and safe community.

"Promoting a healthy and safe city is in line with the Government's emphasis on district administration and partnership, with the District Councils playing a pivotal role," she said. The significant increase in District Council funding, both under the pilot scheme in four districts launched since last month (January) and the roll out to 18 districts from January, 2008, would provide the needed resource support for this very important district initiative, she said.

All District Offices under the Home Affairs Department will spare no effort in rendering assistance and offering advice to relevant organisations in their district to pursue and implement the initiatives.

At today's inauguration ceremony, Mrs Lam said she was delighted to see the setting up of the Building Healthy Kowloon City Association which marked an important milestone in cultivating a healthy living lifestyle in the community. While the association is an independent body, it maintains a close relationship with the Kowloon City District Council and local organisations.

She commended the association as an exemplary model of close collaboration among various sectors in the district. "Through partnership among different sectors, I believe the association will be able to fully mobilise and utilise resources at district level and contribute to the well-being of the people in the district," Mrs Lam said.

Ends/Friday, February 2, 2007