

PSHA's speech at Opening Ceremony of "The French Revolutions" Exhibition

The following is the speech delivered by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Yau, at the Opening Ceremony of "The French Revolutions" Exhibition today (December 16):

Mr Thébault, Mrs Fougère-Cazalé, Mr Léri, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here with you this evening at the opening ceremony of the "The French Revolutions" Exhibition. First of all, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to Mrs Fougère-Cazalé and Mr Léri for coming all the way from Paris to join us at this opening.

I feel particularly excited to be able to rehearse with you what I learnt since the secondary school days. The stories of Marie Antoinette and the guillotines all come back to me. France experienced a number of revolutions in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the French Revolution in 1789, in particular, was an important event in modern history of the world. As a consequence of the Revolution, the citizens of Paris overturned the regime, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was promulgated to protect the rights of people such as liberty and equality.

The French Revolution was an important milestone with far-reaching influence in world history. In the 19th century, waves of revolution swept across Europe, covering Spain, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Poland and Hungary. Liberalism and nationalism pervaded Europe and transformed the social and political looks of the continent. The Communist Manifesto was published in the midst of the revolutionary upheavals in 1848, and the birth of the Paris Commune in 1871, an important event in the development of Communism, inspired the communist movements around the world in the 20th century. This exhibition provides an opportunity for us to look at the cultural relics of this revolutionary period and treasured photos relating to the Paris Commune.

We are very delighted to join hands with the City of Paris Department of Culture in presenting this exhibition which features a rich selection of artifacts from the collections of the Musée Carnavalet and the Historical Library of the City of Paris. Browsing through the exhibits, one can get a good understanding of the revolutionary history of France and experience a close encounter with Louis the 16th, Queen Marie Antoinette and revolutionary martyrs at the time. The year of 2008 symbolises 160 years of French presence in Hong Kong while 2009 marks the 220th anniversary of the French Revolution. It is indeed of special meaning to hold this exhibition in Hong Kong at this point of time. After the Hong Kong stop, the exhibition will be brought to Beijing next year.

The coming to Hong Kong of this exhibition is the result of the generous support of the City of Paris Department of Culture, the Consulate General of France in Hong Kong and Macau, the Paris Musées, the Musée Carnavalet and the Historical Library of the City of Paris, without which the exhibition would not have been possible. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to all of them and I look forward to seeing more opportunities of cultural exchange between Hong Kong and France in the future. Lastly, I wish the exhibitions in both Hong Kong and Beijing every success! Thank you.

Ends/Tuesday, December 16, 2008