

SHA's speech at opening ceremony of 25th East Asian Games Association Council and Committee meetings (English only)

\*\*\*\*\*

Following is the opening address by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, at the opening ceremony of the 25th East Asian Games Association (EAGA) Council and Committee meetings today (May 19):

President Fok, Mr Yu, distinguished delegates and friends from the East Asian Games Association, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honour to join you here at the opening of the EAGA Council and Committee meetings. On behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I extend a very warm welcome to you all for your visit to Hong Kong.

Today is a milestone for the 5th East Asian Games, as the Bid Day –the opening of the Games – is exactly 200 days away. Thanks to the very able leadership of President Fok, and the close and strong partnership we have established with the Hong Kong Sports Federation and Olympic Committee, the local sports sector, as well as the efforts of the 2009 EAG (Hong Kong) Company, we are proceeding smoothly in our preparatory work.

We have made very good progress on venue preparation. The upgrading works at the 13 existing government venues have mostly been completed, while the official opening of the new Tseung Kwan O Sports Ground will be held this afternoon. Also, the other venues for the Games have all been confirmed.

As regards preparation for various competition events, the EAG Company has been working closely with local sports associations and the respective Asian federations to refine arrangements for the competitions. We have launched a series of programmes to promote the EAG in the past months and will be stepping up our efforts in the lead up to the Games. We will soon roll out another series of promotional and educational programmes including a comprehensive city dress up programme, 100-day countdown and torch relay, and many other activities to encourage community participation and support. Through the Hong Kong SAR Government's overseas offices and the network of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, we will also promote the Games at EAG participating places as well as other overseas cities.

The progress on the preparation of the Games will be reported at today's meeting. Although a lot of work has been done so far, the Government will continue to provide the best possible support for the remaining work. With concerted efforts, Hong Kong is determined and fully committed to staging a most memorable and successful EAG.

Let me say a few words about the human swine flu. So far we have successfully prevented the virus from being introduced and spreading in our community, but the battle against the flu is far from over. We all need to be very vigilant. I wish to assure you that the Hong Kong Government will continue to monitor the situation closely and take the necessary measures to respond to the challenges and possibly changing circumstances posed by the new public health threat.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I take this opportunity to thank you all for your unwavering support for the Games. I hope you will have some time away from your busy schedule to explore the beauty of the city. I wish you all a fruitful meeting and an enjoyable stay in Hong Kong. Thank you.

Ends/Tuesday, May 19, 2009

Issued at HKT 10:42

NNNN