

SHA's speech at opening ceremony of ACCF 2007 Open Forum (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, at the opening ceremony of Open Forum "World Creativity Summit - Launch and Public Dialogues" of Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum 2007 today (July 24):

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past two days, at our official meetings, we have engaged in lively debate on various aspects pertaining to the theme of this year's Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum - namely the all-embracing topic of Culture Coming Home. And by "coming home" we mean culture returning to its roots with distinct characteristics.

We have discussed Cultural Harmony, Cultural Exchange, Asian Modernity and Cultural Diversity. Through such exchanges, we have come to recognise, perhaps more forcibly than before, the importance of protecting and enhancing our uniquely Asian cultural distinctions against the ever-encroaching tide of globalisation.

Of course, it was Kipling who said "East is East and West is West" and "Never the twain shall meet". He was perceptive enough in stressing the distinction, but failed to foresee that the two do meet - colossally and with considerable consequences. But the ongoing meeting of East and West need not be a contest, and should certainly never be reduced to a choice of "either, or". Each hemisphere has much to contribute to an equal alliance, provided we both retain our own perspectives.

There is as much richness and diversity here in Asia as one can find in, say, western Europe, which many acknowledge as the cradle of industrialisation and modernisation. So what is to prevent us from defending our own distinctive attributes against those which have come, figuratively speaking, knocking at our door?

Our greatest danger lies in resignation: in accepting that global uniformity is inevitable. It is not inevitable, and we have to sound the wake-up call to convince our respective populations that our core traditions, our intrinsic Asian values, are not only worthy of preservation but vital to our ethos. So the debate does not stop here. It is our duty, once this particular forum comes to a close, to take it out into the public

arena, bringing it home with us to our respective populations and endeavouring, by every means, to engage our people in the discussion of how best to protect our cultural heritage.

Public engagement plays an absolutely fundamental role in promoting culture. Our goal is to promote cultural activities and build a society with sufficient cultural depth. Hence, as in the past, local and international arts organisations have been invited this year again as our partners to organise a series of open forums. We believe that these will give us greater insights into the four particular topics touched upon in the course of our dialogue - namely a World Creativity Summit, Living Urban Heritage, Culture Core Values and Chinese Modernity and Popular Culture. I personally anticipate that the outcome of our collective endeavours will enable us to better identify the challenges ahead, and the ways and means to tackle them.

I thank all of you present here today, as well as all parties who have contributed to these fruitful discussions.

Ends/Tuesday, July 24, 2007

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