

SHA's speech at closing ceremony of Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum 2007  
(English only)

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Following is the speech by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, at the closing ceremony of the Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum 2007 today (July 25):

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a challenge for me to speak after this very interesting session of popular culture as our iconic idols so eloquently walk us through the art and science of 'Making Stars' and 'Crossing Boundaries'.

I took up the post of Secretary for Home Affairs 25 days ago. These have been very eventful days and not the least the past four as I took part in the 5th Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum (ACCF) which gave me the opportunity to meet so many friends from across the miles and those closer to home.

Thanks to the support of our partners, over the years, the ACCF has matured into a signature event in the cultural calendar of this part of the world. I must thank my predecessor Dr Patrick Ho for master-minding this initiative five years ago. The ACCF has been bringing together on a regular basis leading government officials as well as non-government cultural leaders from the Mainland of China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam for discussions and exchanges on various topical cultural themes. A quick stock-take will see that we have over these years traversed a full spectrum of agenda items from the more down-to-earth themes of 'Brand Asia', 'Creative Asia' to the more philosophical themes like last year's 'Asia Arts, Culture and Modernity' and this year's 'Culture Coming Home'. As we worked on the themes together with our partners in Asia, we have enhanced our mutual understanding and built a good foundation for closer collaboration in arenas outside this forum. This multiplier effect is indeed what we hope to see.

Locally, the forum has also enabled us to work more closely with the local and international arts and cultural sector as we engage them to be our co-organisers of open forums. This engagement model should speak for itself our commitment to the policy principles of 'people-oriented', 'pluralism', 'freedom of expression', 'holistic

approach', 'partnership' and 'community driven'. Indeed, without our partner organisations - the World Alliance of Arts Education, the Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture, the Hong Kong Institute of Architects, the Hong Kong Institute of Engineers, the Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects, the Hong Kong Institute of Planners, the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, the Chinese Civilisation Centre of the City University of Hong Kong, the Centre for Cultural Policy Research of the University of Hong Kong - the programme this year could never have been as interesting as it has been and it is precisely this engagement model which we shall continue to adopt in our future work on the cultural front.

Before the curtain falls on the forum this year, I wish to add that as we prepare for the West Kowloon Cultural District, the largest commitment we have so far on the books for culture in Hong Kong, we shall redouble our efforts to listen to the views of our community on their vision for the future of culture and the arts in Hong Kong. Investment in the culture and the arts is not to be interpreted as an investment in the arts sector. It is an investment in the community and for the community much as our investment in education, social welfare and healthcare. In the run-up to West Kowloon, we shall be dedicating more resources to build our cultural fabric, both within Hong Kong and through more active cultural exchange activities with our ACCF partners and the rest of the world. And for that matter, I am sure we shall be meeting up on different occasions soon, before the next ACCF.

Thank you.

Ends/Wednesday, July 25, 2007

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