

SHA's speech at the Ethnic Harmony Variety Show 2007 (English only)

The following is a speech by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, at the Ethnic Harmony Variety Show 2007 today (September 23):

Mr Lam (Albert), Chairman Tam, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to attend this occasion. The Ethnic Harmony Variety Show shines a spotlight on some of the values we hold dear in Hong Kong.

We live in a cosmopolitan city where East meets West. Respect and understanding of each other's cultures and values is of utmost importance in maintaining a harmonious society. Hong Kong has become well known for its cultural diversity over the years. It is part of what makes us Asia's World City. Only by learning from each other, regardless of our race or religion, can we enhance our status as an international city.

I believe that racial harmony is fundamental to our pursuit of social harmony. This in turn is the foundation of social stability and prosperity.

I also believe mutual respect and acceptance of cultural differences is the basis for a harmonious and cohesive society. Hence, the Government's objective is to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination, and to foster racial equality and encourage the integration of racial minorities into our community. At the same time we should preserve the unique cultural characteristics that set Hong Kong apart from other cities.

While Hong Kong has a long tradition of social harmony, sometimes misunderstandings, prejudices and stereotyping may surface. There may be several reasons for this, such as language barriers, misinformation or problems integrating into the community. So we should always be vigilant. Social harmony should not be taken for granted. Once the social fabric is torn, it is not easily sewn back together.

The Government fully recognises the special needs of ethnic minorities in society. There are a wide variety of support services in place that help to make it easier for ethnic

minorities to adjust to living in Hong Kong. We will continue to strengthen our work in these areas, to enhance mutual understanding and respect between people of different ethnic origins.

I congratulate the DAB (Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong) on its work to promote racial harmony in our society. The DAB's Ethnic Minorities Committee has done a good job in providing a range of services and organising various activities, such as this one today, to encourage harmony in society. The Committee has set an example we can all follow in maintaining the true multi-cultural nature of our city.

I wish the Variety Show every success as a regular event. Thank you.