

Speech by Commissioner for Tourism at luncheon for the travel trade in Mumbai, India (English only)

Following is the speech by the Commissioner for Tourism, Ms Margaret Fong, at luncheon for the travel trade in Mumbai, India today (October 2):

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to join today's luncheon for our travel trade partners from India and Hong Kong.

To most of us in Hong Kong, Mumbai is not unfamiliar. The city is synonymous with the "Film City of India". Bollywood is one of the largest centres of film production in the world and the movies find a ready market in Hong Kong.

Several months ago, when I was attending an international conference on movies' impact on tourism in Hong Kong, I told the audience that movies, like travelling, allow one to take a snapshot of a different way of life. Indeed, both films and tourism appeal to our emotion, stimulate our imagination and indulge our fantasies. They are the true "dream factories".

As tourism operators, we work to make our clients' dreams come true. We help them live their fantasies during their travel, experiencing the magic first hand.

Last year, Hong Kong received 29.5 million visitors. That means some 29.5 million people from all over the world have chosen to live their dreams in Hong Kong. And why?

As Asia's world city, Hong Kong is a widely acclaimed tourist destination known for its international outlook, sophistication and diversity.

We are the region's aviation hub with flight connections to some 150 cities, including major cities in India. We operate a liberal visa regime where the citizens of 170 countries/ territories can enter Hong Kong without a visa. This of course applies to Indian nationals who enjoy 14 days of visa-free access. Such travel convenience speaks for our desire to welcome friends from round the world to make Hong Kong your home or home away from home.

To make Hong Kong fun and appealing, we have attractions that meet the needs of every visitor. For families, we have our two flagship theme parks, the Ocean Park and Disneyland; the spectacular Ngong Ping 360 cable car; and the world-famous Madame Tussads. And we must not forget, of course, our varied shopping and dining scenes which Hong Kong is renowned for.

For visitors who prefer to explore the nature, Hong Kong offers a pleasant surprise. Our mountainous landscape lends us spectacular rock formations and excellent hiking trails. We also have a Ramsar-declared wetland, a wetland park and are planning for a geological park. And our beautiful islands with their immaculate beaches and unspoiled forest are sights to be beheld.

For business visitors, we have top-notch facilities coupled with world-class professional services to stage exhibitions, conferences and business meetings. We are the ideal location for MICE (Meetings, Incentive Travels, Conventions and Exhibitions) events. Each year, some 300 international conventions and exhibitions take place in Hong Kong.

Whilst on events, I must mention that we have successfully hosted the Equestrian Events of the 2008 Olympic Games last year. And in December this year, the East Asian Games will be held in Hong Kong. Recently, we have set up a 620 million Indian rupee fund to attract more international signature events to be held in Hong Kong. Together with our

numerous international sports tournaments such as Rugby Sevens and Cricket Sixes, and the must-see Chinese New Year Parade, to name but a few, we can promise our visitors an exciting and unique experience every day.

We are also pushing ahead with our new world-class cruise terminal that will allow the berthing of two of the largest cruise vessels in the world at the same time. With over 40 flights every week between Hong Kong and India, you can easily catch a plane to Hong Kong and enjoy a relaxing cruise holiday.

Ladies and gentlemen, I came to Mumbai to meet our Indian trade partners because I am confident of the immense opportunities for bilateral tourism. And I must express my heartfelt appreciation for your kind presence and support.

After today's meeting, let us join hands in expanding our dream factory. I look to you all to design appealing travel itineraries and roll out attractive products that will unleash the imagination of the many in our two cities. Together we can make their dreams come true.

Thank you.

Ends/Friday, October 2, 2009

Issued at HKT 20:06

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