

Speech by SCED at Three Queens in Town Celebration Party reception (English only)

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Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, at the Three Queens in Town Celebration Party reception today (March 29):

Bob (General Manager of EMEA Sales at Carnival UK, Mr Bob Dixon), Nancy (Asia Regional Director of Princess Cruises and Cunard Line, Mrs Nancy Chung), Anthony (Executive Director of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Mr Anthony Lau), honourable guests and colleagues in the Government,

It is my great pleasure to join all of you here at this party to celebrate the arrival of the "three queens" in Hong Kong. This is indeed a very happy and important occasion which marks a milestone for both the Cunard Line and cruise tourism development in Hong Kong. I thank Bob and Nancy, and of course, the "three queens", for inviting me to share this remarkable moment with all of you here.

The Cunard Line is one of the most traditional luxury cruise brands with more than 170 years of history. It is indeed our great honour that all of its current fleet, comprising Queen Mary 2, Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth, are visiting Hong Kong within 24 hours. This demonstrates fully our appeal as a destination for cruise passengers, as well as a turnaround port for cruise lines. This also signifies our infrastructural strength in receiving mega-size cruise ships in Hong Kong and our role as a leading cruise hub in the region.

Some of you may remember that when Queen Mary 2 first visited Hong Kong during its 80-day round-the-world voyage in 2007, she berthed at the Kwai Chung Container Terminal because at that time we did not have a cruise terminal sizeable enough to accommodate mega-size cruise ships. With the Government's commitment in developing cruise tourism in Hong Kong, we now have the world-class Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, which can accommodate two mega-size cruise ships simultaneously. My colleagues in the Tourism Commission and the Hong Kong Tourism Board will continue to work closely with the terminal operator and international cruise lines to leverage on this infrastructural strength to promote cruise tourism development in Hong Kong.

Bob just told me that the "three queens" will together bring some 17,000 international cruise passengers and crew members to Hong Kong. These international

visitors will benefit many of our tourism-related businesses, such as attractions, retail shops and our numerous restaurants. Many of these international visitors will also stay in Hong Kong for a few days before they go on board and afterwards when they fly back home. These "fly-cruise" passengers will usually have a longer stay in Hong Kong and will be a welcome source of patronage for our hotels and aviation services sector.

We are committed to developing "fly-cruise" tourism. We will allocate additional resources to the Hong Kong Tourism Board to partner with international cruise lines. Together, we will launch marketing and promotional schemes to promote fly-cruise programmes. International cruise lines should be even more confident in expanding their businesses in Hong Kong. I therefore hope to see the "three queens" more often here in Hong Kong.

This party is all about celebrating the arrival of the "three queens" and it will not be complete if we do not also involve the Queen Victoria, which is now at berth at the Ocean Terminal.

I therefore took the liberty to suggest to Bob and Nancy that we should use an unconventional way to get to Kai Tak Cruise Terminal this morning. We met at the Central public pier, got on board our legendary Dukling, and sailed past Tsim Sha Tsui to say "hello" to the Queen Victoria before reaching the Kai Tak area.

I then invited Bob and Nancy to join me for the inaugural berthing at the new Runway Park Pier, which is just next to the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal.

The commissioning of the Runway Park Pier this morning marks a further leap in terms of infrastructure support for the cruise terminal and the Kai Tak area. The new pier will enable transportation to the cruise terminal and Kai Tak area by sea, and will also allow a wider variety of shore excursion programmes for our cruise passengers. We are offering complimentary Victoria Harbour tours on the Dukling to cruise passengers today. And we understand that shore excursion operators will be running seafood tours and programmes to the outlying islands soon. I am sure these shore excursion activities will allow cruise passengers to enjoy the tranquility and a more exotic experience of Hong Kong.

Once again, I thank the Cunard Line for your confidence in the Hong Kong market. I hope everyone will enjoy the celebration party today and together let's bring our cruise tourism to new heights.

Thank you.

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