

PSCIT's speech at launch ceremony of MEHK (English only) (with photos)

Following is a speech by the Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce, Industry and Tourism), Miss Yvonne Choi, at the "MEHK - Hong Kong Converging Possibilities" launch ceremony today (November 13):

James (Tien), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to represent the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development at this very special event today which is for the launch of the Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK) Office of the Hong Kong Tourism Board.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to all of you, especially to those who have travelled many miles to be here.

I congratulate the Tourism Board on rolling out this international marketing platform with the inspiring brandline - "Hong Kong Converging Possibilities".

This is very appropriate because Hong Kong has made its reputation in bringing together people, products, services, ideas and opportunities from all around the world in a compact, dynamic and business-friendly environment - and of course with endless possibilities.

We have a proven track record of harnessing these opportunities for many prestigious MICE events, large and small, with good Hong Kong relish.

Over the years, we have steadily enriched our exhibition portfolio by staging Asia's, if not the world's, largest fairs for many products, including watches, clocks, gifts, electronics, jewellery, fashion, houseware, beauty and cosmetics as well as wine, together with many other conventional or innovative products.

Each year there are more than 300 international conventions and exhibitions in Hong Kong.

Our prime location within easy reach of half the world's population, world class infrastructure and a sophisticated services sector help to ensure that events are run smoothly in Hong Kong.

And our proximity to the Mainland of China and experience in cross-boundary trade means there is never a shortage of numbers or interest at MICE events here.

Furthermore, visitors from over 170 countries enjoy visa-free entry to Hong Kong.

And with the setting up of the MEHK Office, MICE travellers and organisers here will have another advantage.

As James just mentioned, in the Budget in February this year, the Financial Secretary has set aside \$150 million for activities to enhance the appeal of Hong Kong as an international convention, exhibition and tourism capital. The MEHK Office will be the key driver for such activities and will certainly help raise Hong Kong's profile in the MICE sector.

We could not have predicted the seriousness of the financial turmoil way back in February, but I feel the timing of this launch could not be better. The MEHK Office is a good tonic to give our tourism industry a boost amid the global economic downturn.

Later this month, the Chief Executive will attend a MEHK event in London as part of our global push to attract more MICE events here.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would be remiss if I do not pay a special tribute to the environment the ceremony is held in today.

The Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre is the ideal venue for the launch of the MEHK Office.

Converting an old industrial building into an arts and heritage centre is a great idea, and reflects the creativity and potential of our city and its people.

I am confident the MEHK Office will also help find creative solutions for maximising our potential as a location of choice for MICE events.

Thank you.

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