

Speech by Commissioner for Tourism at opening ceremony of Asia
Funeral Expo 2010 (English only)

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Following is a speech by the Commissioner for Tourism,
Mr Philip Yung, at the opening ceremony of Asia Funeral Expo
2010 today (May 13):

Mr (Kenny) Lo, Mr (Bill) Wappner, distinguished guests, ladies
and gentlemen,

Good morning. It's a great pleasure to welcome back the
Asia Funeral Expo in Hong Kong. I am delighted to see the return
of this signature event which exemplifies our diversified
exhibition portfolio.

Last year, the Asia Funeral Expo was staged in Hong Kong
for the first time. It attracted 150 exhibitors and 2,000
participants from around the world. I understand that many
of the exhibitors were able to make business deals during the
show. All this made it another highlight in the calendar of
the exhibition and convention industry in Hong Kong.

Nowadays, it is common for people to plan ahead for the
different phases of life, including their final journey. For
instance, some will take out insurance policies to protect
themselves and their dependants. Some even plan their own
funeral and burial arrangements to ensure their post-mortem
needs are taken care of. Therefore, we see great potential
in the funeral market in this part of the world.

Building on last year's success, the organiser of the
Asia Funeral Expo has cast its vote of confidence in Hong Kong
by bringing back the event this year on an even larger scale.
With over 200 exhibitors from different segments of the
funeral industry, the fairground today offers abundant
products and services to meet the needs of our customers. With
excellent exhibition venues, tailor-made support services and

a business-friendly environment, as well as being an international trading hub and an important gateway to the Mainland, Hong Kong is proud to be the home of the Asia Funeral Expo.

As an international convention and exhibition capital, Hong Kong is the place where business opportunities converge. In 2008, the Government gave the MICE industry a further boost by earmarking additional funding of \$150 million to step up the promotion of Hong Kong as a premier MICE destination over the following five years. The Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK) Office was then set up under the Hong Kong Tourism Board as a dedicated agency for MICE promotion.

Since its establishment, the MEHK has been driving promotional campaigns, providing one-stop support to event organisers and has successfully secured many new events for Hong Kong. This year, the MEHK will develop a new online business-building platform, the "E-marketplace", to facilitate event organisers to find suitable local services providers. The MEHK will also expand the current value-added offers so as to enhance the travel experience of our exhibition participants.

Indeed, the combined efforts of the trade, the Government and the MEHK are now bearing fruit. Since the beginning of this year, alongside the global economic recovery, we have seen a rise in the number of MICE events in Hong Kong. In the first quarter of this year, we received over 280,000 overnight MICE visitors, a staggering increase of 29% over the same period last year. We will continue to work hard to maintain the upward trend.

Ladies and gentlemen, Hong Kong is Asia's world city with an unique blend of East and West. Our wide-ranging shopping and dining offerings, cultural heritage, theme parks and natural scenery are something that you should not miss. I sincerely invite you to take some time to walk around Hong

Kong and feel for yourself the vibrancy and diversity of our city.

May I once again welcome you all and wish the Asia Funeral Expo a huge success. Thank you.

Ends/Thursday, May 13, 2010

Issued at HKT 11:53

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