

Speech

Speech by SFST at opening ceremony of HOFEX 2013 (English only)

Tuesday, May 7, 2013

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, at the opening ceremony of the 15th International Exhibition of Food & Drink, Hotel, Restaurant & Food Service Equipment, Supplies & Services (HOFEX 2013) at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre today (May 7):

Peter (Lam), Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board; Daniel (Cheung), General Manager of HK Exhibition Services Ltd; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It's my pleasure for me to join you all for the opening of HOFEX 2013. A very warm welcome to all the delegates, especially those of you who have travelled long distances to attend this important event for the food and hospitality industry.

This is the 30th year since the launch of HOFEX. How time flies! This year, the 15th edition of HOFEX, is set to be the biggest so far in terms of the number of buyers, exhibitors and exhibiting spaces. I am pleased to see how HOFEX has grown and diversified over the years. It is a truly international event which underlines the healthy development of the food and hospitality industry in Hong Kong and throughout our region.

Hotels, catering and tourism are extremely important to our city and our economy. These sectors have transformed significantly over the past decade to meet growing demand while maintaining quality. Last year, we welcomed over 48 million visitors. Each day of the year, there is an average of about 1 million tourists in Hong Kong. In 2011, our visitors contributed over HK\$50 billion on hotel accommodation, dining and shopping to our GDP. That represents an increase of 34 per cent over the previous year. We expect this momentum will continue, and 2013 is shaping up to be another good year for our tourism sector.

Hong Kong is an ideal location for hosting large-scale exhibitions, such as HOFEX, here in the heart of the fastest growing region of Asia. We are surrounded by large population centres in the Mainland of China and further afield. The name of the game in terms of hospitality is great service, from the arrival hall to the departure hall and at every stop in between.

Coupled with our world-class convention and exhibition facilities, Hong Kong is a great place for sellers to showcase their products, and for buyers to make their purchases. We

are an effective shop window for goods and services targeting the huge China market.

To enhance Hong Kong's appeal as Asia's trade fair capital, the Hong Kong Tourism Board has established the Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong Office, or MEHK. Since 2008, MEHK has been providing one-stop support for event organisers. It helps enrich the travel experience of our visitors for exhibitions, conventions, meetings and incentive travels. We are exploring ways to further develop our convention and exhibition industries. Earlier this year, we set up an Economic Development Commission which includes a specific Working Group on Convention and Exhibition Industries and Tourism. This underscores the Government's commitment to the travel and hospitality sectors and brings together leaders in the field to find new opportunities for development. Please let us know your ideas too.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you get the chance to visit Ocean Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui, the chances are good that you will see a giant rubber duck floating in Victoria Harbour. In fact, at a height of six storeys, it is difficult to miss. But no! We have not all gone "quackers"! The massive inflatable duck is the brainchild of a Dutch artist, Florentijn Hofman. The artwork promotes, among other things, joy, happiness and caring for each other. I hope that our visitors feel the joy, happiness and hospitality that make our tourism industry tick.

Next month, we shall be able to welcome even larger floating vessels to Hong Kong when the new Kai Tak Cruise Terminal opens for business. It will be able to accommodate the world's largest cruise liners and, in turn, add a new string to the bow of our city's tourism industry.

From cruise ships to tourism statistics and even giant floating rubber ducks, size clearly does matter. With that in mind, I wish the largest ever edition of HOFEX a great success. I also wish all our visitors a wonderful stay here in Hong Kong.

Thank you very much.

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