Speech by PSHA at Welcome Reception and Creative Works Recital,
The Visiting Writers 2009, International Writers Workshop (English only)

Following is the speech by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Yau, at the Welcome Reception and Creative Works Recital, The Visiting Writers 2009, International Writers Workshop (November 17):

Professor Ng, Professor Chung and all Visiting Writers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Hong Kong has long been established as a leading Asian world city, with strong financial foundation. Not every citizen here would readily admit that it is also a city with a rich cultural foundation. I therefore wish to highlight the fact that Hong Kong is a place of creativity and cultural innovation and that we deserve a presence on the world’s cultural map. Our very unique local cultural identity is attributed to the integration of traditional Chinese heritage and humanities with Western cultural values.

While our strong cultural foundation provides Hong Kong with a firm and permanent bedrock to be a perfect cultural hub, it is the heart of our cultural talents in pursuit of excellence and breakthroughs that sustains and flourishes our cultural scene. Our literary scene depends on the synergy of devoted distinguished writers, authors, scholars and critics. They engage not only in the process of creative writing and produce brilliant literary pieces but also actively involve in all kinds of literary events such as writing workshops, literary appreciation seminars, literary recitals and many other forms of activities.

There is never a dearth of good writers and literary works in Hong Kong. It is evident that many local cultural and academic organizations organise award schemes to accentuate recognition to writers and their works that excel in the world of literature. Such schemes include the “Hong Kong Biennial Awards for Chinese Literature” by the Hong Kong Public Libraries of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the “Hong Kong Arts Development Awards” by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, “The Man Asian Literary Prize” sponsored by the Man Group plc and also “The Dream of Red Chamber’s Award – the World’s Distinguished Novel in Chinese” initiated by the Hong Kong Baptist University. These awards, rooted in the soils here, celebrate the achievements of both local and international writers who enhance Hong Kong’s strong
literary tradition and support the city’s many diverse voices.

In order to support local and global cultural dialogue and to promote free flow of cultural exchanges, it is essential to place our arts and cultural accomplishments at the forefront internationally. Last month, Hong Kong just participated at the Frankfurt Book Fair, which is one of the most important cultural events in the world in celebration of books and publications. We bring the Man Asian Literary Prize to the Frankfurt Bookfair by making the very important shortlist announcement for the first time. Indeed, in just three years, the Man Literary Prize, first rooted in Hong Kong, has become an event of international significance. We also proudly present the multi-faceted local arts and cultural scene and productions that mark the city’s literary creativity. For example, the seminar held at Frankfurt Bookfair hosted by our local eminent scholars and writers was a full-house success.

Now in its sixth year, the Hong Kong Baptist University’s International Writers Workshop has been regarded as a significant initiative to promote literary creativity in Hong Kong and internationally, acclaiming 49 writers from around the world up to the year of 2008. As for this year, the Hong Kong Baptist University honorably invites Mr Gary Snyder from USA to be the featured writer, and other eight reputable visiting writers from various regions of the Pacific Rim including New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, The Philippines, USA, Hawaii, Taiwan and the Mainland China. They are going to stay on the campus of Hong Kong Baptist University and interact with students, staff, and the local cultural communities in the complete gamut of literary activities, such as public lectures, readings and symposiums. These events serve as a reminder on the importance of cultivating international ties and cross-boundary platforms for literary activities.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank the Hong Kong Baptist University for inviting me to take part in this meaningful event. Thanks also go to all writers for coming to Hong Kong to share with us their thoughts and insights. Last but not the least, I hope the Workshop can generate literary enthusiasm among the public and continue to be a remarkable cultural event for those who cherish literature. For lovers of literature, we may wish to share the favourite quote here lifted from our ‘oriental bible’ ‘Lun Yu’ (論語) ‘The four teachings of Confucius are : literature, conduct, loyalty and trustworthiness’ (子以四教：文、行、忠、信). Literature comes first!

Thank you.
Ends/Tuesday, November 17, 2009
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