

Speech by DCS at special session of "The Great Unity – Civilisation of the Qin and Han Dynasties in Shaanxi Province" Exhibition (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, at a special session of "The Great Unity – Civilisation of the Qin and Han Dynasties in Shaanxi Province" Exhibition today (June 17):

The Honourable Commissioner Cui Jianchun (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Mr Gary Chan (Legislative Council Member), Ms Starry Lee (Legislative Council Member), Mr Holden Chow (Legislative Council Member), Acting Secretary Lau (Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau), Director Chan (Director of Leisure and Cultural Services, Ms Manda Chan), consuls-general, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is great pleasure to welcome you to this special session of "The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: The Great Unity – Civilisation of the Qin and Han Dynasties in Shaanxi Province" Exhibition.

President Xi Jinping has, on many occasions, made important remarks on strengthening the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage, and promoting China's magnificent traditional culture. Hong Kong has an important role to play here: deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and extensively connected to the international communities, we are well positioned as the East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange to promote Chinese culture and history to the world and encourage mutual learning across nations and regions.

The Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) Government established the Chinese Culture Promotion Office (CCPO) last year. The CCPO is dedicated to promoting Chinese culture and history-related activities, exchanges and collaborations, thereby enhancing the public's cultural confidence and national identity. In collaboration with the Hong Kong Museum of History, the CCPO launched in 2024 the first flagship project – the "General History of China Series" – for the public to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the development of Chinese civilisation. Last year, the first exhibition in the series, "The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: The Ancient Civilisation of the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties in Henan Province" and the inaugural Chinese Culture Festival have attracted more than 1 million in physical attendance, including 10 000 teachers and students, in the same place that we are standing today.

Following that remarkable success, "The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: The Great Unity – Civilisation of the Qin and Han Dynasties in Shaanxi Province" is the much yearned for second major exhibition in the General History of China Series. Qin and Han, spanning the 440 years from 221 BC to 220 AD, were two dynasties of immense significance. The Qin period saw the first unification of China in terms of adopting: political centralism, the system of prefectures and counties, "li shu" as the common written words, common currency, common weights and measures etc. Whereas the Han period saw the defeat of neighbouring and invading foreign tribes, the expansion of the national boundary, the prosperity of external trade via the Silk Road, and the adoption of Confucianism as the orthodox thinking and value etc. These developments profoundly influenced the course of China's development for over 2,000 years.

The capital of Qin and Western Han was respectively Xianyang and Changan, which are today's Xianyang and Xi'an in the province of Shaanxi. With the staunch and generous support of the Shaanxi Provincial Cultural Heritage Administration, about 110 sets of priceless exhibits from Shaanxi, including figures from the world-renowned terracotta army of Emperor Qin Shi-huang (秦始皇), and warrior and animal figurines of Emperor Jing (汉景帝), the sixth emperor of Western Han, are presented in this exhibition. Among the exhibits, 11 are grade-one national treasures brought to Hong Kong under the auspices of Shaanxi Province, with four on exhibition outside Mainland China for the first time. We earnestly hope that the wide array of exhibits will give our distinguished guests today a taste of the grandeur of the two dynasties and a deeper appreciation of the richness and beauty of traditional Chinese culture.

I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong SAR and the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong for organising this special viewing session. I look forward to having more exhibitions of national treasures from different Chinese provinces in Hong Kong under the General History of China Series to further introduce Chinese culture and history to the global audience.

In closing, I hope you like the exhibition and have a delightful afternoon meeting the art pieces from 2 000 years ago. Thank you very much.

