

FS's speech at "Hong Kong Saddles Up for Olympics"

Following is a speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr John C Tsang, at "Hong Kong Saddles Up for Olympics" promotion event in London on 15 October.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you today for this special event.

The UK has a long and proud history in equestrian sports, and I'm particularly pleased to be speaking here at the Household Cavalry Museum about the Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events to be held in Hong Kong next year. I hope what you see today will persuade you to be part of this great sporting occasion.

As you can imagine, we are proud and privileged to be hosting these sporting events. The Beijing Olympic Games is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Hong Kong to join the ranks of Olympic cities.

But it is also a great opportunity for our friends to take part and enjoy this spectacle. Today, I wish to invite you all to help Hong Kong celebrate the spirit of the Olympics. We want you to saddle up for a visit to our city next year.

I can assure you it will be well worth the visit. Here's a taste of what to expect:

The dressage and jumping events will take place at a brand new, all-weather arena at Sha Tin. The cross-country competition will be held at Sheung Shui on a magnificent, undulating course among the rolling hills of our countryside around Beas River. You will find out that Hong Kong is not just high rises and shopping malls. We also have large tracts of open space. In fact, 40% of Hong Kong is made up of country parks.

We don't like to leave things to chance, so in August we held the HKSAR 10th Anniversary Cup at Sha Tin as a dry run for the Olympics, to test our facilities with some of the best riders from around the world. The feedback from the riders and officials who took part was most gratifying - they said the facilities at Sha Tin were among the best they had ever seen. However, as you can imagine, this has helped spur us on to do even better, and we are constantly looking at ways to improve the facilities so everything will go even more smoothly.

Competitors, officials and supporters can expect a warm Olympic welcome when they come to Hong Kong next year for the equestrian events. But we would also like to use the occasion to invite people to experience the excitement and vibrancy of Hong Kong. And if you are going to the Olympics in Beijing, why not consider stopping by in Hong Kong for a bit of R and R on the way there, or on the way back... or both. Why not?

Apart from enjoying all the grace and action of the equestrian events, visitors can enjoy a huge range of cultural, shopping, dining and entertainment experiences in Hong Kong. We have a lot to offer.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please join us next year for what will be an unforgettable Olympics. And if you can't make the Olympics, well, come and see us anyway! You can be sure of a warm welcome and an enjoyable stay.

Thank you.