

# Olympic Flame fires Hong Kong spirit

Civil Service Newsletter Editorial Board

■ THE Beijing 2008 Olympic Torch Relay in Hong Kong (OTR) was held on May 2 as one of the most important ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games.

The OTR was organised by the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government.

Thousands of Hong Kong residents and visitors from the Mainland, many dressed in red, cheered the Olympic torch as it was proudly carried through the streets of Hong Kong on Friday, May 2.

The relay started at 10.30am with Olympic gold medallist windsurfer Lee Lai-shan the first to run with the torch. It was handed to her by the Chief Executive, Donald Tsang Yam-kuen.

As he handed over the torch on the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront, Mr Tsang said, "Today, the Olympic Torch Relay resumes on Chinese soil after its global journey across five continents. It is a great and solemn honour for Hong Kong, 'Asia's world city', to be the first city in China to welcome back the Olympic Flame on behalf of our proud nation.

"We are a world in a city, where different people, with different beliefs and different views have thrived in the spirit of diversity, tolerance and respect. This same spirit feeds the Olympic Flame, and makes it burn brightly.

"The Olympic ideals of friendship, fair play and solidarity are, indeed, universal ideals that are an intrinsic part of our society. We don't just embrace them; they are part of what make us tick. As a cosmopolitan city of China, Hong Kong is uniquely placed to play this bridging role between the peoples of the world, and the people of our country," Mr Tsang told the crowd that had started milling at the waterfront hours before.

Altogether, 119 torchbearers from all walks of life, including athletes, sports people, business people, legislative councillors and entertainers, took part in the relay, which took more than seven hours. The torch's journey, the first leg of its tour through China, also included running, rides on horses, a vessel, a dragon boat and a golf cart!

Unlike other cities around the world, where the Torch Relay was marred by aggression, Hong Kong showed the world its image as a safe and civilised society. Extensive planning before



Secretary for Home Affairs, Tsang Tak-sing (second right), welcoming the Olympic Flame on its arrival at the airport with the Executive Vice-President of the Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, Yang Shu'an.

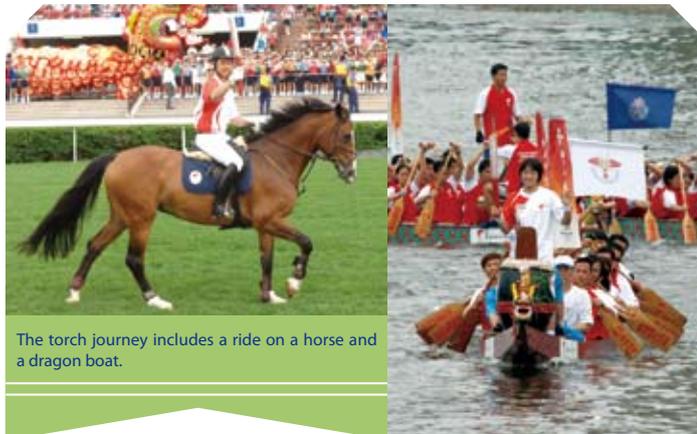
the event meant that the few small disruptions were quickly dealt with.

In fact, the Torch Relay epitomised the spirit of "One Country, Two Systems", with its mix of patriotic fervour and openness to views from all sides. At one point, Hong Kong Police Force calmly led protesters away from the torch route and steered them to safety.

One of the torchbearers was an artistic cyclist, Yu Sum-ye, who is also a Police Inspector, Patrol Sub-unit Commander (Sheung Shui Division). "I am so proud and overjoyed at being selected as one of the torchbearers in Hong Kong," Mr Yu said after the relay. "It came as a surprise when I was told to attend a briefing a few days before the public announcement. On the Torch Relay day, while we were being transported to our designated legs, we kept talking about how enthusiastic we were to take part in this historic event. It was even more exciting when I arrived for my leg (No. 60 in Sha Tin), seeing the active engagement of thousands of local citizens and the atmosphere of harmony."

From the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui, the torch made a 25-kilometre journey, travelling past various landmarks in Kowloon, the New Territories and the Hong Kong Island, ending at Golden Bauhinia Square in Wan Chai. Among the torchbearers were Cantopop idols Andy Lau Tak-wah, Kelly Chen Wai-lam and Jacky Cheung Hok-yau, Olympic table tennis silver-medallist Li Ching, and his doubles partner, Ko Lai-chak, and champion cyclist Wong Kam-po, who was the last runner.

Yuen Wai-san, Senior Officer with the Correctional Services Department, who also joined the Torch Relay, said, "I was deeply impressed by the citizens, who were waving and cheering on both sides of the roads when I was on my way to the finishing point at Golden Bauhinia Square in Wan Chai. It was in that moment, I couldn't help thinking of the theme of the Torch Relay event, Light the Passion Share the Dream. And I believe that the feeling was shared by all the people in Hong Kong."



The torch journey includes a ride on a horse and a dragon boat.

Officiating at the end of the relay, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Henry Tang Ying-yen said it was “truly a journey of harmony”, which had made Hong Kong proud. “Every member of our community who defied the rain and took part played an indispensable role in creating this ocean of red that has washed over Hong Kong today.”

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department was largely responsible for collaborating efforts with various government departments and organisations in ensuring such a great turnout. Various ceremonies/community involvement programmes were held to promote the event and to cultivate a strong Olympic atmosphere in the community.

The Olympic torch arrived in Beijing on March 31, a prelude to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Torch Relay. It was not the first time Hong Kong had hosted a leg of the relay, the first being 44 years ago.

The May 2 Olympic Torch Relay will no doubt be remembered for years to come as a joyous, yet dignified, celebration of the Olympic spirit and Hong Kong's pride that our country is at long last hosting the Olympic Games.



An RTHK film crew shooting behind the scenes.

## Behind the Torch Relay

Forever Sze Wing-yuen,  
Acting Assistant Director of Broadcasting (Radio),  
Radio Television Hong Kong

■ THE Olympic Torch has since made its way to Mountain Qomolangma, but its presence is still felt at Radio Television Hong Kong — the Video Editing Section is working on full-length and highlight versions of the event; the Arts Services Section is preparing a commemorative DVD pack; and on my desk lie copies of appreciation letters I do not want to file away yet, as I feel that words are still not sufficient to convey my gratitude.

The stunning scenes of the Torch Relay linger in the minds of all in Hong Kong; behind the camera, the excitement was felt even more deeply by the broadcasting team. The 25-kilometre route through Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories showcased Hong Kong's unique scenery, but the different terrains also posed transmission challenges to engineering staff of seven local broadcasters, who combined their efforts and wisdom to push aside all obstacles to make the unprecedented nine-hour continuous live television (TV) broadcast a success.

to be made and contingency measures set up accordingly. As for unpredictable situations, it required the ability to meet an emergency, the successful execution of which brought great satisfaction. Thanks to the professionalism of the shooting team and their skills in putting into place contingency operations, TV pool signals were transmitted in time despite the early arrival of the plane flying in the tinder lamp and the shooting team's hold-up by security check procedures — the team arrived at the apron with just 10 minutes to spare.



Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad Executive Vice-President, Yang Shu'an handing the Olympic Flame to Mr Tsang.

Starting in March, the whole party conducted endless trial runs to make adjustments, from using a helicopter for signal relay to employing a diversity reception system. To ensure secure signal transmission, we also utilised mobile surveillance techniques using the 3.5 gigabit network provided by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department for backup



Shooting of the Torch Relay by helicopter.

Another set of challenges lay ahead following the arrival of the tinder lamp: the unexpectedly shortened ceremony at the airport necessitated immediate adjustment of the arrangements in the Hong Kong Cultural Centre; the early morning rain initiated the rainy day contingency

signals. When asked by the Chief Executive, Donald Tsang Yam-kuen, on April 18 about anticipated problems in the live broadcast, we could only say trial runs were still under way to find the best system, given the complex and unpredictable nature of the task where every test conducted was based on assumption.

measures; the low clouds struck out aerial shooting by helicopter, and the humidity negatively affecting the video transmissions had rendered it necessary for the immediate use of stand-by signals...  
Embracing the many unpredictable challenges beyond our control, we broadcasters acted like magicians who could produce miracles in a flash. I was greatly moved to see the Olympic Flame beginning its first solemn journey across Chinese soil and by the joyful cheers of the large chanting crowds along the streets, and much gratified by the efforts of the broadcasting team.

In preparation for such a large project, we looked at various hypothetical situations so that we would be prepared for different contingencies, such as disruption to live broadcasting in TV House, or inclement weather. Every assumption had

More related programmes on the Beijing Olympics are available at the Radio Television Hong Kong webpage: <http://olympics.rthk.org.hk/events.htm>.