



## Expecting the best, preparing for the worst

Civil Service Newsletter Editorial Board



■ IT was a proud moment for Hong Kong when the Chief Executive, Donald Tsang Yam-kuen, handed over the Olympic Torch to Olympic gold medal-winning windsurfer Lee Lai-shan at the start of the Hong Kong leg of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Torch Relay on May 2. But it was an even prouder moment for the city's people when the relay ended more than seven hours later without so much as a glitch.

The Torch Relay was the first event held in Hong Kong in its official capacity as co-host of the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events (the Events). But the smooth running of the relay belied the intense preparation by various government departments.

The same can be said for every aspect of planning for Hong Kong's historic co-hosting of the Events. In the months — and in some cases, years — of preparation by departments and bureaux, nothing has been overlooked. The scale and global importance of the Events have created special challenges for the civil service, even those sectors with absolutely no involvement in sports!

### Watching our Ps and Qs

The Protocol Division, for instance, while not an organiser of any of the events related to the Olympics, will be constantly on its toes and has been working closely with the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) to ensure that appropriate arrival and departure courtesies are extended to those international dignitaries visiting or transiting Hong Kong during the Games. HAB, in conjunction with the Equestrian Events (Hong Kong) of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad Company Limited (Equestrian Company), has the specific role of receiving heads of states, heads of governments, royalty and sports ministers who are officially accredited by the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of XXIX Olympiad to attend the Olympics. In this regard, preparatory meetings with HAB and the Equestrian Company have been ongoing for a long time.

### Cultural sensitivity

HAB estimates that the Equestrian Events will draw to Hong Kong some thousands of visitors comprising athletes, sporting officials and their entourages, equestrian spectators, as well as media. The construction of competition venues also creates more job opportunities. In the long run, Hong Kong will be able to raise its international profile, promote its credentials as "Asia's world city" and further strengthen its status as a tourism and events city.



Buntings are erected at the Avenue of Stars in Tsim Sha Tsui.

The Equestrian Company will be hosting welcome receptions to extend a warm welcome to the participating athletes, team officials and overseas parties who are not able to join the Beijing opening ceremony due to tight competition schedules. Live entertainment and cultural performances will be presented during the Events.

Catering services will provide a variety of safe, healthy and nutritious food and beverages for athletes who come from all around the world with varying dietary needs. At the athletes village, international cuisine will be available, and Chinese and Asian cuisines will also be showcased on a seven-day rotational menu. Hot and cold foods (including vegetarian options) and beverages in a buffet style will be served on a 24-hour basis. Halal and kosher foods will also be available.

### Showcasing Hong Kong's hospitality

The Tourism Commission (TC) has been working closely with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) to



A sports exchange programme featuring sports demonstrations by three of the 2008 Olympic Games co-host cities, Beijing, Qingdao and Hong Kong was held in October 2007 to raise public awareness of the 300-day countdown to the Beijing Olympics.

leverage the co-hosting of the Events to promote Hong Kong. Together, their initiatives include a display of mega Olympic rings on the façade of the Hong Kong Museum of Art and setting up the Hong Kong Olympic Piazza next to the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The Hong Kong Olympic Piazza will be open free of charge to both local residents and overseas visitors between July 25 and August 24. There will be broadcasts of the Olympic opening/closing ceremonies and competition events, display of information about Olympic Games and Equestrian Events, cultural and entertainment activities, etc. Information and suggested itineraries will be provided to visitors on site to promote Hong Kong's exciting shopping and dining experience, as well as its diversified portfolio of tourist attractions.

TC has sponsored a Government Announcement of Public Interest for promotion of the hospitality culture to complement the staging of the Events. HKTB has arranged mounting of banners at ports of entry and Olympic-themed decorations on visitor directional signage at tourist areas. HKTB and TC, in collaboration with HAB and the Equestrian Company, have also organised topical briefings and familiarisation visits for the travel trade members at all levels since February 2008.

Other than visitors who are interested in the Equestrian Events, the Beijing Olympic Games will also attract a large number of Olympic fans to Hong Kong. The promotional activities will entice them to revisit Hong Kong and recommend our city to their friends and families.



The Olympic rings on the facade of the Hong Kong Museum of Art.

## Who's in and who's out

With the huge influx of visitors, one of the biggest jobs in ensuring the Events to proceed without a hitch falls to the Immigration Department (ImmD) which set up the Special Tactical Agency, consisting of four members, at its Airport Division in April 2008 to plan for the Events.

ImmD is tasked with facilitating the importation and exportation of horses and grooms at the airport, the entry/exit clearance of VIPs and participating teams while maintaining its usual effective immigration and security control. The biggest challenge is to ensure that it undertakes its Olympic duties to the best of its ability while maintaining effective immigration control.

ImmD anticipates additional thousands of visitors will be attracted by the Events via the airport.

According to its Contingency Plan for the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events, ImmD will take a proactive approach to work in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, especially the Hong Kong Police Force in intelligence-gathering and exchange before and during the Events.

ImmD will also guard against service disruption at control points and immigration offices resulting from any unforeseen incidents, including system and power failures.

A Three Tier Response System is adopted to handle different levels of emergency. Low level and moderate level of emergency are respectively handled by division and branch heads. In the event of a high level of emergency, the Deputy Director of ImmD will take charge of the command and give strategic directives to subject branch heads as appropriate.

Close liaison has been maintained between ImmD and its Mainland counterparts for the exchange of information and ideas in order to ensure the smooth running of the Events.



Measures to assist entry/exit clearance of VIPs at airport stepped up.