

Speech by CE at 3rd Asian Youth Athletics Championships opening ceremony (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the opening ceremony for the 3rd Asian Youth Athletics Championships today (March 15):

Mr Kondrat (Vice President of Asian Athletics Association, Mr Alexey Kondrat), Mr Moh (President of Hong Kong Amateur Athletic Association (HKAAA), Mr Alex Moh), Mr Kwan (Chairman of HKAAA, Mr Kwan Kee), athletes, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to join you today for the opening ceremony of the third Asian Youth Athletics Championships. This year's event features over 400 young athletes – 16 and 17 years of age – from 29 Asian countries and regions competing in 40 events. I'm delighted to welcome you all to Hong Kong for this prestigious, three-day international Championships.

In terms of the number of athletes participating, this year's event is the biggest ever; but what excites me the most is the growing size of the Hong Kong team. At the first and the second Championships in 2015 and 2017, Hong Kong sent 13 and 26 young athletes to compete. This year, I am glad to note, we have a team of 62. It shows that we have many good young athletes in the city and our younger generations are passionate about sports, which can only be very good news.

The benefits of sports are well documented. Being involved in sports helps develop our physical and mental strengths as well as our character. It teaches us the importance of teamwork, leadership and discipline. It increases our confidence and reduces our stress. And, above all, it brings us a lot of joy. That's why my Government has worked hard to develop sports in Hong Kong. We have injected resources to boost support for our athletes and our national sports associations. We are also investing substantially in sports venues and sports grounds. That includes the 28-hectare Kai Tak Sports Park, the construction of which has just begun. It will include a 50 000-seat main stadium and an athletics stadium with a seating capacity of 5 000, allowing Hong Kong to host more regional and international athletics events in the future.

But for now, Hong Kong is proud to host this year's Asian Youth Athletics Championships. I'm grateful to the Hong Kong Amateur Athletic Association for its vision in making this international tournament possible and successful. My thanks, as well, to the enormous support the Championships has received from its many supporting organisations and sponsors.

For the young athletes here, I wish each and every one of you good luck

and record results at the Championships. More importantly, as you are about to hit your physical peak in the coming years, I wish you all the best in your continued pursuit of athletic excellence and a very happy stay in Hong Kong. Thank you very much.

