

Speech by CS at Hong Kong Riding for Disabled Association Cup Luncheon 2019 (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the Hong Kong Riding for the Disabled Association Cup Luncheon 2019 today (June 8):

Thomas (The Chairman of Hong Kong Riding for the Disabled Association, Mr Thomas Yeung), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am pleased to join you all here at the Riding for the Disabled Association Cup Luncheon. First and foremost, I would like to extend my warmest congratulation and appreciation to the Riding for the Disabled Association for organising this meaningful and exciting race.

When it comes to horse riding, some people may think of horse racing which, of course, has a long history in Hong Kong. However, riding as a sport is much more than that and can bring us many benefits. Riders tend to develop better reflexes, balance and body co-ordination as the sport requires the entire body to guide and propel the horse forward. Therefore, horseback riding is widely recognised as an effective form of rehabilitation and therapy in the medical sector.

Beyond physical benefits, riding is enjoyable and promotes the concept of "challenge by choice" in which people are empowered to decide whether to participate in an activity. Our local Paralympian Natasha Tse also sees her sport as a source of inspiration and training for her body. Her success story inspires all and serves to illustrate how a life-changing sport can be.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government attaches great importance to providing rehabilitation services and welfare to people with disabilities. The overall government recurrent expenditure in this area has increased from \$16.6 billion in 2007-08 to \$33.9 billion in 2018-19, representing an increase of over 100 per cent. The Government also spares no effort in promoting a sustainable sporting culture and implementing three broad policy objectives, namely promoting sports for all, supporting elite athletes and attracting more major sports events to Hong Kong. The development of sports for persons with disabilities is one of the major initiatives taken forward by the Government. We have implemented various measures to provide support and promote participation in sports for persons with disabilities.

To name a few, we launched in February this year outreach sports programmes to provide training on bocce to 50 persons with intellectual disability at three workshops or centres. We will extend the outreach programmes to persons with physical disability, visual impairment and hearing impairment soon. In parallel, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

has launched the Pilot Scheme for Priority Booking of Facilities, giving organisations of people with disabilities booking priority at four designated sports centres during non-peak period, with a view to boosting their participation rate.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express my warmest appreciation to the Riding for the Disabled Association for their relentless efforts in promoting rehabilitation riding in the past four decades. Numerous children and adults with disabilities have benefited from the Association's free riding lessons and activities. Their enthusiastic and invaluable support helps substantially the physically-challenged and their family members to overcome obstacles and foster integration, contributing to the development of a harmonious society in Hong Kong. I wish the Riding for the Disabled Association continuous success, this year's racing game a resounding triumph and all of you a most enjoyable and memorable afternoon. Thank you.

