

Speech by FS at Inter-School Athletics Competition (English only)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Inter-School Athletics Competition today (March 8):

Stella (The Chairperson of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Secondary Schools Regional Committee of Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation, Mrs Stella Lau), distinguished guests, students and athletes, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

So here comes the remarkable last day of this year's Inter-School Athletics Competition, which has run for 18 competitive days, with more than 250 schools and nearly 23 000 students taking part. You competed, head-on, in sports ranging from badminton and basketball to football, rugby, netball, swimming and life saving.

Sport is certainly life expanding – in health and well-being, and in the sheer joy of competition. I certainly saw that just a few moments ago, taking in the exciting finals of the 4x400 metre relay races.

I'm delighted to be here to congratulate the winners today, and also the participants, along with their coaches and schools and parents. And let's not forget the Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation, which works closely with the Government on the development of sports and runs, smartly and smoothly, the vast programme of sporting competitions within our school system.

I'm here, as well, to let you know that the Government is committed to sport, believes in what it can do for our students, our schools and the well-being of the community.

Recently, we awarded a \$30 billion contract for the construction of Kai Tak Sports Park. Work on what will be our most important sports centre began last month and is expected to be completed in 2023.

For those of you who are interested to become an elite athlete, let me assure you that the Government is committed to support you.

In the Budget last year, I injected an additional \$6 billion to the Elite Athletes Development Fund to ensure that our internationally competitive athletes can count on a stable source of funding support.

This year, I will boost the Hong Kong Athletes Fund by another \$250 million. That will create more scholarships in support of young athletes pursuing dual-track development, i.e. pursuing sports training and academic studies at the same time. Additional cash recognition awards will also be provided to full-time athletes on their retirement.

In summary, the Government is working to ensure that you can take part in your favourite sports at whatever level.

The point of the game is playing, enjoying, and developing a spirit of sportsmanship. That, I'm pleased to say, was brilliantly obvious today.

Thank you.