

Speech by FS at joint opening ceremony of HOFEX and other events (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the joint opening ceremony of HOFEX, ProWine Hong Kong, Natural & Organic Asia and Retail Asia Conference & Expo at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre this morning (September 7):

Margaret (the President & CEO of Informa Markets in Asia, Ms Margaret Ma Connolly), Dr Pang (the Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Dr Pang Yiu-kai), Noor (the Trade Commissioner and Consulate General of Malaysia in Hong Kong, Ms Noor Ezzwane Ahmad), CG Clemente (the Consul General of Italy in Hong Kong, Mr Clemente Contestabile), trade commissioners and directors, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I'm delighted to join you today for the opening ceremony of HOFEX and ProWine Hong Kong, along with the Retail Asia Conference & Expo, and Natural & Organic Asia.

The "fantastic four" fairs are expected to attract more than 30 000 trade buyers, from Hong Kong and around the world. They're keen to connect, source and do business, in person and online, with some 1 000 exhibiting brands.

It is heartening to see this compelling show of confidence. And it is led, I'm pleased to say, by some of my favourite sectors: F&B (food and beverage), hospitality and retail.

Now in its 19th edition, HOFEX presents another inspired programme of events and activities, including the Hong Kong International Culinary Classic. I understand that more than 300 chefs, cooks and other food aficionados will battle it out over afternoon tea, pastry and Chinese and Western cuisine.

The Hong Kong Coffee Competition and the Foodtech Asia seminar are among the fair's stimulating new offerings.

And I'm pleased to see that ProWine Hong Kong is once again a featured event alongside HOFEX. Highlights include a series of masterclasses of wine and spirits, with Japan and California in the spotlight this year.

Hong Kong may not be blessed with vineyards. But we are Asia's pre-eminent wine trading and distribution centre. That's thanks to our long-standing experience in the wine trade, world-class logistics infrastructure,

zero wine duties and our singular ties to the Mainland.

That Hong Kong is hosting four high-profile trade fairs over the next three days is testimony to the resilience of our convention and exhibition industry and our unwavering belief in the business, and in the value, of trade.

The Hong Kong SAR Government fully supports the industry and the critical importance of its speedy recovery. Which is why we've put aside a \$1 billion HKD Convention and Exhibition Industry Subsidy Scheme for exhibition and convention organisers. And today's event is one of the Scheme's beneficiaries.

That said, ladies and gentlemen, vaccination is by far the most comprehensive and cost-effective means of beating COVID-19 and moving into the post-pandemic economy.

The SAR Government's "Early Vaccination for All" campaign offers free and easy vaccination throughout the community. If you haven't yet to be vaccinated, I urge you to do so. For your family, your business and your future.

My sincere thanks to the organiser – Informa Markets – for delivering this cheering international trade show.

I wish you good health and the best of business at the fairs.

Thank you.



