

Speech by FS at opening ceremony of WBSC Baseball5 World Cup 2024 (English only) (with photos)

â€‹Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the opening ceremony of the WBSC Baseball5 World Cup 2024 today (October 7):

Mr Fraccari (President of the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC), Mr Riccardo Fraccari), Andrew (President of the Baseball Association of Hong Kong, China, Mr Andrew Fan), Wilfred (Chairman of the Major Sports Events Committee, Mr Wilfred Ng), Winnie (Head of Charities (Culture, Sports and Community Engagement) of the Hong Kong Jockey Club, Ms Winnie Yip), players and fans, ladies and gentlemen,

I'm delighted to join you for the opening ceremony of the WBSC Baseball5 World Cup 2024.

Baseball5 is a whole new ballgame, folks. The first Baseball5 World Cup took place just two years ago, in Mexico City. And Hong Kong, I'm pleased to say, is hosting the World Cup's second edition over the next six days, right here at Central Harbourfront, with the spectacular Victoria Harbour as the backdrop.

This event splendidly illustrates how sports can be seamlessly woven into the fabric of our city. It brings Baseball5 to the heart of Hong Kong, allowing players, residents and visitors to enjoy the games against the city's skyline. At the same time, it brings Hong Kong once again to a world of audience, who are watching the games here live and through broadcast across the globe.

As you can see, Hong Kong is as vibrant, energetic and welcoming as ever.

Speaking of Baseball5, its beauty is its streamlined, fast-paced mix of traditional baseball and softball, with more than a little handball tossed in. Yes, you whack the ball with your bare hand, fist, wrist or arm. There are no gloves, bats or pitchers in this urban street game in a hurry. And it can be played almost anywhere, though I wouldn't recommend the family living room. It's a bouncy rubber ball, after all.

The fast, flexible nature of Baseball5 brings to mind the spirit of Hong Kong – efficiency, resilience, resourcefulness and fleet-footed adaptability – qualities that have shaped Hong Kong into the thriving city it is today.

The World Cup has been awarded the "M" Mark status by our Major Sports Events Committee, and for good reason.

The international tournament brings together 12 teams from five continents. And Hong Kong, China, ladies and gentlemen, is among them. Speaking of men and women, this is a mixed game: eight players on a team, four men and four women. Of course, boys and girls are playing Baseball5, too – in Hong Kong and all over the world.

And the game is gaining popularity. I'm pleased to learn that the number of teams participating in the next edition of the World Cup will be expanded, and that it will be featured for the first time in the Youth Olympic Games in 2026.

My thanks to WBSC, and the Baseball Association of Hong Kong, China, for organising this world-class event and putting a bright spotlight on Hong Kong as the region's sports and entertainment capital.

I'm also grateful to the Hong Kong Jockey Club, whose financial support has made this spectacular sporting event possible. And my thanks, too, to all the volunteers and sponsors involved.

I wish the WBSC Baseball5 World Cup resounding success. And all our overseas players, fans and friends an unforgettable stay in Hong Kong, on and off the field.

Ladies and gentlemen, beyond this glamorous harbour, Hong Kong has so much to offer, so much for you to explore. For example, over 200 Michelin-recommended restaurants, food stalls on the streets, the breath-taking hiking trails in the countryside, and stunning outlying islands. Don't miss this opportunity. Enjoy Hong Kong.

Now, let's play ball. Thank you very much.

