

Press Release

Hong Kong dragon boats race in Berlin waters

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin (HKETO Berlin), together with the Hong Kong Tourism Board, sponsored the 18th annual Berlin Dragon Boat City Cup, held in Grünau in Berlin, Germany, on June 20 and 21 (Berlin time). Some 100 teams from all over Germany took part in the competition, which is Berlin's largest water sports event. For the first time, HKETO Berlin joined the 200-metre City Cup Mixed competition with its own team, Hong Kong Waverunners.

At the award ceremony, the Director of HKETO Berlin, Ms Betty Ho, presented trophies to the winning teams. Ms Ho said she was impressed by the fact that the Hong Kong tradition of dragon boat racing reaches as far as Berlin and has spread throughout the world, reflecting important values such as endurance, harmony and teamwork. "Today, 40 years after the first races in Hong Kong, there are nearly 50 million dragon boaters in China and over 300,000 in Europe. People from all over the world come to Hong Kong every year to join the international competitions at the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival and enjoy the tradition, culture and social interaction of dragon boat racing," Ms Ho said.

Dragon boat racing originated in China and dates back more than 2,200 years. The poet Qu Yuan took his own life by jumping into the Miluo River in protest against state rulers. When local villagers learned of his death, they took their boats out on the river and hit the water with their paddles and beat drums to keep the corpse safe from fish. The dragon boat tradition is based on this legend and Hong Kong's first international races were held in 1976, marking the start of the modern era of competitive dragon boat racing. The teams back then mainly consisted of Hong Kong fishermen.

Nowadays, the Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races attract more than 5,000 athletes in 200 teams from 11 countries who compete against each other for 20 championship titles. The Dragon Boat Festival is even a Hong Kong public holiday, which is being held this year on June 20, the same day as the start of the Berlin City Cup. The Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival not only attracts the world's best dragon boat racers to the international competition in the Asian metropolis, but also more than 100,000 spectators every year watch the boats speeding across the water in Victoria Harbour. At the waterfront, athletes and spectators enjoy non-stop music, live entertainment and ice-cold beer.

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In Berlin, sports fans and families also enjoyed a diverse entertainment programme with culinary and musical highlights and a video about the festivities in Hong Kong.

About Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin

HKETO Berlin is the official Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government representative in commercial relations and other economic and trade matters in Germany as well as Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland.

Photo Captions

1. Dragon boats race in the Berlin Dragon Boat City Cup, held in Grünau in Berlin, Germany, on June 20 and 21 (Berlin time).
2. The Director of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin, Ms Betty Ho (middle) and the Hong Kong Waverunners.

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