



For Immediate Release

**CELEBRATION AND HEARTBREAK FOR HONG KONG ROWERS
AT OLYMPIC QUALIFICATION EVENT**

There were tears of joy and heartbreak for Hong Kong rowers competing in the finals of the Asia and Oceania Olympic Qualification Regatta in Korea today. Racing on the 2014 Asian Games course in Chungju, the new lightweight men's double scull combination of **TANG Chiu Mang and CHIU Hin Chun** took third place in a close-fought final, to gain a qualifying place for the Games in Rio. Heat winners Japan took the early lead, but China pushed hard before the halfway mark to move ahead, with Japan and Hong Kong chasing. In the last 500 meters, China continued to draw away to take first position in 6:24.70, with Japan holding off a rapidly closing Hong Kong - finishing in 6:27.79 and 6:29.76 respectively. Indonesia were 4th, India 5th and Uzbekistan 6th, with only the top 3 finalists qualifying for Rio.

Experienced Hong Kong stroke-man **TANG Chiu Mang** is no stranger to the course in Chungju, having won two silver medals here at the Asian Games in 2014. His partner, 22-year old CHIU, only took up rowing in the summer of 2013 however, after switching from the HKSI windsurfing programme. He was recruited via a Talent Identification Programme and this is his first major international success.

The heartbreak came in the lightweight women's double sculls, where experienced single sculler **LEE Ka Man** was paring up with her younger sister **LEE Yuen Yin**. Times from the heats showed that there were at least five crews capable of challenging for the three qualifying places available for Rio in this event. This was confirmed in a thrilling final. SEA Games champions, Vietnam sprinted out from the start but were soon overhauled by the favourites, Japan, with Hong Kong, Korea and Iran almost level in third as the boats passed the halfway mark. Going into the final quarter of the race, Iran fell off the pace whilst Korea, Vietnam and Hong Kong all sprinted for the line. It was a photo finish and, sadly, Hong Kong came out on the wrong side of the qualifying positions with Korea second in 7:06.89, Vietnam third in 7:07.32 and Hong Kong missing out - just 0.19s adrift in 7:07.51.

In the men's single sculls, veteran sculler **LAW Hiu Fung** also narrowly missed out on a qualifying place after he finished just over a second behind Uzbekistan in the B Final for an overall ranking of 8th - with seven crews qualifying for Rio.

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Head Coach **Chris PERRY** shared the high and low feelings of his rowers after the event:-

“Obviously the whole team is absolutely delighted with the result achieved by the men's lightweight double. The combination was only formed after trials at the beginning of this season, and they have made incredible progress. TANG, as the stroke-man showed his maturity and experience in leading the crew, and he lived up again to his nickname of "Turbo" - powering the crew in the sprint finish. For his partner CHIU, to be qualifying for an Olympic Games after only taking up the sport in 2013 is an incredible achievement, and testimony to the partnership between the Hong Kong Sports Institute and the Hong Kong, China Rowing Association (HKCRA) in Talent Identification.

At the same time I feel devastated for the women's crew. They raced an absolutely fantastic race, and put in the fastest last 500 meters of any crew in the event. It is tragic to miss out by just 0.19 seconds in a photo finish. Of course, this is the nature of sport at top Olympic level and the athletes can still be very proud that they put in their best performance of the season in the race. They could not have done more. Korea and Vietnam have qualified crews in both the women's singles and doubles so, according to the rules, they must give up one of these events. If they give up the double, then Hong Kong will be next in line for the place but, unfortunately, it is more likely they will give up the singles in order to have a larger number of athletes in Rio. This will be known in the next two weeks and we shall have to wait and see. **LAW Hiu Fung** will not benefit from any extra place in the men's single, as Hong Kong have already qualified in the double and the same rules apply”.

The team will return to Hong Kong tomorrow at 16:30 (HK Time) by KE601.

The HKCRA congratulates to all the rowers for their excellent achievements and we are so proud of you!

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