

PRESS RELEASE

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Lion Dance & Boat Blessing Ceremony 2024

(For immediate release) Did you know that, during the 1950s and 60s, lion dances in Hong Kong developed an unsavoury reputation because of their association with martial arts groups and triad societies? They were even outlawed by the government but, although the ban has since been lifted, dancers still have to apply for a police permit before performing.

Lion dances these days are vibrant, colourful spectacles with great ceremonial significance. Performed during the Chinese New Year period, they are an opportunity for blessings to be made and good fortune to be bestowed. From important community figures to tiny toddlers, everyone can enjoy the skills and antics of the 'lions' as they prance about on their shaolin poles and exchange food and *lai see* with their audiences.

This is what happened on Monday, the 12th of February, at the Hebe Haven Yacht Club. After a sumptuous buffet in the clubhouse, prepared by Chef Dennis and overseen by new F&B manager, Thomas Shum, the VIPs, government officials, village elders, members and guests went downstairs and were invited to sit alongside the Garden Bar.

Then came the dotting of the eyes of the pink and yellow lions. This was done by Ms Amanda Wong (LOi/c(PSW), SKDO, Home Affairs Dept), Ms Kezia Tsang (Div. Ass. Cmdr, Marine East Division, Hong Kong Police) and the club's commodore, Don Johnston.

Then, to the throbbing of drums and crashing of cymbals, the yellow lion performed a spectacular dance, leaping backwards and forwards over the shaolin poles to the delight of the 100 or so people who had gathered to watch the performance. In his finale, the yellow lion unraveled a banner which read 恭喜發財 (Kung Hei Fat Choy) or 'Wishing you a Prosperous New Year' while the pink lion mingled with the crowd, posing for photos.

From there, it was a blessing of the restaurant and kitchen with the attendant musicians creating a very Chinese atmosphere. The admin offices in the Pak Sha Wan Centre followed, after which the pink lion headed for the Sailing Office to perform his blessing. Across the hardstand, the party then visited *Hebe One*, the club's multi-function catamaran, and passing by *Ichiban*, *RB*, dressed overall, and the historic UFO 34, *Eclipse*, also dressed overall.

The two docks of the marina were next on the pink lion's blessing of the Hebe Haven Yacht Club's facilities. Back in the car park, the photos of children and families continued. "They took time to get to know us," said the club's Charron Robertson, head of Events & Sponsorship. "We used a different dance company this year and they gave more of their time with families. That was all ad lib – it was wonderful."

"The dragon became part of the club today," said Peter de Vries, a guest of Gencom member, Aaron Goach. "The performance was both colourful and skillful."

By the way, the 12th of February wasn't just any old day. It was an especially auspicious day according to the 通勝 (Tung Sing), a popular Chinese calendar.

And so ended the lion dance for the club's Year of the Dragon. "The dance achieved its goal of bringing back some 'heart' to the club," said Charron Robertson. "We saw a community spirit that we certainly deserve."

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About Hebe Haven Yacht Club

Hebe Haven Yacht Club is a private members club established in the Pak Sha Wan, Sai Kung area in 1963. The Club provides first-class yacht racing and boating facilities for members. The Club also works closely with local schools and organisations, to offer training facilities and professional instruction to develop youth sailing in Hong Kong. In addition, as a 'Caring Organisation' member, the Club proactively contributes to the local community with regularly organised events.

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