At this year’s 37th Annual Swimming Gala held on 11 September, students of Hotung Secondary School, from swimmers, spectators, officials to cheerleaders, got dripping wet as a result of the persistent rain, but it failed to dampen their enthusiasm or stop them from giving their best. All had a great time from start to finish – and left the Victoria Park Swimming Pool with delight, fond memories and food for thought.

In her opening speech, Principal Ms Wong Yin-ling noted that it was quite a feat for the school to have organised this annual event 36 times and to be able to keep going
strong. Actually, due to waning interest in the sport, many local schools have decided against holding any swimming gala. She was very glad that this time 103 Hotung girls had chosen to take part and was hopeful that more would participate next year.

Ms Wong stressed the importance of a strong physique to students. Not only can it help them develop mental dexterity, which will translate into better performance in their studies and in exams, but it will also give them effective protection against diseases, especially infectious ones like the swine flu. Swimming, according to experts, is the best sport for fitness, as it requires you to use all your muscles. Another benefit of swimming, in Ms Wong’s view, is that it is ideal for building up your mental fortitude, enabling you to deal with adversities with courage. To illustrate this point, she cited the story of China’s latest sporting hero Zhang Lin, who became the first Chinese male swimmer to win a World Championship gold medal earlier in July. He encountered countless challenges on his road to success but he struggled on and
prevailed in the end. Finally, Ms Wong revealed her love for swimming by disclosing her own best record – covering 30 laps, or 1,500 metres, in one go. Naturally, everyone present was impressed and gave her a big hand.

The events went full steam ahead right after Ms Wong’s speech. While the swimmers gave their all and fought it out among themselves in the water, things were as hectic and exciting on the grandstand as the cheerleading teams from different houses belted out slogans and inspirational songs to cheer on their fellow housemates, teachers or guests. They managed to shout themselves hoarse on their own initiative even without the frenzied prodding of their trainers. In short, for four straight hours, the whole venue was filled with a fun-filled, festive atmosphere and an electrifying vigour.

The highlight of this year’s Swimming Gala was, like always, the contest between pairs of students and teachers. This year, the event attracted a total of eight teams, with the ones headed by the two PE teachers the crowd’s favourites. To everyone’s surprise, however, the champions turned out to Ms Verman Wong, an old girl, and Li Ka-man, a S6 student. Throughout the event, the cheers and the laughter were deafening and heartwarming.
Hotung girls were given more food for thought when the guest of honour Mr Albert Law, President of Rotary Club of Admiralty, delivered his speech at the closing ceremony. Echoing Principal Ms Wong Yin-ling’s remarks, he highlighted the important benefits of physical exercise. He pointed out that sports can strengthen our physique, boost our confidence and improve our ability to handle adversity. At the same time, he stressed that for a comprehensive whole-person development, having a sound mind and a sound body is not enough, as developing a caring heart has to be included, which can be best achieved by participating in community service to help those who are underprivileged or in need.

Drawing on his own experience, Mr Law recalled how his first voluntary service assignment many years ago at Castle Peak Mental Hospital fully opened his eyes and completely changed his perspectives, in addition to relieving the stifling stress caused by his problems at work. He came to deeply appreciate how blessed he actually was and how true the saying “it is better to give than to receive” was. The thunderous applause by the students that greeted his speech showed that the message was well received and understood.
The other guests of honour attending the function included Mr Michael Eyles, current President of Rotary Club of Kingspark Hong Kong, Mr Stephen Tsai, District Director of American International Assurance, Ms Yolanda Ng, Wanchai District Councillor and Mr Chan Man-keung.

These are some of the most notable results of this year’s Swimming Gala:

- House championship (Grade A) : Diligence
- House championship (Grade B) : Courtesy
- House championship (Grade C) : Truth
- Overall House championship : Diligence
- Class championship (Senior) : 4A
- Class championship (Junior) : 3D
- Individual championship (Grade A) : Li Ka-man (6CS)
- Individual championship (Grade B) : Cheung Wai-ting (4A), Yiu Wing-sum (3D) and Sin Lok-man (2D)
- Individual championship (Grade C) : Chan Wing-yu (2A)
- Best Cheering Team : Confidence
- Winner of Best Discipline Award : Confidence