

# Overseas teams out to dethrone HK Tigers

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## ICE HOCKEY

**Chan Kin-wa**

Defending champions the Hong Kong Tigers face a daunting task in trying to keep the Mega Ice Hockey 5s trophy at home.

Teams from Germany, Japan, Canada and China form the biggest hurdles for the hosts when the largest tournament of its kind in Asia begins at MegaBox in Kowloon Bay from next Tuesday, running to May 9.

"The standard of ice hockey in Hong Kong has been picking up strongly over the last couple of years with more young and potential players taking up the sport," said tournament director and deputy general manager of Mega Ice, Keith Fong Gee-kay.

"The Hong Kong team finished fourth in last month's Asia Challenge Cup, and with the experience we gained playing against top regional teams, such as Thailand and hosts the UAE, we are improving gradually.

Of course, we have home rink advantage now, which will boost our chances."

The Mega Ice rink, measuring 26 metres by 57 metres, is Hong Kong's first and only approved venue for international ice hockey games.

The 2009 tournament features 60 teams from around the world with half of the teams taking part in the youth competition for ages five to 12. These up-and-coming players also come from China, Manila and Singapore. In the adult division, 15 local men's teams made up of Hong Kong division one players will compete, as well as five women's teams.

"This amazing line-up of ice hockey talent is sure to raise the sport's popularity in Hong Kong as the community gets to experience the excitement and passion of the game first hand," said Fong. "We have also invited four Canadian and one Finnish professional referees to officiate at the games."

Admission to the tournament is free.