

Other Comments from Individual Coaches

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Introduction

As the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) of HKSAR has conducted a “Sports Policy Review” (paper) so as to formulate a strategic blueprint for the sport development in Hong Kong, which is certainly a form of forward movement for the sports in Hong Kong.

Up to now, Hong Kong does not have any sports policy, this review definitely is a very important paper for the development of sports, for that reason we should make it the best because it will influence the long-term sport development.

1. Better prospects for High Performance Sport

In the reason of Elite Sports has moved on a successful path and improved a lot throughout the last decade, government should now focus more on the High Performance by putting more money on it and paying more attention to the athletes.

1.1 Government should realize High Performance need to spend money as a long-term investment. Sport can build up the international image in the worldwide arenas, the typical example proven that is Lee Lai Shan winning the gold medal in the Olympic Games. In the long run, Hong Kong should have a better-developed sport culture that can advantage for strengthening our nationality's union.

1.2 If Government drives to make success in High Performance, it must set the priority and effective strategic toward. Obviously resources are not unlimited, then Government should put the limited resources in a right position and order.

- (i) In order to draw up a more structured “athletes plan” to provide better support for full-time athletes with regard to financial, educational and career guidance, following areas should also be aware: -
 - a. There should be special education training programmes, or more flexible approach in schools for junior athletes. The government should take the lead through legislation of a sports law to make changes in the current education system so that elite athletes could be well supported through a more flexible curriculum and sports achievements were recognized and sport development was more emphasized.
 - b. Elite or retired elite athletes could be attached to the Head Coaches or the national coach of their sport to assist in coaching of the squads. There should be an apprenticeship programme providing allowance for these athletes similar to other vocational training programmes in Hong Kong. This would also help release part of the coaching workload, at least in junior and potential athlete development area. This would help the elite development and support the “athletes plan”.
 - c. The Athletes hostel should be expanded and enhanced to include more studying and recreational facilities to provide a better environment for elite athletes.

- d. Other than encouraging the corporate sector to employ elite athletes and retired elite athletes, the government should take the lead by employing them and allowing more flexible working hours and to accommodate their training and competition needs.
 - e. Apart from financial support, the government should further raise the profile of athletes to foster sports culture as a whole.
 - f. Apart from the major games incentive awards, there were no incentive awards for athletes with high achievements in such high-standard competitions as Asian / World Championships.
- (ii) In addition to strengthen the athletes - backbone of the High Performance, coach is the back up for the backbone and work back to back with the athletes. As Sport is a labor-intensive industry, the ratio of coach to athletes should be increased.

There had been a serious lack of coaching manpower at the HKSI and number of coaches had been frozen for many years, while the pool of elite athletes was increasing. Elite athletes needed more intensive and comprehensive personalized training programme as their counterparts internationally. There must be real resources and additional funding added in this area instead of paying lip services to elite training.

- (iii) Technical support such as sports science and sports medicine and other on-field support during training and competition had become an integral part of elite training. Such provision was minimal and could not meet the basic requirement of all elite athletes at the HKSI in the past. In order not to fall behind our counterparts at the international arena, much resources and manpower was required.

Certainly, Government highlight the High Performance is vital but it must set the priority for it.

- 1.3 A comprehensive infrastructure for elite training and development was also crucial factor in elite development. HKSAR government should take the lead to ensure that appropriate guaranteed resources would be allocated to support elite development.
- 1.4 A comprehensive supporting system emphasizing the continuum of sport is crucial for the future of sport in Hong Kong. The paper emphasized the support of more junior and potential athletes. However, it was also important that such a continuum should be supported under this same sports structure and system, from talent identification to development programmes linking to the elite development and training programmes under the direction and supervision of the elite programmes.
- 1.5 HKSAR government should also consider organizing more territory-wide multi-sports games / competitions to foster the sports culture and enhance the competition standard of Hong Kong athletes.
- 1.6 HKSI facilities should be upgraded into a high-performance training centre to include more up to standard international facilities such as tennis clay courts, standard (50m) swimming pools.

In order to maintain an elite training environment that facilities were available all times and that training was not disturbed. The facilities at HKSI should be retained and maintained for elite training only, instead of turning into public facilities for the purpose of generating income.

1.7 Support to use facilities of the tertiary institution to make them satellite training centers for elite training. The programmes should be HKSI/NSA coach driven and partnership based. The institutions should play supporting role in delivering such elite programmes.

Some of the strength and conditioning facilities of existing LCSD fitness rooms should be upgraded to make them suitable for elite and squad training programmes of NSAs. The management policy of such facilities should cater for such purpose. Expertise at the HKSI should help develop sport specific strength and conditioning programmes for elite coaches to use these fitness rooms in order to ease the saturated situation at the HKSI.

LCSD should designate certain public facilities to NSAs as training base for their national / regional / development squad training.

2. Creating a More Clearly Defined and Effective Administrative Structure for Sport

In the report, HAB had proposed to adopt Option C i.e. to dissolve HKSDB, but I feel disappointed about why there existed a directional decision prior to the completion of the consultation, which is not fair to HKSDB.

2.1 Why I support Option A?

- (i) The role of HKSDB had been clearly defined with the terms of reference similar to the proposed Sports Commission. It was only necessary for the government to empower the HKSDB to deliver all its roles and functions.
- (ii) The HKSDB was not part of the government structure, it could break away from the rigid bureaucracy of the government setting and allow a more flexible, efficient and effective approach in its administration.
- (iii) The HKSDB was in a better position to fulfill the role of the proposed Sports Commission as its Management had the expertise and experience in planning, co-ordinating, funding and initiating various sports development projects.
- (iv) Allocation of funding should not be rest in hands of the end users. Over the past twelve years, the HKSDB had developed a set of funding criteria considered to be fair by most NSAs. With its focus sport concept, elite sports were able to achieve international success. Should there be only one funding body which should be neutral enough, it should be the HKSDB for it had been working closely with all NSAs and understanding most of the need of each NSA in development and elite training.

2.2 Why not to support Option C?

- (i) Member of the HKSDB had been directly appointed by the government, and they were representatives from SF&OC, HAB, respective government departments / related organizations, elite from the community and individuals with good standing in sport. It

was always possible to include a wider representation at any time the government considered appropriate. It was obvious that the same combination of member would be appointed to the Sports Commission, so there's no reason to change only the name and bring even more uncertainty to sport.

- (ii) With the similar members structure but without an operation arm as the HKSDb, with little change in the sports structure in Hong Kong, the paper did not elaborate how this new body could deliver the recommendation which the HKSDb has raised for many years.
- (iii) Without such an executive arm as the HKSDb, the proposed body would remain as an advisory body. Because of the voluntary nature of the organization, accountability to deliver would be in question, and there was no bind of any kind for the sports organizations under its umbrella to follow its instructions in the future.
- (iv) Similar commissions in other fields e.g. Education Commission was proved to be ineffective in delivery their advisory roles.
- (v) It would be hard for the Sports Commission to monitor the use of funds, as it would only be an advisory body giving direction to respective funding bodies.
- (vi) The HKSDb was comparatively flexible and efficient in its funding system. During the past few years, the HKSDb had great difficulties in getting additional funding for sports, such as the preparation for major Games from the ASDf, through the government offices. It was worried that if the funding agency was within the government set up with people having little knowledge or concern about elite sport, elite sports would be tied down by the bureaucratic government system and its inflexibility, not to mention the possible lost of opportunities because the process took far too long than necessary.

2.3 To formulate a clear function / role of HKSI is also recommended

- (i) The HKSI should be re-positioned as the elite training centre for elite athletes where comprehensive support in coaching, elite competitions, athlete development and technical services were provided.
- (ii) The HKSI should continue to be the elite training centre of Hong Kong with full autonomy and free from politics in delivery of its programmes.
- (iii) An effective communication approach had been adopted between the HKSI and all elite sports NSAs in the past few years. The elite training programme was a partnership programme between two parties, and NSAs' were well informed and consulted on the planning and delivery of the programme.
- (iv) An effective coaching structure was crucial for the overall elite sports. Only with adequate coaching support could the performance of elite athletes be enhanced.

3. Review of Public Funding for Sport

It is good to look into the Public Funding for Sport in this review. Following are my comments:

- 3.1 The government had reiterated once and again that there would be no new money for sport in the near future. In view of the significant shortfall for elite training and development, the government must review and re-allocate its funding to sport so to maintain a more balanced emphasis to high performance sport and sport promotion and participation. According to the existing resources spent in sport, only 8% is given to the HKSDDB.
- 3.2 Consistent support was vital for consolidating effective feeder systems and continuous development of sports and elite training. HAB should consider granting funds to NSAs on a 4-year cycle tying in with the Asian Games cycle.
- 3.3 To ensure cost-effectiveness, the Sports Commission, or the HKSDDB in the future, as a policy-making body, should set priority in the overall sports resources allocation, with a view to strike a balance between support to high performance sports and mass participation in sport.
- 3.4 To review the mechanism and criteria in subventing NSAs with a view to ensuring a fairer allocation of resources and to evaluate the choice and number of "Focus" sports in the elite training programmes with a view to optimizing the effectiveness of the resources put into the programmes, which is always a truth. However, there is no mechanism has been mentioned in the paper, therefore the public cannot comment on it. This will also misleading the public to attribute HKSDDB of its unfair current funding policy. But in fact, HKSDDB already has a set of funding criteria, which is accepted by the majority of NSAs.
- 3.5 To establish an "Event Fund" to support the hosting of international sports events in Hong Kong will be a good idea for generates the financial support for the NSAs.
- 3.6 In the future, all funding related to Elite Sports training and competition and development should be allocated through the HKSI in order to eliminate the misunderstanding of double funding to Elite Sports. This would also ensure a more professional approach in the management and monitoring of public funding, and to maintain a one-stop approach in the support to elite sports.
- 3.7 To attract more sports sponsorships, the government should consider introducing tax-exemption incentives for sports sponsors.

4. Planning, Design and Management of Public Sports Venues

Overall recommendations make to the public sports venues are positively moving forward, such as to adopt a more strategic, client-oriented and innovative approach. Besides, I would like to add the following few points on it: -

- 4.1 Before the Government plan to construct some large facilities or venues, it should consult the NSAs first, which to ensure the NSAs will make benefit of the new facility.
- 4.2 Apparently Hong Kong had its own living style and sport culture, Government should consider to add the social elements into the new facilities in an attempt to make it more user-friendly and helps the Community Sports Club development in long-run.

5. More Sport for Students

- 5.1 Government leads development of sport starting from the youngsters is on the right track because sport can release the youth problem. But now the schools mainly concentrate on the academic results of the students, the government must get the involvement and support of the high structure level e.g. headmasters in order to facilitating the plan.
- 5.2 In order to develop the all-round sports development in schools, Government can also organize sports programmes for the schools by using the LCSD venues nearby while the schools have limited facilities.

6. Overall Comments

- 6.1 Promoting of public participation in sport and maintaining support for disable athletes certainly is a good strategic to be formulated. As a whole for the sport development, Government must play an active role to facilitate. If fail, Government then cannot produce any result of it.
- 6.2 The review did not place any emphasis on the key elements affecting the development of elites in Hong Kong, i.e. the lack of society support, consistent and long-term guaranteed support for elite athletes in training on their road to medal achievement. Therefore, paper should investigate the affecting factors of such a phenomenon, rather than putting the blame on a structure.
- 6.3 HKSAR government does not clearly state its goal in the paper, emphasis of the paper is put on sport for all and recreational activities and physical exercise, rather than on elite development. There is a severe imbalance in the allocation of resources and support for the development of high performance sport.
- 6.4 The paper is misleading and irresponsible by making assumptions that creating a new body would resolve all problems and all the recommendations would be delivered, without any concrete suggestions and concrete action steps.
- 6.5 The paper has only addressed the weaknesses and controversies in sport, but not stating the facts and reasons for such weakness and controversies.
- 6.6 The paper is too general, not giving any concrete recommendations or action steps.
- 6.7 As all the coaches, athletes and NSAs was busy preparing for the 2002 Asian Games, the timing for consulting this Review at this moment, which has made the respective parties hard to reflect their views on the Review paper.

- 6.8 The government has been denying its role in the monitoring of sport and put all the blame on the HKSDB for all the controversies and for issues not of HKSDB's responsibility.
- 6.9 The paper has no direction and is contradictory, misleading and full of assumptions. There are no clear mission statement stating its focus, nor any targets or actions steps to state the time frame and how its recommendations should be achieved.
- 6.10 The paper has suggested setting a 5-year or 10-year strategic sports policy, which is actually not long-term enough for elite training.

All the above are my personal views and comments on the "Sports Policy Review". If the concerning party have any questions on that, I am happy to discuss and share with you.

Regards,

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