

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
Sports Development in Hong Kong

Introduction

This paper updates Members on the progress of the key initiatives on promoting sports development, particularly elite sports, in Hong Kong.

Background

2. Following a review on sports policy in 2002, we have set three broad directions for the long term sports development in Hong Kong, namely to develop a strong sporting culture in the community; to achieve greater excellence by our elite athletes; and to raise our international profile on sports. In his 2006-07 Policy Address, the Chief Executive re-affirmed the Government's strategy in sports development and pledged additional resources to help achieve the objectives.

Update on Elite Sports Development

3. Hong Kong's athletes have achieved remarkable success in major games in recent years as evidenced in the record-breaking numbers of medals won in the 2006 Far East and South Pacific Games for the Disabled held in Kuala Lumpur and the Doha Asian Games and the latest world championship won by our elite cyclist, Mr Wong Kam-po. To encourage and train more young people with potential to compete for Hong Kong in the international sports arena, and to support the development of elite athletes in Hong Kong, we have provided additional funding of \$40 million annually from 2007-08 onwards to enhance the support to elite athletes in key areas including financial assistance, athlete training and coaching support, as well as education opportunities and

career development. The funding earmarked will be spent directly on athletes. Besides, to provide elite athletes with a more modern training environment, we are taking forward the redevelopment of the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI).

Direct Financial Support to Athletes

4. Over the past few years, direct financial support to elite athletes has mainly come from three funding sources, which are administered by HKSI, i.e. HKSI monthly stipends, Sports Aid Foundation Fund (SAFF), and Sports Aid for the Disabled Fund (SADF) which caters for the disabled athletes. Separately, HKSI provides funding support to individual athletes of non-elite sports and secondary disciplines of elite sports who have achieved outstanding results in international competitions through the Individual Athletes Support Scheme (IASS) to cover their training expenses as well as basic living expenses, including meal and transportation expenses.

5. In 2005-06, HKSI provided \$5 million as monthly stipends for 198 athletes based on the performance level of athletes. In addition, HKSI disbursed grants of about \$9 million to 223 athletes, including disabled athletes in accordance with the criteria of SAFF and SADF. Under the IASS, about \$1.5 million was disbursed to 10 athletes. In total, around \$15.5 million comprising \$6.5 million of recurrent government subvention and \$9 million drawn from the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) Elite Athletes Fund was spent on direct financial support to elite athletes. Level of assistance under these various schemes is detailed below.

6. In 2005-06, each Elite A athlete could receive a combined total of up to \$17,500 per month paid out from the SAFF and monthly stipends, whereas each Elite B and C athlete could receive financial subsidy amounting to an average of about \$10,000 and \$5,000 per month respectively. According to the actual allocation made by HKSI in 2005-06, the average subsidy to Elite A athletes was no less than \$10,000 per month. Besides, the SADF provided financial assistance to 39 disabled athletes of which each Elite A athlete could receive about \$4,100

per month on average. Disabled athletes are not eligible for monthly stipends which are applicable only to athletes in the 13 elite sports in the HKSI.

7. The financial support provided to elite athletes and disabled elite athletes by HKSI in 2005-06 is detailed at **Annex A** and **Annex B** respectively. Such information has already been provided to Panel Members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)866/06-07(01).

8. With effect from 2007-08, we have decided to allocate half of the \$40 million additional recurrent provision, i.e. \$20 million annually, to improve direct financial support to athletes. Accordingly, the actual amount of Government recurrent subvention to HKSI for direct financial support to athletes would be increased to \$26.5 million. Together with HKSI's annual drawdown of about \$9 million from the HKJC Elite Athletes Fund for supporting the SAFF and SADF to provide top-up grants to athletes, total resources for providing direct financial support to athletes would increase to \$35.5 million per year, or an increase of 129%. This should go some way towards providing our athletes with a more financially stable environment to undergo training and compete in major games.

9. Operationally, we see much merit in terms of public accountability and transparency to consolidate the existing schemes into a unified scheme (proposed to be named as Elite Athletes Grants). Thanks to the inputs and advice from the Elite Sports Committee, the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC), the National Sports Associations (NSAs) of the elite sports and disabled sports, the head coaches and the HKSI Board, a unified scheme has been formulated for implementation by HKSI. While HKSI is still working with the relevant NSAs and head coaches on the detailed implementation arrangement, the elite athletes should be able to benefit from the proposed Elite Athletes Grants with effect from April 2007.

10. To illustrate the improvements to athletes, based on an estimated total of 413 athletes (including 363 able-bodied and 50 disabled athletes), financial support provided to the able-bodied athletes and disabled athletes under the proposed Elite Athletes Grants is summarized

at **Annex C** and **Annex D** respectively. A table comparing the level of direct financial support under the current schemes and the unified scheme is set out below for Members' easy reference:

	<u>Monthly Financial Support</u>	
	<u>Current Situation</u> <u>[Reference: LC Paper</u> <u>No.</u> <u>CB(2)866/06-07(01)]</u>	<u>Unified Scheme</u> <u>(Elite Athletes Grants)</u>
Elite A	\$17,500 (maximum)	\$21,250 - \$32,500
Elite B	\$10,000 (average)	\$11,900 - \$18,200
Elite C	\$5,000 (average)	\$8,500 - \$13,000
Elite A (disabled athletes)	\$4,100 (average)	\$5,400 (average)

Training and Coaching Support

11. In view of the fact that the training expenses budget has not kept pace with growing number of elite athletes under training and the challenges posed by a more competitive global environment, we have decided to allocate \$6 million from the remainder \$20 million from 2007-08 to training programme expenses to be deployed directly by head coaches. Compared with the relevant budget of HKSI in 2006-07 at \$22.86 million, the actual amount for athletes training programme will be around \$28.86 million in 2007-08, representing an increase of 26%. The training programme expenses are deployed for meeting athletes' local and overseas training. They may also tap the Arts and Sport Development Fund (ASDF) for one-off funding to prepare for and participate in major games. A \$40 million injection into the sports portion of the ASDF was approved by Finance Committee. This would provide a stable source of funding for athletes in anticipation of the major games in the coming few years.

Education Opportunities and Career Development

12. To support elite athletes upon their retirement, we have invited SF&OC to work with us in developing a comprehensive athlete

retirement scheme. SF&OC is best placed to carry out this initiative as they have recently set up the Olympians and Meritorious Athletes' Commission (the Commission) whose objectives are to recognize our athletes' outstanding performances in international sports competitions, and to provide local top athletes with more opportunities of overseas exposure in both educational and sports participation as well as to have opportunities of further studies and development especially when they retire from their athletes' careers. Renowned local and Mainland Olympian gold medalists such as Lee Lai-shan and Fu Mingxia are honorary advisors of the Commission. While details of the athlete retirement scheme will be announced as soon as we are in a position to do so, our focus would be on the offer of higher education opportunities and support to career planning and development.

13. Joining hands with SF&OC, we have exchanged views with representatives of the eight higher education institutions funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) on measures to facilitate retired athletes to pursue higher education in Hong Kong. We are glad to learn that most UGC-funded institutions have already put in place measures to support elite athletes. In response to our request to extend the flexibility with admission and to enhance support to elite athletes, all the eight UGC-funded institutions have indicated strong support. Out of their own initiatives, two representatives (one from City University of Hong Kong and another from Hong Kong Baptist University) have been nominated to work with SF&OC in developing the comprehensive athlete retirement scheme.

14. We believe corporations in Hong Kong can also play a useful role in supporting retired athletes who wish to pursue a working career after retirement. We have sounded out some corporations and have received a positive initial response. We will draw up a more detailed scheme for them to take part.

15. We estimate that we may need to deploy about half of the \$14 million (out of the \$40 million mentioned above) yet to be designated allocation to support the retirement package. We are consulting stakeholders to see whether there are other worthwhile projects to promote the well being of elite athletes in order to make full use of the

resources available.

Redevelopment of the Hong Kong Sports Institute

16. The Government is mindful of the need to improve the training facilities and environment for elite athletes. To this end, the Government has earmarked funding to embark on the redevelopment of HKSI. Details are presented in a separate paper for Members' information and consideration.

Update on Promoting Sports for All

17. Sports can strengthen social cohesion and enhance people's quality of life. Promoting "Sports for All" is to encourage people of all age groups to participate actively in sports in quest of sound physical and psychological health as well as positive community spirit.

18. In late April 2007, we shall stage the first biennial Hong Kong Games to promote public participation and a sense of belonging to their community. In 2007-08, we will formulate systematic and objective indicators to measure the effectiveness of the "Sports for All" policy, and collaborate with NSAs, District Councils and district organisations in developing sports facilities and training bases. To meet the community's needs for recreation facilities, the Government has also taken measures to expedite the delivery of Leisure and Cultural Services projects, including the 25 priority projects announced in the Chief Executive's Policy Address in 2005, and further projects selected upon review of the former Municipal Councils projects. The Government has been updating the Sub-Committee to Follow up the Outstanding Leisure and Cultural Services Projects of the Former Municipal Councils under this Panel on the progress with these works projects.

19. To promote sports amongst the elderly, we have together with 17 non-governmental organisations running elderly centres launched the "Healthy Exercise for Longevity" Project in January 2007. This is a 2-year project which will last until December 2008. It aims to

encourage the elderly to engage in sports activities through which they can keep themselves healthy. With the assistance of seven NSAs, seven sports items (including gateball, lawn bowls, table tennis, easy-tennis, social dance, jazz dance and general gymnastics) are covered in this project. The project includes train-the-trainer courses, sports training courses for the elderly, sports competitions and sports fun days. It is expected that about 29,000 elderly persons would benefit from this project through their participation in some 2,000 activities to be held throughout the two years in the 18 districts.

Update on Promoting Major Sports Events

20. Hosting of major sports events helps enhance Hong Kong's image as Asia's sports events capital. By promoting major sports events in Hong Kong, we hope to instill a sustainable sporting culture, foster a sense of pride and social cohesion and bring tangible economic benefits to our community. In 2004, a "M" Mark System and Support Package (M-Mark Scheme) was introduced to recognize and support major sports events organised by NSAs and other sports organisations in Hong Kong. In 2007, we are reviewing the M-Mark Scheme with a view to improving the system and facilitating NSAs and sports organisers on staging more "M" Mark events in Hong Kong. In collaboration with SF&OC and other reputable sports organisations, we shall enhance the role and involvement of the "Core Sponsor Group", apart from providing financial support to approved "M" Mark events.

Advice Sought

21. Members are invited to note the progress of the key initiatives on promoting sports development in Hong Kong.

Home Affairs Bureau
April 2007

Financial Support provided to Elite Athletes by HKSI in 2005/06

Elite Athletes						
Category of Athletes ^{Note 1} (based on the categorization under Sports Aid Foundation Fund)	Total number of athletes	HKSI Stipends		Sports Aid Foundation Fund		Total
		No. of recipients	Annual Total	No. of recipients	Annual Total	
Elite A	18	125 (Note 2)	\$4,344,400	18	\$1,620,000	\$10,736,900
Elite B	68			68	\$3,957,500	
Elite C	30			30	\$815,000	
Potential Athletes (non-SAFF recipients)	33			-	-	
Junior Elite A	38	73 (Note 3)	\$668,700	38	\$1,065,000	\$2,156,200
Junior Elite B	30			30	\$422,500	
Potential Junior Athletes	51			-	-	
Other Potential Athletes	188			-	-	
Total :	456	198	\$5,013,100	184	\$7,880,000	\$12,893,100

Note 1: based on the categorization as laid by the eligibility criteria under Sports Aid Foundation Fund

Note 2: based on the categorization as laid by the criteria for stipend provision for elite athletes

Note 3: based on the categorization as laid by the criteria for stipend provision for elite junior athletes

Source: Hong Kong Sports Institute

Annex B

Financial Support provided to Disabled Elite Athletes by HKSI in 2005/06

Disabled Elite Athletes		
Category of Athletes ^{Note 4} (based on categorization under Sports Aid for the Disabled Fund)	No. of athletes	Annual Total
Elite A	18	\$887,500
Elite B	6	\$180,000
Elite C	15	\$225,000
Potential	50	-
Total :	89	\$1,292,500

Note 4: Based on the categorization as laid by the eligibility criteria under Sports Aid for the Disabled Fund

Remarks : Subsistence grant was provided to to athletes with disabilities separately via the Hong Kong Paralympians Fund.

Source: Hong Kong Sports Institute

Elite Athletes Grants - Financial Support provided to Elite Athletes

		Elite Athletes								
		HKSI Scholarship Athletes			Non-HKSI Scholarship Athletes			Team Sports		Total (\$ million)
Category of Athletes ^{Note}		Number of Athletes	Range of Monthly Support	Annual Total (\$ million)	Number of Athletes	Monthly Support	Annual Total (\$ million)	Number of Teams	Annual Total (\$ million)	
Elite A	Full-time	42	\$21,250 - \$32,500	\$11.4	13	\$12,500	\$1.0	-	-	\$23.8
	Part-time		\$9,750 - \$21,125							
Elite B	Full-time	30	\$11,900 - \$18,200	\$4.6		\$7,000		-	-	
	Part-time		\$5,460 - \$11,830							
Elite C	Full-time	43	\$8,500 - \$13,000	\$4.4		\$5,000		-	-	
	Part-time		\$3,900 - \$8,450							
Potential Athletes	Full-time	39	\$5,525 - \$8,450	\$2.4	-	-	-	-		
	Part-time		\$2,535 - \$5,493							
Junior Elite A	Full-time	47	\$5,525 - \$8,450	\$2.5	5	\$3,250	\$0.2	-	-	\$4.0
	Part-time		\$1,950 - \$4,225							
Junior Elite B	Full-time	27	\$2,550 - \$3,900	\$0.6		\$1,500		-	-	
	Part-time		\$900 - \$1,950							
Potential Junior Athletes		117	\$425 - \$650	\$0.7	-	-	-	-	-	
Other Potential Athletes		284	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Elite & Potential Teams		-	-	-	-	-	-	10 teams	\$1.4	\$1.4
Total :		629 (345 recipients)	-	\$26.6	18 (18 recipients)	-	\$1.2	10 teams	\$1.4	\$29.2

Note: based on the categorization currently applied to the Sports Aid Foundation Fund

Elite Athletes Grants - Financial Support provided to Disabled Elite Athletes

Disabled Elite Athletes		
Category of Athletes ^{Note}	No. of athletes	Annual Total (\$ million)
Elite A	10	\$0.7
Elite B	22	\$0.9
Elite C	18	\$0.4
Potential	50	-
Total :	100 (50 recipients)	\$2.0

Note: based on the categorization currently applied to the Sports Aid for the Disabled Fund

Remarks: subsistence grant has been provided to athletes with disabilities separately via the Hong Kong Paralympians Fund