

Motion on
“Promoting the development of local football”
Moved by Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun
at the Legislative Council meeting
of Wednesday, 4 June 2008
Progress Report

Purpose

At the LegCo Meeting on 4 June 2008, the LegCo endorsed the motion moved by Hon. Mrs. Sophie LEUNG, amended by Hon. CHOY So-yuk and Hon. YEUNG Sum on “Promoting the development of local football”. The motion urged the Government to promote local football development so as to raise the standard of the sport, enhance the community involvement and strengthen cohesion of the society.

2. This report aims at reporting to Members on the progress on the following issues raised in the motion debate.

Suggestion 1

Immediately conduct a detailed study to position the development of local football, formulate an overall development plan, set long-term and short-term goals, and implement the relevant initiatives, etc

Response and Progress

3. Currently, all local national sports associations (NSAs) are affiliated to their international federations of the respective sport. They are responsible for the development of the respective sport in Hong Kong and are autonomous in administration and managed with their own expertise and experience. The Government will actively cope with various NSAs in the promotion of the respective sport and to provide appropriate support. To promote the local sports more effectively, the Government established the Sports Commission (SC) in 2005. The SC advises the Government on policies, strategies, allocation of resources, etc. related to local sports development and works on the overall strategy for promoting local sports development.

4. The issues of studying the position of the development of local football and an overall development plan, setting of long-term and short-term goals, and implementation of the relevant initiatives should fall within the purview of the relevant NSA. In response to recommendations of the LegCo, the Government will thoroughly study the steps, scope and time table of the study with a view to help further promote the development of local football.

Suggestion 2

Develop football training schemes for local youngsters, encourage renowned overseas football clubs to establish football academies in Hong Kong, and enhance the training for young football players with potential, so as to lay a good foundation for the development of local football

Response and Progress

5. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has all along supported the development of local football. Through the Sports Subvention Scheme, the LCSD assists the Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA) to organise systematic, comprehensive and conversional football training programmes for students/youngsters aged 5 to 19. The programmes include the School Sports Programme and the Youth Football Development Programme.

6. The School Sports Programme provides subsidies for the HKFA to assign coaches to schools to conduct Mini-Soccer Training and organise Guided Tour Visits for Major Events with a view to cultivating students' interest in football and providing them with basic football training. The Youth Football Development Programme covers the Youth Football Scheme, Primary Athletes Football Training Scheme, Young Athletes Football Training Scheme, District Youth Football Teams Training Scheme and Regional Squad Training, etc. The Programme provides youngsters with a systematic, comprehensive and conversional football training to enhance their skills. Young players with potential are selected for further training in District Football Teams and Regional Squads.

7. Moreover, under LCSD's Sports Subvention Scheme, the HKFA has formed a number of football teams of different age groups to supply young athletes for local football development, including the Hong Kong Team (aged 16 to below 23), five-a-side football teams and women football teams.

8. In respect of local and international matches, the LCSD provides subsidies for the HKFA to organise local and international matches every year with a view to raising local football standard as well as allowing the Hong Kong Team to gain valuable experience and learning opportunities for enhancing the strength of local football teams.

9. Besides, the LCSD provides an additional subsidy for the HKFA to

participate in the Guangdong/Hong Kong/Macao Youth Football Exchange Programme for local young players and mainland football elites to exchange experience annually.

10. Regarding the proposal for the renowned overseas football clubs to establish football academies in Hong Kong, football sport has been developed into a highly commercialised sport in the international arena. . The establishment of academies in Hong Kong by overseas football clubs is a commercial decision and must be endorsed by the HKFA. It is appropriate for the Government to play a supporting role. Currently, the overseas football clubs has established football schools in Hong Kong, e.g. the Manchester United Soccer and the FCB Escola. The mode of management of these organizations are highly commercialized.

Suggestions 3 and 11

Apart from supporting the Football District League and the Young Athlete Training Scheme, consider giving more funding support to football teams with outstanding performance, and formulate a long-term funding policy; and include football as an elite sport to attract more talents

Response and Progress

11. In respect of the overall subvention policy for elite training, resources have been converged on sports with potential or remarkable track records, or athletes with outstanding performance in individual sports, with a view to raising Hong Kong's chance of winning in international competitions. We are currently using an objective in-and-out mechanism to select elite sports. Any sport, including football, may become an elite sport as long as it reaches a certain standard and by then it will be provided with more support.

Suggestion 4

Provide support to promote the professionalisation of local football, such as assisting the football sector in drawing up a clear framework and targets for the development of professional football players as well as career paths for coaches and managers, etc to be promoted to the management of football teams, thereby encouraging more football players to take up the sport as their career, and strengthen the training of referees, so as to facilitate the enhancement of the overall professional standards of the football sport

Response and Progress

12. Currently, all local NSAs are affiliated to their international federations of the respective sport. They are responsible for the development of the respective sport in Hong Kong and are autonomous in administration, management as well as in formulating their own development frameworks. The Government has all along been actively cope with various NSAs in the promotion of the respective sport and to provide appropriate support. The HKFA may apply for subsidy on need basis to organise coach or referee or similar training schemes for football players who aspire to take up the sport as their career, in order to provide a path for them to move on to the management of football teams on their retirement. It may help to promote professionalisation of the local football and to enhance the overall professional standards of local football.

Suggestion 5

In order to meet their education needs, recommend young football players with outstanding performance in football matches for admission to universities and tertiary institutions so as to broaden the prospects of retired football players

Response and Progress

13. To broaden the prospects of retired athletes, the eight funded institutions and the other three institutions affiliated to under the University Grants Committee commit to render support to athletes, and to accept and consider enrolment applications from athletes recommended by the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China or the Hong Kong Sports Institute. Besides, the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, (China) (SF&OC) has implemented a retirement plan for the athletes to provide support for their future study and employment. This arrangement allows athletes with potential to focus on their sports career while their overall personal development is also taken care of. Such an arrangement is also applicable to football players with potential.

Suggestion 6

Provide support for football teams to conduct overseas training and participate in overseas matches, so as to encourage exchange of experience and learning, and become stronger teams

Response and Progress

14. The Government always gives full support to the HKFA in organising international matches in Hong Kong and in sending the Hong Kong Team to participate in international matches so as to learn from overseas teams and gain experience with a view to raising the standard of local football. The LCSD has all along actively supported the HKFA by inviting world renowned football teams for demonstration matches in Hong Kong, e.g. the Real Madrid Asia Tour 2003 – Hong Kong vs Real Madrid; the HKSAR 10th Anniversary Reunification Cup in 2007 whereas the FC Bayern Munich's, the Sao Paulo FC's and the China National Team paid visits to Hong Kong. Local players can exchange experience with and learn from world-class football teams in these occasions.

15. The LCSD also provides subsidies for the HKFA to participate in and organise international matches, such as the Lion City Club Tournament held in Singapore every June and the Saitama International Junior (U12) Football Tournament held in Japan in July 2005, with a view to raising the standard of local football and that of the Hong Kong Team by exchanging valuable experience with and learning from other teams.

16. On the front of exchange activities, the HKFA has, since 1997, secured additional funds from the Arts and Sport Development Fund for the Hong Kong Team to participate in football matches in the National Games of the People's Republic of China and the National Cities Games of the People's Republic of China. Since 2006, the LCSD has allocated additional subsidies every year for the HKFA to send two youth football teams (one with players aged 11 or 12 and the other aged 13 or 14) to participate in the Guangdong/Hong Kong/Macao Youth Football Exchange Programme for local young players to exchange experience with elite players from the Mainland.

Suggestion 7

Draw reference from successful examples in Europe and America to create a favourable environment for establishing local football team brands

Response and Progress

17. Football sport has already become highly commercialised with all the successful examples in Europe and America involving commercial sponsorship. The establishment of a team brand in sports development depends on the community development, the overall sports atmosphere, the development targets and strategies of the respective NSA, and the will and capabilities of the respective team. As a lead promoter of a respective sport in Hong Kong, the NSA concerned can, subject to market needs and the overall

sports atmosphere of the community, devise plans for establishing a team brand and work out the details with its professional knowledge or making reference to the successful experiences overseas. The Government will assume an appropriate supporting role in this respect.

Suggestion 8

Build more football pitches across the territory and upgrade the facilities of existing football pitches, including converting the existing concrete pitches into natural turf, plastic or artificial turf pitches, so as to reduce the chances of football players sustaining injuries

Response and Progress

18. At present, there are 50 natural grass pitches, 27 artificial turf pitches and 228 hard-surfaced pitches under the LCS D. To increase the number of sessions available for booking and further improve those pitches, the LCS D has converted six natural grass pitches into third generation artificial turf pitches for use by the public, and is planning the conversion project of another eight pitches which is expected to be completed by 2010. 12 new pitches, including four of artificial turf, two of natural grass and six of hard-surfaced, will be built in three years for the public.

19. The LCS D will continue to tie in with the overall urban planning of each district by building more pitches of grass, hard-surfaced and artificial turf at suitable locations to promote football development.

Suggestion 9

Encourage local radio and television stations to conduct live broadcast of football matches to cultivate the community's interest in watching local and overseas football matches

Response and Progress

20. Currently, all major pay TV operators are keen on purchasing the broadcast rights of sports programmes. Live Broadcast of major football matches is a focus of their publicity and local TV viewers are provided with more choices. In fact, all broadcasters (both free and pay TV stations) can freely purchase/bid for the broadcast rights (including exclusive rights) of sports programmes or matches.

Suggestion 10

Deploy resources to support the future day-to-day operation of the Football Academy to be built in Tseung Kwan O

Response and Progress

21. The Government has all along been actively rendering assistance to the HKFA in seeking the allocation of a site at the Tseung Kwan O Landfill for building a Football Training Centre. The Environmental Protection Department has issued a land licence valid for 21 years to the HKFA and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has also granted \$103 million to the HKFA in 2005 for building the training centre. The training centre will operate on a self-financing basis. There will be a number of grass pitches of international standard, dormitories, canteen, lecture rooms, physiotherapy room, etc. in the proposed training centre. The Government will continue to provide appropriate support to the HKFA to facilitate the development of the training centre.