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Panel on Home Affairs

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 8 May 2009**

Promotion and development of local football

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the promotion and development of local football and gives an account of past discussions by Legislative Council (LegCo) Members on the subject.

Background

2. The promotion and development of football in Hong Kong is a major role of the Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA), one of the 74 National Sports Associations (NSAs) and sports organisations under the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC). The mission of HKFA is to promote and develop football in Hong Kong, including professional, youth and amateur football, so as to enhance the world ranking and image of Hong Kong football, provide quality football matches for Hong Kong people, and make football the most popular sport in Hong Kong. Like other NSAs, HKFA is autonomous in administration, and the role of the Administration is to assist the Association in the promotion of football and to provide the appropriate support.

Promotion and development of local football

3. On 4 June 2008, the Legislative Council passed a 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 Administration to promote local football development so as to raise the standard of the sport, enhance community involvement and strengthen cohesion of the society through the following measures -

- (a) immediately conducting a detailed study to position the development of local football, formulate an overall development plan, set long-term and short-term goals, and implement relevant initiatives;
- (b) developing football training schemes for local youngsters, encouraging renowned overseas football clubs to establish football academies in Hong Kong, and enhancing training for young football players with potential;
- (c) providing more funding support to football teams with outstanding performance and formulating a long-term funding policy; and including football as an elite sport to attract more talents;
- (d) providing 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 to be promoted to the management of football teams, and strengthening the training of referees;
- (e) recommending young football players with outstanding performance in football matches for admission to universities and tertiary institutions;
- (f) providing support for football teams to conduct overseas training and participate in overseas matches;
- (g) drawing reference from successful examples in Europe and America to create a favourable environment for establishing local football team brands;
- (h) building more football pitches across the territory and upgrading the facilities of existing football pitches, including converting the existing concrete pitches into natural turf, plastic or artificial turf pitches;
- (i) encouraging 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; and
- (j) deploying resources to support the future day-to-day operation of the Football Academy to be built in Tseung Kwan O.

4. In response, the Administration undertook to conduct a consultancy study with a view to further promoting the development of local football. Its reply to other issues raised in the motion is summarized in the ensuing paragraphs -

Football training

5. Through the Sports Subvention Scheme and other subsidies, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) had provided support to HKFA in (a) organising systematic, comprehensive and conversional football training programmes for students/youngsters aged 5 to 19; (b) forming 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; and (c) organising local and international matches. As for the establishment of football academies by overseas football clubs, it should be a commercial decision by HKFA.

Inclusion of football as an elite sport

6. In respect of the overall subvention policy for elite training, resources had 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. Football could become an elite sport and qualify for more support as long as it reached a certain standard prescribed under an objective in-and-out mechanism for the selection of elite sports.

Professionalisation of local football

7. HKFA could apply for subsidy on a need basis to organise coach/referee training schemes for football players who aspired to take up the sport as their career, in order to provide a path for these players to move on to the management of football teams on their retirement.

Prospects of retired football players

8. The eight funded institutions and the other three affiliated institutions under the University Grants Committee were committed to accepting and considering enrolment applications from athletes recommended by the Hong Kong Sports Institute or SF&OC. The latter had also implemented a retirement plan for football players with potential to provide support for their future studies and employment.

Overseas training and matches to raise standards of local football

9. The Administration had given full support to HKFA in organising international football matches in Hong Kong, sending the Hong Kong Team to participate in international matches, and inviting world renowned football teams for demonstration matches in Hong Kong.

Establishing local football team brands

10. As a lead promoter of a respective sport in Hong Kong, the NSA concerned could, 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 by making reference to the successful experiences overseas. The Government would assume an appropriate supporting role in this respect.

Building and upgrading football pitches

11. There are 50 natural grass pitches, 27 artificial turf pitches and 228 hard-surfaced pitches managed by LCSD. Of these, six natural grass pitches had been converted into third generation artificial turf pitches and the conversion of another eight would be completed by 2010. 12 new pitches, including four of artificial turf, two of natural grass and six of hard-surfaced, would also be built for public use.

Encouraging live television/radio broadcast of football matches

12. Live broadcast of major football matches was a focus of their publicity and local TV viewers could watch live broadcast of these matches offered by all broadcasters (both free/pay television stations) which could freely purchase/bid for the broadcast rights of sports programmes or matches.

The Football Academy in Tseung Kwan O

13. The Government had all along been actively rendering assistance to HKFA in seeking the allocation of a site at the Tseung Kwan O Landfill for building a Football Training Centre. The Environmental Protection Department had issued a land licence valid for 21 years to HKFA, and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust had also granted \$103 million to the Association in 2005 for building the Centre which would operate on a self-financing basis.

Other related issues raised by members

Enhancing funding support for the development of football

14. During the deliberation of the Betting Duty (Amendment) Bill 2003, some members held the view that a certain percentage of the tax revenue generated from football betting should be earmarked for the promotion of local football. At the special meeting of the Panel on 20 October 2008, some members considered that inadequate government funding (viz. an annual subvention of \$100,000 for each District Football Team) and the shortage of local football pitches for schools and local communities had hindered the development of local football. They urged the Administration to revitalize the sport, which could neither attract audience nor commercial sponsorship. At another special meeting to discuss the proposed injection of funds into the Arts and Sport Development Fund (ASDF) on 6 February 2009, some members considered that government subvention should cover not only the Hong Kong Team but also other football teams representing Hong Kong in various tournaments.

15. In response to the above concern, the Administration had advised that -

- (a) athletes' participation in major international games was funded by allocation from ASDF (sports portion). For other competitions in which HKFA wished to field representative teams, the Association could seek sponsorship from the private sector or use its recurrent subvention from LCSD; and
- (b) it was not appropriate to hypothecate part of the proceeds from authorized football betting to finance local football development, as the development of local football activities should primarily be funded by public expenditure from the Government. Moreover, the primary objective of authorizing and regulating football betting was to combat illegal football gambling problem, which had nothing to do with raising funds for developing local football or any other kinds of sports activities.

Progress of the consultancy study

16. At the Council meeting on 11 March 2009, Hon LAM Tai-fai raised some questions on the development of local football, including the details and progress of the consultancy study. The Administration advised that the study would seek to explore the successful experience of other Asian countries or cities where football had successfully developed and review the current state of local football development, with a view to helping the Administration map out the long-term positioning of local football. The consultancy report was expected to be completed by early 2010.

Effectiveness of the Sports Subvention Scheme

17. In response to Hon LAM Tai-fai's question on the effectiveness of the Sports Subvention Scheme in promoting the development of football raised at the Council meeting on 11 March 2009, the Administration advised that annual subventions (of about \$7 million) was provided to HKFA under the Scheme for the organization of and participation in international events, training of National Squad and the organization of football training programmes for the young people. In 2008-2009, HKFA had organized 2 083 subvented programmes, involving over 54 200 participants and a subvention of around \$7.31 million. To tie in with the work of HKFA, LCSD held annual meetings with HKFA to review the effectiveness of these programmes.

Mechanism to monitor government subvention to NSAs

18. In response to members' request, the Administration provided the Panel with updated information in March 2009 regarding the enhanced monitoring mechanism for government subvention to NSAs. The key points are that -

- (a) taking reference from the samples of Code of Conduct (Code) and procurement guidelines (Guidelines) provided by the Independent Commission Against Corruption in 2006, NSAs had revised or drawn up their Code and Guidelines which were applicable to office-bearers as well as staff of NSAs; and
- (b) to improve the monitoring of NSAs' compliance with the Code and Guidelines, NSAs were required under the revised Subvention Agreement with effect from 2008-2009 to provide the Government with declaration of interest made by their office-bearers and staff, and official records of management decision for examination of compliance with the Code and Guidelines. The Agreement further required NSAs to inform the Government of any amendments to their Code and Guidelines, and their auditors to include in their annual audit reports an opinion as to NSAs' compliance with the Subvention Agreement, their Code and Guidelines.

Latest development

19. The Administration will brief the Panel at its meeting on 8 May 2009 on the promotion and development of football in Hong Kong, including the funding to HKFA and the monitoring mechanism for local football matches.

Relevant papers

20. A list of relevant papers with their hyperlinks at the LegCo website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
5 May 2009

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Relevant documents on the promotion and development of local football

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper/Minutes	LC Paper No.
Council meeting	10.7.2003	Report of the Bills Committee on Betting Duty (Amendment) Bill 2003	CB(2)2757/02-03 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/bc/bc59/reports/bc590709cb2-rpt-e.pdf
---	---	Administration's overall response to deputations' views on the Betting Duty (Amendment) Bill 2003	CB(2)2603/02-03(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr02-03/english/bc/bc59/papers/bc590624cb2-2603-5e.pdf
Council meeting	4.6.2008	Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG moved a motion on "Promoting the development of local football". The motion was passed.	http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/legco_rpt/legco_motion06051-e.pdf
		Progress report provided by the Administration	http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/counmtg/motion/cm0604-m5-prpt-e.pdf
Panel on Home Affairs	20.10.2008	Administration's paper on policy initiatives of Home Affairs Bureau	CB(2)42/08-09(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha1020cb2-42-1-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(2)425/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha20081020.pdf
	6.2.2009	Administration's paper on response to questions on the Arts and Sport Development Fund	CB(2)743/08-09(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0206cb2-743-1-e.pdf

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper/Minutes	LC Paper No.
		Administration's paper on proposed injection of funds into the Arts and Sport Development Fund	CB(2)580/08-09(06) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/papers/ha0109cb2-580-6-e.pdf
		Administration's response to the views of members of the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs and deputations at the special meeting on 6 February 2009 to discuss the proposed injection of funds into the Arts and Sport Development Fund	CB(2)860/08-09(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/papers/ha0206cb2-860-1-e.pdf
Council meeting	11.2.2009	Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai raised a written question on "Development of soccer in Hong Kong" and the Administration's reply	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200902/11/P200902110115.htm
	11.3.2009	Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai raised a written question on "Soccer development in Hong Kong" and the Administration's reply	http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200903/11/P200903110191.htm
Panel on Home Affairs	(issued on 1 April 2009)	Supplementary information provided by the Administration on the monitoring mechanism for Government subvention to National Sports Associations	CB(2)1206/08-09(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/papers/hacb2-1206-1-e.pdf

Council Business Division 2
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