

For discussion on
8 January 2010

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
Promotion of Sports Development

Introduction

This paper updates Members on progress of initiatives that the Administration has undertaken in recent years to promote sports development, with a particular focus on support for elite athletes.

Background

2. Following a review of sports policy in 2002, we have set three strategic directions for the long term development of sport in Hong Kong, namely: to help our elite athletes to achieve excellence; to develop a strong sporting culture in the community; and to raise our profile as a centre for international sports events. In his 2006-07 Policy Address the Chief Executive re-affirmed these strategic directions and pledged additional resources for achieving the related objectives. We last briefed Members of this Panel on initiatives to promote sport in April 2007 (vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1493/06-07(01)). This paper sets out the current position with regard to on-going measures, and describes new initiatives that we have recently introduced to strengthen our support for sports development.

Elite Sports Development

3. The key delivery agent for providing training and other support services including sports science and medicine to elite athletes is the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI). The HKSI receives a recurrent annual subvention of about \$160 million from the Government and at present has around 800 Sports Scholarship Athletes. The institute provides funding support for the elite squads of 14 sports that have

achieved high levels of performance at the junior and senior levels, namely: athletics, badminton, billiard sports, cycling, fencing, karatedo, rowing, squash, swimming, table tennis, tenpin bowling, triathlon, windsurfing and wushu. Under the Individual Athlete Support Scheme (IASS), the HKSI also provides funding for selected individual athletes who have achieved outstanding performances in other sports.

4. Since April 2007, we have, in consultation with the HKSI, the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC), and National Sports Associations (NSAs), devised and implemented the initiatives to help elite athletes described in paragraphs 5-9 below.

Direct Financial Support to Athletes

5. With a view to providing more support to elite athletes in order to allow them to focus on developing their sporting career, the HKSI has implemented four enhanced direct financial support (DFS) schemes –

- (i) Elite Training Grant – the institute awards these grants to scholarship athletes in the 14 elite sports as well as to athletes who have achieved outstanding results in other Olympic Games and Asian Games Sports, for example, equestrian sports and shooting;
- (ii) Sports Aid Grant – the HKSI awards these grants to athletes who have achieved outstanding results in non-Olympic Games and non-Asian Games Sports, such as cricket and rugby;
- (iii) Sports Aid Grant for Athletes with Disabilities – the HKSI awards these grants to elite athletes with disabilities; and
- (iv) IASS – under this scheme, the HKSI provides funding to individual athletes in sports that are not among the 14 elite sports (such as weightlifting) through their respective NSAs.

6. The DFS Schemes cater for the needs of both able-bodied athletes and athletes with disabilities, and are conducive to the objective of expanding the elite squads. In the three years since the launch of

these Schemes, the number of elite athletes qualified to receive Elite Training Grants has increased by nearly 30%, from 182 in 2007-08 to 234 in 2009-10. The total number of athletes who benefit from the DFS Schemes has also increased by 15% over the same period, from 510 to 582.

Educational Opportunities and Career Development for Athletes

7. We appreciate the importance of meeting the personal educational and career needs of athletes at different stages of their development, including the period following retirement from competition. Since 2008, the HKSI has offered Enhanced Athletes Educational and Vocational Development Programmes, which provide support services such as educational and vocational workshops and exchange programmes. The institute also offers tailor-made coach training programmes through the Elite Coaching Apprenticeship Programme, which helps expand job options for elite athletes after retirement and also encourages the provision of sufficient coaches to support sports development at all levels.

8. In July 2008, we allocated \$8.5 million to the SF&OC so that it could establish the Hong Kong Athletes Career and Education Programme (HKACEP) with the aim of improving the educational and career prospects for athletes. To date, 10 corporations have joined the HKACEP to offer vocational opportunities to retired athletes and several retired athletes have found long-term employment under the Programme.

9. Since 1999, the HKSI has had an agreement with Beijing Sport University whereby the latter offers degree courses on sports training to Hong Kong athletes. Since 2008, 11 tertiary institutions in Hong Kong have agreed to adopt measures to help athletes continue their sports training whilst studying at these institutions. These initiatives can encourage athletes to pursue higher education without having to give up competitive high-level sport.

Recent Sporting Achievements

10. We have received positive feedback from athletes, coaches and NSAs in relation to the measures described above. There are

indications that these measures are having the effect of encouraging higher levels of achievement as evidenced by the results that Hong Kong athletes have achieved in recent major games. For example, in 2009 Hong Kong athletes have -

- (i) for the first time, won gold medals at the World University Summer Games (held in Belgrade, Serbia in July);
- (ii) achieved a best ever total of two gold, one silver and four bronze medals at the 11th National Games held in Shandong in October; and
- (iii) won a record 110 medals at the East Asian Games (EAG), including 26 gold, 31 silver and 53 bronze, which put Hong Kong at the fourth position in the overall medal tally behind China, Japan and Korea.

In addition, as at December 2009, Hong Kong had 31 athletes from eight different sports who had attained top-twenty positions in their respective world rankings, and 16 athletes from six sports are in the top ten in Asia.

Further Measures to Support Elite Athletes

11. Although these recent achievements by Hong Kong athletes are encouraging, we recognise the need to continue to improve levels of support for elite athletes if they are to keep pace with competitors elsewhere and have a chance of recording even better results. In this connection, starting from the current financial year (2009-10) we have increased additional recurrent funding for supporting elite athletes to \$50 million annually. This extra funding will provide additional training, coaching, education and career support for our top athletes. In addition, we are putting in place new measures that focus on nurturing young athletes, developing sports with strong track records and providing greater incentives to athletes to achieve outstanding results at the highest level. These measures are described in paragraphs 12 - 17.

(a) Nurturing young athletes

12. In 2009-10, we have earmarked \$10 million to help 21 NSAs and the two sports associations for athletes with disabilities to enhance

their feeder programmes to identify and train more young athletes with potential to reach the highest level. We have also allocated \$3 million to the HKSI on a recurrent basis to strengthen its training of junior athletes.

(b) Emphasis on selected sports with strong track records

13. To further improve our athletes' prospects for achieving good results at the London 2012 Olympic Games, starting from the current financial year, we will allocate \$5.6 million annually for four years to the HKSI to strengthen support for the four elite sports in which Hong Kong athletes have regularly performed well at Asian and world level. These sports – known as the “priority target sports” – are badminton, cycling, table tennis and windsurfing.

(c) Added incentives for medalists at major games and youth games

14. In August 2009, the Sports Commission (SC) endorsed a proposal for the HKSI to increase the levels of incentive awards for medalists at major games (namely the Olympic, Paralympic, Asian and Asian Paralympic Games) starting from the Guangzhou 2010 Asian Games. With the support of a commercial sponsor, the HKSI was also able to double the levels of incentives for Hong Kong medalists at this year's EAG on a one-off basis, with the result that a total of \$6.1 million has been awarded to 196 athletes in 18 sports.

15. In March 2009, we injected \$5 million into the Hong Kong Athletes Fund for the setting up of an incentive award scheme to provide scholarships to athletes aged 18 or below who win medals in major Youth Games. The HKSI has subsequently developed the “Young Athletes Scholarship Award” for this purpose, under which 15 medal-winning athletes at the Asian Youth Games held in July 2009 were eligible for a total of \$220,000. In addition, 26 young athletes with disabilities received a total of \$184,000 under the new scheme following their performances at the Asian Youth Para Games in September 2009.

Redevelopment of the HKSI

16. To enhance HKSI's position as a base for elite sports training and development, the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council

has approved an allocation of around \$1.8 billion for the redevelopment of the institute. Work on this project started in March 2009 and is scheduled for full completion by late 2013, upon which the HKSI will provide a state-of-the-art environment for training elite athletes.

Injection of Funds into the Arts and Sport Development Fund

17. The Arts and Sport Development Fund (ASDF)¹ is an important source of funding for developing sport in Hong Kong. It is used mainly to support -

- (i) preparation of athletes for major games;
- (ii) participation in major games;
- (iii) hosting of major international events; and
- (iv) other "one-off" activities which are of significant importance to the development and promotion of sports in Hong Kong.

In February 2009, the FC approved an injection of \$90 million into the sports portion of the ASDF to support Hong Kong athletes' preparation for and participation in major games in the near future. This year we have allocated \$14.7 million from the fund for athletes' preparation for the Shandong 2009 National Games. We anticipate that the funding required for athletes' preparation and participation in the Guangzhou 2010 Asian Games will be more than \$10 million.

18. In consultation with the SC, we shall keep the measures described here under review. In this regard, we shall take account of the performances of Hong Kong athletes and feedback from athletes, coaches, NSAs and other stakeholders, and decide whether further measures should be introduced.

¹ In January 1997, the Finance Committee (FC) approved the setting up of the ASDF as a sub-fund under the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation to provide funding for the key initiatives of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) and the then Hong Kong Sports Development Board in their respective five-year strategic plans, and other projects that in the opinion of the Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA) would make significant contribution to the further development of the arts and sports in the community.

Provision of Sports Facilities

19. We are committed to providing adequate facilities to allow for the development of sport at all levels. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) seeks to address the training and competition requirements of elite athletes as well as the sporting needs of the wider community through the provision of new or improved sports facilities throughout Hong Kong.

20. To ensure that Hong Kong will have suitable venues for staging high-level international sports events, we are planning the construction of a Multi-purpose Stadium Complex (MPSC) in Kai Tak, in consultation with stakeholders in the sports community and the general public. Our current plan envisages that the new MPSC will comprise a main stadium with a seating capacity of about 50 000, a secondary stadium with about 5 000 seats and an indoor arena where multiple sports events can be organised.

Promoting Sport for All

21. By promoting “Sport for All” we aim to create opportunities for people to enjoy healthy and active lifestyles, as well as nurturing a larger and stronger base of participants in sport from which talented athletes may emerge. Currently, LCSD promotes sport in the community through two main channels. First, LCSD provides funding under the Sports Subvention Scheme for NSAs to organise sports promotional programmes and competitions. The amount of subvention has increased from around \$120 million in 2004-05 to around \$180 million in 2009-10. Secondly, LCSD organises a wide range of community sports and recreation programmes every year for all walks of life as well as territory-wide major events such as the biennial Hong Kong Games. The expenditure incurred in these programmes has also increased from about \$99 million in 2004-05 to about \$125 million in 2009-10.

22. LCSD is adopting a two-phased approach to further promote a more active sporting culture in the community. Since June 2009, LCSD has begun implementing the first phase of this initiative by introducing the key findings of a recent study on “Sport for All – Participation

Patterns of Hong Kong People in Physical Activities” to stakeholders including the District Councils and schools with a view to enlisting their support for promoting sport in the community. The department is also conducting publicity campaigns to target people belonging to different groups to raise awareness on the importance and benefits of regular exercise. The second phase of work, which is due to start in April 2010, will include a comprehensive review on existing community sports programmes and public demand for sports facilities with a view to improving the services and creating environment which are more conducive to active and regular participation in sports and physical activities by people.

23. To further facilitate participation in sport in the wider community, from 2009-10 onwards, we have earmarked \$50 million from the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation to subsidise the building of new facilities or the purchase of new sports equipment by NSAs and District Sports Associations in the next three to four years.

Promoting Major Sports Events

24. In November 2004, we set aside \$30 million from the ASDF to provide interest-free loans, matching funds² or direct grants³ for recognised major sports events (designated by the SC as “M” Mark events). Since 2004, 11 sports events have been designated as “M” Mark events, and some, such as the Hong Kong Marathon, Hong Kong Rugby Sevens, World Volleyball Grand Prix – Hong Kong, Hong Kong Open Badminton Super Series and Hong Kong Cricket Sixes have become landmark events not just in Hong Kong, but also internationally, attracting tens of thousands of spectators, including sports fans from overseas. As well as providing funding support, the Administration also helps promote “M” Mark events and provides other logistical support for the staging of these major sports events. The SC will continue to explore the potential for new events with a view to boosting the major sports events calendar in Hong Kong.

² The matching fund is a one-off, dollar-to-dollar matching grant up to a maximum of \$3 million, \$2 million and \$1 million for the first, second and third year of the event respectively.

³ The maximum amount of direct grant is on a sliding scale from \$1.5 million (first year) to \$0.7 million (second year) to \$0.5 million (third year), or 70% of the total expenditure on eligible items for each year, whichever is less.

25. To enable people from all backgrounds to attend major sports events, we have secured sponsorship from members of the Core Sponsor Group under the Major Sports Events Committee of the SC for the purchase and distribution of 5 490 tickets in 2008 and 2009 (including more than 2 700 tickets for the EAG events) to people from less privileged groups.

Way Forward

26. We consider that the current three-pronged approach is an appropriate and sustainable basis for taking forward the development of sport in Hong Kong. In line with this approach, we will continue to move forward with the initiatives outlined in this paper with a view to –

- (i) providing support for elite athletes that will enable them to realise their potential at the highest levels of sport;
- (ii) developing programmes and facilities that will encourage and enable more people to take part in sport; and
- (iii) promoting “M” Mark and other major sports events that will stimulate local interest in sport and reinforce Hong Kong’s profile as an international sports event capital.

Advice Sought

27. Members are invited to note the measures we are taking to develop sport further, in particular with regard to support for elite athletes.

**Home Affairs Bureau
December 2009**