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Legislative Council

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Panel on Home Affairs

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 17 March 2010**

Promotion of local football

Purpose

This paper gives an account of discussions held by Legislative Council (LegCo) Members on the promotion and development of football since May 2009. For background information on the subject before that date, members may wish to refer to LC Paper No. CB(2)1464/08-09(04) issued on 5 May 2009.

Background

2. The Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA) is affiliated to the Federation International de Football Association (FIFA) and is the recognised national sports association (NSA) governing the promotion and development of football in Hong Kong. Its responsibilities include: organising local leagues; monitoring and providing assistance to local football clubs; selecting the Hong Kong representative teams; and cooperating and arranging matches with associations, football clubs and leagues in other countries and regions. The Administration works in partnership with the HKFA to help promote and develop football, primarily by providing financial and venue support.

Initiatives to promote football development

3. In his reply to a Member's question on football development in Hong Kong at the Council meeting on 11 November 2009, the Secretary for Home Affairs advised Members of the Administration's latest initiatives to promote the sustainable development of the sport. The salient points are set out as follows.

Consultancy study on the development of football

4. The Home Affairs Bureau has commissioned a consultant to conduct a study to review the current status of football in Hong Kong, analyse the experience of nearby countries and cities in developing football, assess the relevance of this experience to the situation in Hong Kong, and recommend viable options for the direction in which the Government might develop the sport locally. Having regard to the findings of the study report, which is scheduled to be delivered in early 2010, the Administration will consider in detail how to formulate suitable and practicable measures and implementation strategies to help the HKFA promote the long-term development of football in Hong Kong.

Proposed football academy

5. The Administration is studying the feasibility of building a football academy at Tseung Kwan O with a view to providing a training base for indentifying talent effectively and providing training for young football players. The Administration will explore with stakeholders the most appropriate mode of development and operation.

Funding support to HKFA

6. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) provides an annual subvention of about \$7 million to the HKFA for the following purposes -

- (a) to sponsor the HKFA in organising youth development programmes to identify and train talented young football players. In 2008-2009, the HKFA organised more than 2 000 subvented football activities. These included the School Sports Programme, under which the HKFA assigned coaches to schools to conduct football training and organised student visits to major events, as well as the Youth Football Promotion Scheme, the Primary Athletes Football Training Scheme and the Young Athletes Football Training Scheme which together attracted about 50 000 participants;
- (b) to train Hong Kong representative teams and relevant officials, and arrange participation of the representative teams in international football competitions; and
- (c) to support the regular operational expenses of the HKFA.

7. In addition, the Administration provides funding from the Arts and Sports Development Fund and other sources to help football players to participate in major competitions.

Provision of facilities

8. The LCSD manages 51 natural turf pitches, 24 artificial turf pitches and 236 hard-surfaced football pitches, and is working to improve existing facilities and build new venues in order to promote football, meet the needs of the community, and the need for training and competition venues for teams at various levels. In response to HKFA's request, LCSD has designated home pitches for each of the 11 First Division teams in the 2009-2010 football season, which will allow for the allocation of more training sessions to these teams.

Support to district football teams

9. To strengthen support for the development of football at the district level, the LCSD has assisted the HKFA in setting up district football teams by providing free training sessions for each of these teams at its pitches, and encouraging the 18 District Councils to provide funding for their district football teams in order to reduce the teams' financial burden.

10. In connection with the Council question mentioned in paragraph 3, the Member also asked the Administration (a) whether it would consider setting up different levels of subventions in accordance with the performance of football teams so as to encourage them to enhance their strength; and (b) the eligibility criteria for football to become an elite sport.

11. The Administration advised that the question of earmarking subventions to individual teams in accordance with their performance would be considered in the context of the strategic recommendations in the consultancy report on football development. Regarding the eligibility for football to be selected as an elite sport for elite training subvention, the Administration explained that with effect from the beginning of the 2005-2009 funding cycle for elite sports, the Sports Commission had selected sports for the subvention of the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI) in accordance with a set of stringent criteria. The HKSI would make an assessment based on the medal won and ranking position achieved by the Hong Kong representative team and youth team in recognized regional and international competitions over the past two years. If the teams reached the required performance level, the relevant sport could become an elite sport. According to the assessment criteria, football currently did not meet the qualifying standard to be an elite sport.

Members' views and concerns

12. The Administration briefed the Panel on Home Affairs on the Government's role and involvement in the promotion and development of local football at its meeting on 8 May 2009. Members also deliberated briefly the development of football when discussing the review on the 5th East Asian Games (EAG) and sports

development in Hong Kong at the Panel meeting on 8 January 2010. Major views and concerns as expressed by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Support for football development

13. Some members expressed grave concern at the continuous drop in the international ranking of the Hong Kong Team in the past two decades and the decline in audience attendance and gate receipts for local football matches. These members considered that the situation was aggravated by insufficient funding for the First Division Teams, lack of career prospects for professional football players and coaches, and inadequate international exposure of local players. They suggested that measures should be taken to enhance the participation of local players in professional matches; strengthen the support for professional players to enable them to sustain a more decent living; award more incentive bonus to the winning teams in league and cup matches; and give due recognition to the achievement of outstanding players.

14. A member considered that the some \$7.5 million annual subvention to HKFA was unreasonably low, particularly given that \$4.44 million of the subvention would be used for organising youth development/training programmes for more than 48 000 youngsters. He urged the Administration to enhance its support to HKFA, and capitalize on the success of the Hong Kong Football Team in the EAG to seek a breakthrough in football development.

15. The Administration explained that the annual subvention for HKFA, which had increased by 80% since 2005, was among the highest as compared to the funding received by other NSAs. Moreover, dedicated funding had been provided to HKFA from the Arts and Sport Development Fund for preparing the Hong Kong representative teams for participating in major events. The Administration further pointed out that like many other places, the development of professional leagues in Hong Kong would have to rely on commercial sponsorships and proceeds from ticketing and broadcasting. As to members' suggestions for enhancing the international exposure of local football players, such as through organising friendly football matches with overseas teams, the Administration advised that while the matter was within the ambit of HKFA, it would endeavour to facilitate these matches by providing support in respect of venues and facilities.

Role of HKFA

16. A member pointed out that the development of local football had been hampered by the inadequate funding to HKFA, as well as the historical malpractices in the management and operation of the Association. The member urged the Administration to include these issues in the context of the consultancy study on football development in Hong Kong, and to commit a funding support of \$5 million for the development of the Hong Kong Team established by the HKFA in 2008. Another member considered that the HKFA Board should comprise independent members and the business of the Association should be managed by professionals.

The Administration assured members that issues in relation to the role of HKFA would be reviewed in the context of the consultancy study.

Development of district football

17. Some members expressed concern that the government subvention to district football teams was far from adequate. They pointed out that despite the success of some district football teams, their future was rather uncertain because of the limited funding support from the respective District Councils and their reliance on sponsorship; this had rendered it difficult for these teams to retain outstanding players. A member suggested that an independent foundation should be set up to provide direct funding support for the development of football teams in the 18 districts. The Administration undertook to discuss with HKFA the feasibility of channeling more funding support for district teams, in particular those that had reached the professional league level.

Provision of venue

18. Some members urged the Administration to accord priority to district football teams in the booking of football pitches, and to review the current system for booking of football venues to make it more convenient for hirers. The Administration advised that priority had been given to HKFA for the use of football venues managed by LCSD to facilitate the Association's co-ordination of training and tournament schedules. LCSD also provided each district football team with facilities free of charge for 36 training sessions in each football season. As for the progress in the establishment of a football academy at Tseung Kwan O to address the shortage of training grounds for football teams, the Administration advised that it was prepared to liaise with both the HKFA and the Hong Kong Jockey Club over the funding for the project.

Motion passed by the Council

19. On 6 January 2010, LegCo passed a motion moved by Hon IP Kwok-him, and amended by Hon LEE Wing-tat and Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, on "Promoting the sports development in Hong Kong". The motion urged the Administration, among others, to -

- (a) take the lead in providing additional funding and encourage the Hong Kong Jockey Club to put in more resources to support the development of local football;
- (b) allocate funding to directly support the football academy at Tseung Kwan O, and provide adequate funding to maintain and develop football representative teams of different age groups; and

- (c) provide sufficient training venue for various First Division football clubs and consider waiving their venue rental.

A full version of the motion is in **Appendix I**.

Latest Development

20. The Administration will brief the Panel on the outcome of the consultancy study on the development of football at the meeting on 17 March 2010.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
12 March 2010

(Translation)

**Motion on
“Promoting the sports development in Hong Kong”
moved by Hon IP Kwok-him
at the Legislative Council meeting
of Wednesday, 6 January 2010**

Motion as amended by Hon LEE Wing-tat and Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po

That the sports development in Hong Kong has long been neglected, but the East Asian Games has been successfully completed, and with the support of the community as well as the strenuous effort of the athletes, Hong Kong players have still achieved outstanding performance and won high praise; in order to further enhance the standard of local sports and promote the sports development in Hong Kong, this Council urges the Government to:

- (a) review the existing scoring mechanism for the elite training programmes, and actively consider including team sports which are popular among the public and have development potentials in such programmes;
- (b) take the lead in providing additional funding and encourage the Hong Kong Jockey Club to put in more resources to support the development of local football;
- (c) allocate funding to directly support the football academy at Tseung Kwan O, and provide adequate funding to maintain and develop football representative teams of different age groups;
- (d) provide sufficient training venues for various First Division football clubs and consider waiving their venue rental;
- (e) examine the effectiveness of the various existing funding schemes, and increase the funding amounts according to actual needs;
- (f) improve the hardware facilities for various sports activities and expeditiously carry out the multi-purpose stadium complex project in the Kai Tak Development Area, so as to provide better support for sports development;
- (g) formulate a specific policy to improve the treatment of athletes and their career development after retirement;

- (h) draw reference from the Mainland and overseas experience to encourage the business sector to take part in the funding of sports;
- (i) step up effort in motivating schools, the general public and enterprises to attach importance to sports, promote sports for all, and create a competition atmosphere among district sports teams, so as to increase public participation and community cohesion;
- (j) strengthen collaboration and exchanges with the Mainland to enhance the standard of local sports; and
- (k) actively consider bidding to host the 18th Asian Games in 2019;
- (l) review the adequacy of resources currently allocated to sports, and enhance the transparency of the funding policy and the funding approval process; and
- (m) assist various national sports associations in enhancing their discipline in corporate governance, accounting and compliance with rules and regulations, so as to ensure that the resources allocated to them are utilized in a proper and effective manner.

Panel on Home Affairs

Relevant documents on the promotion of local football

Committee	Date of meeting	Minutes/Paper/ Council question or motion	LC Paper No.
Council	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/counmtg/hansard/cm0604-translate-e.pdf (page 108)
		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	8.5.2009	Administration's paper on promotion and development of local football	CB(2)1464/08-09(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0508cb2-1464-3-e.pdf
		Background brief on promotion and development of local football	CB(2)1464/08-09(04) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0508cb2-1464-4-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(2)2108/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha20090508.pdf
Council	11.11.2009	Oral question raised by Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming on "Football development in Hong Kong"	http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/counmtg/hansard/cm1111-translate-e.pdf (page 41)
	6.1.2010	Motion moved by Hon IP Kwok-him on "Promoting the sports development in Hong Kong"	Please refer to Appendix I of this background brief
Panel on Home Affairs	8.1.2010	Administration's paper on review on the Hong Kong 2009 East Asian Games	CB(2)652/09-10(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0108cb2-652-1-e.pdf

Committee	Date of meeting	Minutes/Paper/ Council question or motion	LC Paper No.
		Background brief on review on the experience of the Hong Kong 2009 East Asian Games	CB(2)652/09-10(02) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0108cb2-652-2-e.pdf
		Administration's paper on promotion of sports development	CB(2)652/09-10(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0108cb2-652-3-e.pdf
		Background brief on promotion of sports development	CB(2)652/09-10(04) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0108cb2-652-4-e.pdf

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