

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BRIEF

**SUPPORT FOR THE BID
TO HOST THE 2006 ASIAN GAMES**

Introduction

At the meeting of the Executive Council on 20 November 1999, the Council ADVISED and the Chief Executive ORDERED that -

- (a) Government should support the expression of interest which the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC) intended to submit to the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) for the hosting of the 2006 Asian Games;
- (b) a Bidding Committee to be led by Government should be appointed and the SF&OC should be invited to participate in the formulation of the formal bid; and
- (c) the formal bid to be submitted to the Olympic Council of Asia next year should be subject to further approval of the Executive Council and any financial commitment should be subject to the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

Background

2. The Asian Games is held once every four years, involving some 11,000 athletes and officials from the 43 members of the OCA. In recent years the Games have been held in Beijing (1990), Hiroshima (1994) and Bangkok (1998). The 2002 Asian Games will be held in Pusan, South Korea.

3. Bids to host the Asian Games come from the member federations of the OCA. The bidding process for the 2006 games will start at the OCA meeting in Kuwait in the week of 22 November, when interested federations can state their intention to bid. Upon receipt of invitation from the OCA, formal bids, which have to be endorsed by the Government of the bidding member, will follow in the Spring of 2000. The Council's evaluation committee will then undertake a detailed assessment of the competing bids. The OCA's final decision on who will host the 2006 Asian Games will be made by its members in late 2000. It is normal practice for the city hosting the Asian Games also to host the Far East and South Pacific Games for the Disabled (FESPIC Games).

Principal Considerations

4. The OCA's specific conditions for accepting a bid to host the Asian Games are described by the SF&OC as "flexible enough to accommodate the social and financial features of the host". In studying whether or not to support a bid to host the 2006 Games we have focussed on three key areas -

- (a) the suitability of our existing sports venues and supporting facilities, and the provision of accommodation for athletes and officials;
- (b) the financial implications of hosting the Games in the SAR; and
- (c) the SAR's capacity to organise an event of this size and complexity.

(a) Suitability of Sports Venues and Supporting Facilities

5. In order to gauge our ability to provide venues for a "first-class" Asian Games, we have sought advice from an international sports facility planning and architectural company, Bligh Voller Nield (BVN) Sport Pty Ltd, based in Sydney. Having conducted a review of potential Games venues in Hong Kong, BVN have advised that Hong Kong can make a strong bid for the Asian Games using mostly existing facilities. BVN believe that Hong Kong is capable of mounting the "best Asian Games ever", provided that a number of these facilities are upgraded, either permanently or temporarily, before 2006. BVN recognise that the SAR already has a number of world-class facilities, such as the Hong Kong Stadium, Hong Kong Coliseum and the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, which can be used for Asian Games events.

6. Accordingly, the Government does not intend to construct any new sports venues solely for the purpose of hosting the 2006 Asian Games. In this connection, it should be noted that the 1994 Hiroshima Asian Games ceremonies were held in a 20,000-seat stadium.

Accommodation of Athletes and Officials

7. Should we host the 2006 Games, we would need to accommodate some 11,000 athletes and officials. Most of the games participants would have to be housed in a dedicated Games Village close to sports venues. As the events of the Asian Games are "staggered", rather than all taking place simultaneously, there would be scope for double use of some of the accommodation, by having athletes competing in the earlier events and later events respectively using the

same units in turn. Nonetheless, we expect to have to cater for a maximum of 10,000 resident athletes and officials at any one time. For this, we estimate a requirement of about 3,000 housing units.

8. Options for providing the necessary level of accommodation would include –

- (a) making use of Housing Authority's flats for initial use as a Games Village, but the same time making sure as far as possible that there would be no impact on the waiting time for housing applicants; and
- (b) making land available to developers to build housing which would initially serve as a Games Village.

Both of these options have land and cost implications, either in direct compensation or revenue foregone, and require further consideration before we can come to a firm decision on the optimum solution.

(b) Financial Implications of Hosting the Games

9. The 2006 Asian Games will be a very substantial and worthwhile project, and will offer both local and international marketing opportunities. There will be potential for private sector sponsorship, and we shall seek to maximise the opportunities for this. However, in view of the substantial commitments involved in this undertaking and its limited duration, we do not expect to make a net financial or economic return on the project. In preparing for the formal bid, we intend to engage financial advisers with relevant expertise to establish detailed financial projections.

(c) Organisation of the Games

10. The hosting of a major Games of this nature involves two phases. First, the bidding phase and then, if successful, the planning and implementation of the games themselves. For the bidding phase we will appoint a Bidding Committee to be led by the Government to co-ordinate the preparation of the bid and will invite the SF&OC to participate in the process. The Committee is expected to require the assistance of professional public relations consultants with experience in preparing and promoting bids for major Games.

11. Should the SAR's bid be successful, we would expect to de-commission the Bidding Committee and to incorporate an Organizing Committee as a limited company to plan for the detailed operation of the Games.

We would also expect to rely partly on volunteers from local sports associations, who are experienced in running events at Asian or world level, in the running of individual competitions. However, the Government would take the lead in forming, steering and managing the planning and staging of the games, in order to ensure their first class quality.

Benefits of Hosting the Games

12. From Hong Kong's standpoint, hosting the 2006 Asian Games represents an invaluable opportunity in the following areas -

- First, this will elevate Hong Kong's status as a centre in Asia for hosting international sports events.
- Secondly, it will give Hong Kong people a chance to share the pride and excitement of hosting such an international event.
- Thirdly, Hong Kong athletes will be encouraged to upgrade their skills in the years ahead. This will be a great boost to morale.
- Fourthly, the 2006 Asian Games will provide a rallying point for the community to focus on in the next seven years. The community can invest its collective energy in showcasing Hong Kong to Asia and the world.

13. In sum, hosting the 2006 Asian Games will help foster a sense of identity, social cohesion and national pride, as well as telling the world more about Hong Kong, enhancing our status and showcasing our strengths. Hosting the games represents an extremely attractive opportunity for marketing Hong Kong internationally.

Conclusion

14. Subject to an invitation from the OCA to launch a formal bid, we shall discuss with the SF&OC how best to put together a comprehensive bid. The formal bid to be submitted to OCA next year should be subject to approval by the Executive Council, with any financial commitment being subject to the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.