

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

Safety for High-Risk Sports Events

Purpose

The paper provides information for Members' reference on the boxing tournament held on 5 April 2015 and enquires about safety for high-risk sports events as mentioned in the letter from the Panel on Home Affairs dated 22 February 2017

Background

2. The boxing tournament was one of the events of the "58th Festival of Sport". The Festival of Sport (the Festival) is an annual programme organised by the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC) with the subvention of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD).

3. The boxing tournament, one of the events of the Festival since 2003, is organised by the SF&OC, and co-organised by the Hong Kong Boxing Association (HKBA) which also has full responsibility for organising and co-ordinating the event. The tournament held at Pei Ho Street Sports Centre on 5 April 2015 consisted of 20 bouts of different classes. Halfway through the 20th bout of the tournament, it became known to the HKBA that a participant in the 17th bout was found to have fainted in the changing room. First aid was administered to the injured boxer by an on-site doctor and first aiders from the Hong Kong St. John Ambulance. An ambulance was called immediately and the boxer was hospitalised at Princess Margaret Hospital for treatment. The SF&OC wrote to the HKBA soon afterwards requesting a report on the incident. The injured boxer passed away at the hospital in August 2015.

Follow-up Actions

4. Since the incident, the LCSD has been following up the matter with the SF&OC and the HKBA. According to the report and information provided by the HKBA, the weight categories, age and equipment requirements as well as the scoring format were set in accordance with the rules of the International Boxing Association (AIBA), and qualified professionals were appointed as referees and judges for the tournament. The tournament (including the medical services) complied with those for international-level competitions. In addition,

the HKBA arranged for on-site medical personnel (including one doctor and four first aiders from the Hong Kong St. John Ambulance) to provide first aid to participating athletes.

5. Participation in the tournament was by recommendation of the HKBA's affiliated associations only. Applications from individuals were not accepted. Before the tournament, all participants were required to undergo a basic physical check-up and sign a declaration of health and physical fitness stating that they were willing to participate in the tournament and that they agreed to accept the responsibility for any loss of or damage to property and their injury or death. These arrangements were in line with the rules of AIBA. The HKBA effected and kept in force a public liability policy of insurance and accident insurance for the tournament.

6. The SF&OC followed the injured boxer's condition through the HKBA from his admission to hospital to his death. According to the HKBA, its representatives went to the hospital twice to learn about his condition and extend sympathies to his family, but the latter declined the visits and any contact with the HKBA so as to allow the patient to undergo treatment undisturbed. Out of respect for the wishes of the injured boxer's family, the HKBA did not make any further hospital visits or contact with them. It could only write to the South China Athletic Association, of which the injured boxer was a member, to extend its sympathies to the patient and his family as well as to enquire about his condition.

Safety for Sports Events

7. "National sports associations" (NSAs) are responsible for promoting and developing relevant sport disciplines, including organising competitions and training, in Hong Kong and participating in international sports activities. They are normally affiliated to international federations concerned and are recognised by the SF&OC as the sole official representatives for their respective sport in international events. NSAs, including the HKBA, are registered independent legal entities which are required to conduct their internal business in accordance with their Memorandum and Articles of Association. Regarding safety for sports events, the HKBA, as a member of both AIBA and the SF&OC, is the official representative organisation for promoting boxing in Hong Kong. The LCSD provides subvention to NSAs and monitors their use of the funding. As for matters involving the internal business of the NSAs, professional know-how and competition arrangements, the NSAs, including the HKBA, are required to handle them in an open, fair and transparent manner. In organising

the Festival, while respecting the autonomy and professionalism of the NSAs in delivering their respective events, the SF&OC requires that they all adhere to the rules laid down by relevant International and Asian Federations in operating the competitions.

8. To enhance the organisation and management of events planned by the NSAs, the LCSD conducts seminars related to sports management from time to time. For example, in September 2016, the Department invited a representative from the Hospital Authority to give a briefing on the operation of the Emergency Response Mechanism for Major Events. Topics presented included exercise risk assessment, contingency measures, emergency liaison mechanism, reporting avenues and communication channels. After the briefing, relevant materials were sent to all NSAs for their reference. The LCSD also encourages subvented NSAs to seek additional subvention for first-aid device, such as automated external defibrillators, which may be used to provide first aid to people in need under critical circumstances during routine training and competitions. In addition, subvented NSAs are required to report to the LCSD as soon as possible and take appropriate follow-up action if an accident that occurs during an event may have grave consequences.

9. In response to the incident, the SF&OC has issued an email urging all NSAs to be more safety-conscious in organising events and have paramedics or staff with first-aid certificates standing by on site. It is understood that, in addition to basic first-aid services on the spot, the venues are to be manned by medical personnel for high-risk competitions and events (including this particular event), so as to ensure the safety of the athletes. Also, under the terms of the subvention agreement of the LCSD, the SF&OC requires each NSA to effect and keep in force a public liability policy of insurance in the joint names of the SF&OC, the HKSAR Government and itself in the insured sum of not less than HK\$6.5 million for the Festival.

10. In view of the incident, the SF&OC and the LCSD have reminded the HKBA to ensure sufficient health care personnel for emergency medical services and on-site support for similar events in future. It has also been reminded to take note of the health conditions of participants and provide early assistance to those who feel unwell so as to ensure the safety of participants.

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