

LCQ1: Promoting sports development

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (July 21):

Question:

The Tokyo Summer Olympic Games (TOG) will start soon. Some members of the sports community have pointed out that a craze for TOG and sports is expected to sweep throughout Hong Kong, but the Government has not made sports development a priority in policy implementation, and there is much room for improvement in respect of its promoting sports development on a regular basis and through TOG. On promoting sports development, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Government has acquired the Hong Kong broadcasting rights for TOG and entrusted five television broadcasters to broadcast the various events of TOG for viewing by the public free of charge, whether the Government has, apart from setting up "Olympics Live Zones" in the 18 Districts across the territory, planned to organise, during and immediately after TOG, more community involvement activities and sports activities (e.g. inviting members of the national team for TOG to visit Hong Kong), and whether it has considered acquiring the Hong Kong broadcasting rights for the Beijing Winter Olympic Games and the World Cup finals to be held next year, so as to enhance public interest in sports activities, thereby promoting sports development; if so, of the details;

(2) given that the Kai Tak Sports Park, a major sports facility, will be completed in the second half of 2023, whether the Government will, in the coming five years, consider bidding to host major international sports events such as the Universiade and the Asian Youth Games, so as to promote Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that in 2017, the Government announced a Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities to launch a number of projects between 2017 and 2022 for increasing and improving sports and recreation facilities, of the latest progress of such projects, and whether the Government will commence a new five-year plan or other plans to further promote sports in the community, support elite sports, promote Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events, and facilitate the industrialisation of sports?

Reply:

President,

Attaching great importance to sports development, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has been promoting sports development in Hong Kong through a three-pronged strategic approach, namely

promoting sports in the community, supporting elite sports and maintaining Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events. My reply to the question raised by the Hon Vincent Cheng is as follows:

(1) The Summer Olympic Games will be held in Tokyo, Japan (TOG) from July 23 to August 8. To enhance public interests in sports, we will conduct the following community engagement and publicity activities during and immediately after TOG:

(a) Olympics Live Zones will be set up by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) at designated sports centres in 18 districts, including live broadcast of the opening ceremony of TOG in the evening on July 23 (Friday) and broadcast of TOG competitions from July 24 to August 8;

(b) The launching of Olympics Live Zone in support of Tokyo 2020 Olympics will be held by the LCSD in the afternoon on July 23, i.e. the date of the opening ceremony, at the Kowloon Park Sports Centre;

(c) A series of publicity activities will be held by the LCSD, including online prize quiz, promotional videos played at LCSD venues in 18 districts, a series of Learning Sports 101 videos uploaded in the LCSD Edutainment Channel, and online appeal to netizens for messages supporting the Hong Kong athletes; and

(d) The Sport For All Day 2021 will be held by the LCSD from 2pm to 6pm on August 1 (Sunday). In addition to sports demonstrations and a wide range of free activities at designated sports centres in 18 districts, there will be themed promotion in each district for the Olympic sports chosen.

Subject to the development of the pandemic, there are no plans for arranging the Mainland Delegation at TOG to visit Hong Kong at the moment.

The broadcasting rights for the Olympic Games and other major sports events (including the Beijing Winter Olympic Games and the World Cup finals) have all along been contested by television broadcasters through competitive bidding led by market forces and commercial considerations. This year is different. The Government took exception this time to secure the broadcasting rights of TOG in view of the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong. The Government therefore firmed up the purchase decision only after it had become clear that all of the broadcasters had ended their discussion for purchasing the rights with a view to ensuring that the public would have wide access to the coverage of the TOG on television free of charge, especially for all events competed by Hong Kong athletes, and that the public can support and cheer for them. The HKSAR Government has no intention of changing the competitive environment of the television broadcasting market, and the purchase of the broadcasting rights of the TOG this time is a one-off initiative taken under exceptional circumstances. It is understood that the Television Broadcasts Limited has purchased the local television broadcasting rights for the Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

(2) The Government is committed to developing Hong Kong into a centre for major international sports events, and has been facilitating local "national

sports associations" (NSAs) to launch major sports events in Hong Kong. Introduced in 2004, the "M" Mark System supports local NSAs to host major sports events in Hong Kong through provision of matching fund and direct grant. In order to enhance support for NSAs to stage international sports events, the Government allocated \$500 million to implement a new Major Sports Events Matching Grant Scheme in 2019 to encourage further sponsorship from the business sector to promote the launch of more local top-level competitions. Upon completion in 2023, the Kai Tak Sports Park will be available for hosting more world-class sports events and providing additional opportunities for local athletes to compete on home ground. The public and inbound visitors will also have more opportunities to enjoy top-level performance sports, thereby enhancing Hong Kong's status as a centre for major international events.

At present, any bid to host major or multi-sports events (such as the Asian Youth Games or the Universiade) has to be submitted by the National Olympic Committee or the relevant NSA of the member state or territory of the relevant international sports federations or associations, with the host city elected by members by way of ballot. If the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China or an NSA intends to bid for a major or multi-sports event, the Government will study the feasibility and provide appropriate assistance.

(3) The Government is pressing ahead with the Five-Year Plan for Sports and Recreation Facilities (Five-Year Plan) announced in the Policy Address in January 2017. A total of \$20 billion has been earmarked under the Five-Year Plan for funding the launch of 26 projects to develop new and improve existing sports and recreation facilities, among which 20 projects have been approved by the Legislative Council. Technical feasibility studies for 15 projects on sports and recreation facilities will also be conducted under the Five-Year Plan, of which the findings will be examined in our consideration of future projects.

While building new sports facilities, we should also make good use of existing facilities and upgrade them. Therefore, the Government announced in the 2021-22 Budget to earmark \$318 million to implement a five-year plan for upgrading over 70 football pitches in order to provide more football pitches meeting the standards of Fédération Internationale de Football Association, thereby contributing to the development of football in Hong Kong.

Since 2018, the Census and Statistics Department has been conducting regular surveys on the local economic contribution of sports and related activities. According to the latest statistics, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at market prices of sports and related activities increased from \$51 billion in 2016 to \$59 billion in 2019, representing an increase from 2.0 per cent to 2.1 per cent in terms of percentage share in the total GDP over the same period. During the period, the number of persons employed in sports and related activities increased from 78 000 to 83 000. A relevant feature article will be published in the August 2021 issue of the Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics. The Government will continue to promote sports in the community, support elite sports and maintain Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events, thereby facilitating on-going development of

sports-related industries.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that the Government has been attaching great importance to sports development. May the public cheer for the athletes of the national team and Hong Kong.