

LCQ19: "M" Mark System

Following is a question by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (January 31):

Question:

The Government has launched the "M" Mark System to support the staging of major sports events in Hong Kong. According to the information from the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, "M" Mark events received government funding of more than \$200 million over the past 10-odd years, and the number of events increased from four at the beginning to 14 in 2019. With Hong Kong's resumption to normalcy from the epidemic, most of the "M" Mark events resumed to be held last year, and new items have been introduced. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on the "M" Mark events held last year (including the events which received government funding and those which did not apply for government funding): the event titles, the amounts of funding received, the numbers of participants, and the numbers of spectators (set out in a table);

(2) whether it has put in place a monitoring mechanism or performance indicators for the "M" Mark events receiving government funding to serve as reference for assessing whether or not to continue to provide funding for the events concerned;

(3) whether it has set a cap on the number of years for which "M" Mark events may receive government funding; whether there are "M" Mark events which, due to special circumstances, have received funding in excess of the cap of \$15 million;

(4) for the "M" Mark events receiving government funding, whether the relevant government departments will be provided with a certain number of admission tickets or admission eligibility, etc, for publicity purposes;

(5) whether the organisers of the "M" Mark events receiving government funding have requested government departments for other assistance in addition to funding (e.g. road arrangements for off-road racing events), and whether the Government has set up an inter-departmental group to provide the relevant assistance, so as to enable the events to be held more smoothly and enhance their effectiveness; if so, of the details (with examples); if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) among the "M" Mark events receiving government funding, of the number of those which have received funding for five years or more, and the reasons for their continuous application for funding?

Reply:

President,

At present, the Government's sports policy is to promote the development of sports through a five-pronged approach, namely, by promoting sports in the community, supporting elite sports, promoting Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events, enhancing professionalism and developing sports as an industry. In respect of promoting Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events, the Government introduced the "M" Mark System in 2004 to support local "national sports associations" (NSAs) to host major sports events through provision of matching fund (i.e. a dollar-for-dollar matching grant provided for the event organiser in accordance with the cash sponsorship solicited from the commercial or private sectors) and direct grant under the Arts and Sport Development Fund (Sports Portion). In addition to providing the public with the opportunity to enjoy top-level performance sports and promoting the overall development of sports, the "M" Mark System also attracts tourists to visit Hong Kong and enhance Hong Kong's status as a centre for major international events.

My reply to the Hon Ma Fung-kwok's question is as follows:

(1) The Government launched various measures in April 2023 to enhance the "M" Mark System. These measures include increasing the funding ceiling (i.e. matching grant plus direct grant) for each event to \$15 million (Note 1), lifting the quota of "M" Mark events to be organised by the same applicant each year, and relaxing the eligibility of the applicants for "M" Mark events to cover events organised by NSAs, private and non-government organisations. The enhancement measures have been effective since their implementation, with a record-high number of major international sports events supported by the "M" Mark System in 2023. Among these events are the Aramco Team Series Hong Kong, FIA World Rallycross Championship Season Finale, Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (Hong Kong Section) Half Marathon and the World DanceSport Federation (WDSF) Breaking for Gold World Series etc, which were staged in Hong Kong for the very first time. The details are as follows:

Item	Title of events	Approved funding support (\$ million)			No. of participants	Attendance
		Matching grant	Direct grant	Grants for venue/marketing		
1	25th Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon	10	0	0	34 783	43 000
2	World City Championship presented by Hong Kong Golf Club	10	0	1	132	12 665
3	Cathay/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens 2023	10	0	1	385	75 299

4	FIVB Volleyball Nations League Hong Kong 2023 presented by China Life (Overseas)	7	6	0*	112	55 313
5	2023 Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races	No funding application from the "M" Mark System			5 034	44 812
6	VICTOR Hong Kong Open Badminton Championships 2023 part of HSBC BWF World Tour Super 500	7	0	0*	271	36 274
7	Aramco Team Series presented by PIF-Hong Kong	No funding application from the "M" Mark System			89	5 210
8	Prudential Hong Kong Tennis Open 2023	15	0	0*	55	52 519
9	Hong Kong Open 2023	15	0	1	422	27 774
10	FIA World Rallycross Championship Hong Kong, China – Season Finale 2023	15	0	2	10	16 000
11	New World Harbour Race 2023	7	0	0	2 850	8 000
12	The Bank of China (Hong Kong) Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (Hong Kong Section) Half Marathon 2023	7	6	2	6 591	7 147
13	FIBA 3x3 World Tour Hong Kong Masters 2023	8	6	0*	64	12 548
14	TTI Milwaukee Hong Kong Squash Open 2023	4	0	1	96	4 055
15	WDSF Breaking for Gold World Series – Hong Kong 2023	1	6	1*	135	9 622
Total:		116	24	9	51 029	410 238

* Permission was also granted to use venues of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department at notional venue charges.

Note 1: Excluding grants for venue and/or marketing.

(2) Under the existing practice, an "M" mark event organiser is required to enter into an agreement and undertake to organise the event as stated in its proposal submitted in the application process. Within six months after the completion of an event, the organiser has to submit an evaluation report and an audited statement of accounts to the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB). The CSTB will carry out inspections (including on-site inspection) to monitor and assess the arrangements of the event in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement and the items listed in the evaluation report. The relevant assessment report will then serve as a basis for reference when the organiser submits a fresh application in the future. Should the organiser fails to hold an event in accordance with its proposal, the CSTB may recover all or part of the funding, as the case may be.

(3) and (6) The "M" Mark System aims to encourage and help local NSAs, private and non-government organisations to organise more major international sports events and nurture them into sustainable undertakings. Therefore, we have not set a cap on the number of years for which an "M" mark event may receive Government funding. At present, among the "M" mark events receiving Government funding, two, namely the Hong Kong Open Badminton Championships and the Hong Kong Squash Open, have been receiving funding support from the "M" Mark System for more than five years. So far, no event has received funding in excess of the funding ceiling (excluding grants for venue and/or marketing).

(4) According to the terms and conditions for "M" Mark events, the organiser should, having regard to the scale and actual circumstances of each event, reserve a reasonable number of tickets for the disadvantaged groups to watch the competitions. The organiser should also invite members of the Major Sports Events Committee (MSEC) or Government officials as recommended by the MSEC Secretariat to attend the ceremony of the events in the capacity of VIPs.

(5) In considering an "M" Mark event application, members of the MSEC will advise on the organisation, sponsorship and promotion strategies of the event. In addition, the CSTB will co-ordinate with relevant Government departments in supporting the planning and organisation of the events according to their individual needs. For instance, the CSTB has assisted the relevant organisers in planning the Hong Kong Marathon, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (Hong Kong Section) Half Marathon and the FIA World Rallycross Championship, among others. The CSTB has co-ordinated with relevant Government departments (including the Hong Kong Police Force, the Fire Services Department, the Transport Department and the Home Affairs Department) and rendered advice and logistics support on racetrack design, temporary road closure, traffic diversions, crowd control, medical emergency services, etc, with a view to facilitating the organisation of the events.