

LCQ7: Support for athletes

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (August 18):

Question:

Regarding the support for athletes, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that due to expiry of the contract with his sponsor, an athlete representing Hong Kong wore a jersey not printed with the regional flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (regional flag) to compete in his first match in the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games (TOG), and that some other athletes were found to be wearing jerseys printed with a wrong version of the regional flag, whether the Government will (i) request the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC) to coordinate matters on the sponsorship of the competition sportswear for athletes representing Hong Kong as well as the printing of the regional flag on such sportswear, and (ii) review if the current support for athletes during their participation in competitions is adequate; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will allocate additional funding to increase the direct financial support for serving (particularly full-time) athletes, so that they can focus on training and competitions without worrying about their future;

(3) whether it has reviewed if the existing measures in support of the dual career development of athletes are adequate, and assessed the effectiveness of the measures;

(4) of the respective numbers of applications received, approved, rejected and being processed by the Government under the Retired Athletes Transformation Programme in each of the past three years and since January this year; if there were rejected applications, of the reasons for that; whether it has reviewed the effectiveness of the Programme;

(5) whether it has reviewed if the current career support for retired athletes is adequate, and of the new measures in place to assist retired athletes in taking up employment; and

(6) given that the Hong Kong Sports Institute and the SF&OC set up an Elite Training Science & Technology Support Centre in Tokyo during TOG to provide support services such as strength and conditioning as well as sports nutrition for Hong Kong athletes participating in the competitions, whether the Government will allocate additional resources to facilitate these organisations in setting up such centres during other international competitions, thereby helping athletes deliver their best performance; if so,

of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government strongly supports the development of elite sports in Hong Kong. We established the Elite Athletes Development Fund (EADF) in 2011-12 to provide annual funding to the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI) to nurture elite athletes. The HKSI provides local elite athletes with direct financial grants and comprehensive support services, including strength and conditioning, sports science, sports medicine, dual career development in sports and education, insurance, meals and accommodation. The Government also supports athletes' preparation for and participation in various major international sports events through the Arts and Sport Development Fund (Sports Portion), including the Tokyo Olympic Games (OG). The Hong Kong, China Delegation to the Tokyo OG sent 46 athletes to compete in 38 events covering 14 sports, and made history by capturing one gold, two silver and three bronze medals.

My reply to the six parts of the question is as follows:

(1) As member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC) has been organising the Hong Kong, China Delegation to participate in international multi-sports games, such as the OG and the Asian Games. The SF&OC's work includes the coordination of the ceremonial uniforms and sportswear of the Hong Kong, China Delegation for specific occasions (such as the opening ceremony). Regarding the dress code for competitions of individual sports, due to requirements of international sports federations (ISFs) on fabrics and design, as well as different commercial sponsorship received by individual athletes, the sportswear for competitions are coordinated by "national sports associations" (NSAs) to ensure compliance with the competition requirements of the IOC and ISFs. The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) will follow up with the SF&OC and NSAs to review the current arrangements on sportswear.

The HKSI have been in close collaboration with the SF&OC and NSAs in providing suitable support services to athletes during their preparation for and participation in major international multi-sports games, covering strength and conditioning, sports science, sports medicine, sports nutrition, massage therapy, physiotherapy etc. With completion of the Tokyo OG, the SF&OC will review the various support measures provided to athletes during the competitions.

(2) The Government allocated \$7 billion to establish the EADF in 2011-12, and further injected \$6 billion thereto in 2018-19, so as to provide direct financial grants and comprehensive support services to elite athletes. Currently, there are around 1 300 elite athletes training at the HKSI, of which around 500 are full-time athletes. The HKSI has 20 Tier A sports and 6 Tier A para sports.

To fully support Hong Kong athletes in their preparation for the Tokyo 0G to scale new heights, the HKSI has increased the direct financial grants to athletes since 2020-21 as an incentive. For example, the maximum amount of monthly direct financial grant of an Elite A+ athlete has been increased by around 24 per cent to \$48,240 since 2020-21.

(3) To enhance support to the all-round development of athletes, the Government has injected \$250 million into the Hong Kong Athletes Fund (HKAF) in 2020-21 to increase scholarship awards in support of the dual career development of athletes, including stepping up support for athletes to study bachelor's degrees or above to attract more sports talents and nurture more knowledge-based athletes, and increase the cash incentives for full-time athletes when they retire. Currently, over 80 athletes have benefited from the various enhanced support measures implemented since the injection into the HKAF.

In addition, the HKSI co-operates with 12 local tertiary institutions (the Education University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, School of Continuing and Professional Studies the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, the University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Lingnan University, City University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong and the Open University of Hong Kong) to secure multiple pathways for athletes, provide flexible study arrangements and promote collaborations on athlete education and research. So far, over 70 athletes have benefited from the co-operation.

The HKSI has also set up the Elite Athlete-friendly School Network with 29 secondary schools to provide flexible study arrangements to cater for athletes' training and competition needs and provide additional education support. So far, over 260 athletes have benefited from the arrangements, in which around 50 athletes have benefited from the integrated and flexible school curriculum offered by four local secondary schools.

The Chief Executive announced on August 10, 2021 a number of measures to support the development of elite sports, which includes encouraging tertiary institutions to strengthen support to elite athletes for their dual career development in sports and academic pursuits.

(4) The number of retired athletes participating in the Retired Athletes Transformation Programme (RATP) in the past three years and this year is as follows –

Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 (As at end of July)
Number of participating retired athletes	53	61	72	70

All retired athletes who participated in the RATP in the past three years were employed by schools or sports organisations.

The RATP has been well-received among retired athletes, schools and sports organisations since its launch.

(5) The HKSI has been operating the "Athlete Lifestyle Support Programme" using Government funding to provide athletes with support services including career planning and vocational training. The SF&OC has also been using Government funding to support retired athletes through the "Hong Kong Athletes Career and Education Programme", which provides consultation services, scholarships, vocational training, language courses and job placement programmes. Furthermore, the HAB launched the RATP in 2016 to provide retired athletes with employment opportunities in schools and sports organisations.

The development of the sports-related industry has gradually taken shape in recent years. According to the statistics of the Census and Statistics Department, the local economic contribution of the sports-related industry was around \$59 billion in 2019, amounting to 2.1 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product, while 83 000 persons were employed in the sports-related industry in the same year, representing 2.2 per cent of the then total employment in Hong Kong. With further development in sports and the commissioning of the Kai Tak Sports Park in 2023, there will be increasing demand for manpower for the sports-related industry, such as coaching, refereeing, corporate governance, professional management, sports science, sports medicine, organisation of major sports events, facilities management and media.

To ensure that retired athletes and youths interested in pursuing a career in the sports sector could grasp these opportunities, the Chief Executive has announced on August 10, 2021 that the HAB will explore viable support measures with the business and sports sectors to provide retired athletes with multiple development pathways.

(6) The HKSI and the SF&OC set up the Elite Training Science & Technology Support Centre (Support Centre) at the Tokyo OG for the first time, so as to provide Hong Kong athletes with more suitable and timely support on strength and conditioning, sports science and sports medicine such as physiotherapy, massage, psychology support and sports nutrition support. The HKSI and the SF&OC will review the effectiveness of the Support Centre and the need to establish similar Support Centres during major multi-sports events in the future.