

LCQ8: Broadcasting arrangements of international sports events

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (June 6):

Question:

In recent years, organisers of international sports events, such as the Olympic Games and the World Cup, have sold the broadcasting rights of those matches to media organisations around the world through a competitive bidding process. The broadcasting rights of those matches have often been awarded to pay television broadcasters, rendering members of the public who are not pay television subscribers being unable to watch those matches. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that matches of the 2018 World Cup finals will be held starting next week, and it has been reported that the media organisation which has secured the exclusive broadcasting right for those matches will air only 19 out of 64 matches on its own free-to-air television station, whether the Government will discuss with the media organisation the broadcasting of all those matches on free-to-air television stations or free websites;

(2) whether it will consider paying a fee to media organisations which have been awarded the broadcasting rights of various large-scale international and regional sports competitions in order that arrangements can be made to broadcast those relevant matches in community halls or other venues to enable members of the public (especially the grass roots) to watch them for free; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will discuss with organisers of large-scale international and regional sports competitions to urge them to ensure, when awarding the broadcasting rights for Hong Kong, that all Hong Kong people can watch those relevant matches for free; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consolidated information provided by the Home Affairs Bureau and the Office of the Communications Authority, my consolidated reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

Major sports events are held around the world each year. The broadcasting arrangements of such events are made by the organisers having regard to the nature of the events and their operational needs. In respect of the World Cup and the Olympic Games, the organisers award the broadcasting rights to eligible media corporations or their related companies under market

mechanism in accordance with their policies and regulations. It is understood that the relevant organisers have required the organisations awarded with the broadcasting rights to allow local free television broadcasters to relay certain hours of the events or the key events therein. As such, a mechanism is already in place to ensure that the public may view some of the matches of the World Cup and the Olympic Games free of charge. In general, governments around the world will not intervene in the process and Hong Kong is no exception.

As for the broadcasting arrangements of the 2018 World Cup Russia in Hong Kong, we note that PCCW Content Limited, a company related to HK Television Entertainment Company Limited (HKTVE) (which is a domestic free television programme service licensee), has acquired the exclusive broadcasting rights in Hong Kong. The company has reached a commercial agreement with HKTVE on the broadcasting arrangements of the World Cup matches. Under the agreement, HKTVE's free television channel (i.e. ViuTV) will broadcast 19 matches of the World Cup (including the opening match, two semi-final matches and the final).