

LCQ8: Promoting sports development

Following is a question by the Hon Jimmy Ng and a reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (September 15):

Question:

Hong Kong's athletes achieved brilliant results in the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games (TOG) that concluded recently. In addition, the Government's acquisition of the Hong Kong broadcasting rights for TOG enabled all members of the public in Hong Kong to watch the relevant events free of charge, thereby rousing a craze for TOG and sports throughout the city. On the other hand, the Government announced last month measures to further promote sports development, which include expediting the implementation of the project for construction of a new building for the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI). On promoting sports development, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the measures to be put in place in the coming three years to encourage the business sector to put in more resources to assist in promoting sports development in Hong Kong, and whether such measures will include the provision of relevant tax concessions; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will undertake to acquire the broadcasting rights for those major sports events to be held in the coming three years in which athletes representing Hong Kong will take part, so as to sustain the craze for sports in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the major sports events to be held in Hong Kong in the coming year; the measures to be put in place in the coming three years to step up support for local sports organizations to bid for the hosting of more major international sports events in Hong Kong;

(4) as it has been reported that the current number of accommodation places provided by HKSI for athletes is insufficient, and the living environment in such accommodation is crowded (e.g. two to three athletes sharing a room), of the measures put in place by the Government to alleviate such problems of insufficient accommodation places and crowded environment therein before the completion of the new building for HKSI;

(5) whether, in the coming year, it will review the remuneration mechanism for full-time athletes, so as to ensure that those athletes whose performances have fallen short of the requirements for specified reasons such as injuries and illnesses may still receive their original remuneration for a longer period of time afterwards; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) as it has been reported that there are currently not enough

physiotherapists and masseurs to support athletes in HKSI, of the measures put in place by the Government to increase support for athletes in this regard?

Reply:

President,

The Government strongly supports the development of sports in Hong Kong, including promoting sports in the community, supporting the development of elite sports and maintaining Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events. My reply to the six parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The Government has been encouraging the business sector and private organisations to support the development of sports. With more people participating in sports and more outstanding results attained by Hong Kong athletes in major international sports events, we are pleased to note that many private organisations have been providing sponsorships to nurture and incentivise athletes in recent years, including the Henderson Land Commendation Scheme for Elite Athletes, the Hang Seng Table Tennis Development Programme, the Bank of China Hong Kong Premier League Junior Programme and the Blue Cross Youth Fencing Training Programme. In addition, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has been sponsoring the Jockey Club Youth Football Development Programme.

On promoting major international sports events, the Government launched the "M" Mark System in 2004 to support local national sports associations (NSAs) to host major sports events in Hong Kong through the provision of matching fund (i.e. providing cash subvention equivalent to the commercial or private cash sponsorship raised by the organiser) and direct grant. The Financial Secretary announced in the 2018-19 Budget that \$500 million would be allocated to implement the new "Major Sports Events Matching Grant Scheme", with the ceiling of matching fund for each event lifted to \$10 million to encourage more sponsorship from the business sector and private individuals to promote the launch of more local top-level competitions. Prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, around 12 to 15 major sports events take place in Hong Kong each year. These events are sponsored by the business sector and private organisations, including the Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon, the LONGINES Masters of Hong Kong, the Cathay Pacific/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens, the ITTF World Tour – Hang Seng Hong Kong Open, the CCB (Asia) Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races, the FIVB Volleyball Nations League Hong Kong, the Kitchee vs Manchester City – Jockey Club Kitchee Centre Cup, the New World Harbour Race, the World Rowing Coastal Championships presented by Dah Sing Bank, the YONEX-SUNRISE Hong Kong Open Badminton Championships, part of the HSBC BWF World Tour Super 500, the Prudential Hong Kong Tennis Open, the Everbright Sun Hung Kai Hong Kong Squash Open, the Tissot UCI Track Cycling World Cup Hong Kong, China, and the Hong Kong (Golf) Open.

If a commercial entity sponsors an NSA in order to promote its own business, the sponsorship would be treated as marketing expenses and could be used to apply for tax deduction.

Besides, the Chief Executive announced on August 10, 2021 a number of measures conducive to the sustainable development of sports in Hong Kong, including the set up of a working group by the Home Affairs Bureau to discuss with the business and sports sectors on the development of the sports industry in Hong Kong.

(2) The broadcasting arrangement of major international sports events in Hong Kong is a matter of commercial market operation. For the Tokyo Olympic Games and Tokyo Paralympic Games, the Government took exception this time and decided to secure the relevant broadcasting rights, in view of the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 epidemic in Hong Kong and the extremely challenging business environment besetting the local broadcasters. The Government firmed up the purchase decision only after it had become clear that all of the broadcasters had ended their discussion for buying the rights. The Government will take stock of the experience to decide on the way forward.

(3) With the improvement in the epidemic situation in recent months and the launch of "safety bubble" arrangements, the 2021 Tissot UCI Track Cycling Nations Cup, Hong Kong, China and the Group J fixtures of the 2021 AFC Cup were successfully concluded in Hong Kong, in May and June 2021 respectively. The Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon 2021 will take place in October 2021. Furthermore, various major sports events will be organised by the end of this year or early next year, including the Harbour Race, the Tennis Open, the Golf Open, the Hong Kong Sevens and the FIVB Volleyball Nations League. We would, under close monitoring of the development of the epidemic situation and where situation allows, continue to assist different NSAs in formulating infection prevention and control measures in compliance with the requirements of the health authorities, so as to resume the organisation of more major sports events in a gradual and orderly manner.

(4) There are currently 211 rooms in the athletes' hostel in the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI), providing around 446 hostel places in total. The HKSI also provides sports residence for visiting teams/exchange programmes, and has converted 26 of the 74 rooms at the sports residence for use as athletes' hostel, in order to fulfil the demand for accommodation. If necessary, the HKSI will consider converting more rooms at the sports residence for use as athletes' hostel.

(5) The current Elite Training Grant (ETG) mechanism has already made provisions for fluctuations in sports performance of elite athletes. Eligible full-time Elite A+ and Elite A athletes may retain their athlete categories for four years. Other eligible athletes may extend their previous athlete categories for a maximum of one year if they could not meet the sports achievement requirement of their respective categories for reasons such as injuries or absence of major events of an equivalent level.

In addition, due to the COVID-19 epidemic, our athletes lost their opportunities to attain sports results because most major international events were cancelled or postponed. Nevertheless, we have maintained the

current athlete categories of elite athletes in 2021, so that their ETGs would not be affected.

(6) The HKSI has been providing a wide range of sports medicine support to athletes, including physiotherapy and sports massage.

Physiotherapy is mainly applicable to athletes sustaining sports injuries. The HKSI currently has 14 physiotherapists, who work alongside doctors to formulate treatment plans and schedules for injured athletes. Athletes can receive physiotherapy service as prescribed until recovery without the need to make appointments themselves.

In comparison, sports recovery mainly assists athletes in speeding up muscle recovery and easing fatigue. The HKSI has 20 masseurs, manual therapists, recovery therapists and Chinese medicine practitioners in total, to provide athletes with manual recovery services by appointment. In addition, the HKSI is equipped with various self-recovery facilities, including massage jacuzzi, sauna room, hyperbaric chamber and muscle pressure device. The HKSI also promotes and educates athletes on different self-initiated recovery treatments, including stretching, joint exercise and the use of massage foam rollers.

The Government has been increasing its funding to the HKSI in recent years to provide comprehensive support services to athletes, including professional coaches as well as sports science and sports medicine professionals. The HKSI will keep in view the situation and employ additional physiotherapists and sports recovery professionals if necessary to meet the demand for such services.