

LCQ8: Support for sports development

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Kin-por and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Jack Chan, in the Legislative Council today (September 1):

Question:

Hong Kong athletes achieved record-breaking and brilliant results in the Olympic Games that concluded recently. There are views that the Government should step up efforts in supporting sports development in terms of policies, facilities and resources. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has plans to inject funds into the Elite Athletes Development Fund so that the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI) can obtain more stable financial resources for nurturing more elite athletes;
- (2) whether it has plans to allocate more resources to those sports currently not receiving support from the HKSI so as to help athletes achieve better results, thereby increasing the prospects for such sports becoming elite sports;
- (3) of the measures in place to attract more young people with outstanding performance in sports to become full-time athletes;
- (4) whether the current measures for supporting retired athletes are applicable to retired athletes with disabilities; if not, of the reasons for that; and
- (5) of the details of the programmes implemented in the past three years by the Government for promoting sports in the community, and the amount of expenditure involved; the details of the relevant programmes in the coming three years and the estimated expenditure?

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. On supporting the development of elite sports, the Government 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, providing them 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. In 2021-22, the Government would allocate \$737 million from the EADF to support the HKSI's operation. The Hong Kong, China

Delegation to the Tokyo Olympics 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 five parts of the question is as follows:

(1) We have injected \$6 billion into the EADF in 2018-19. The current balance of the EADF is around \$10.8 billion, of which around \$10.2 billion was deposited with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority to earn an investment return linked to the performance of the Hong Kong Exchange Fund. The current balance of the EADF is sufficient to meet the HKSI's funding requirement for around ten years. The Government currently does not have any plan for further injection into the EADF.

(2) The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) provides subvention to eligible national sports associations (NSAs) under the Sports Subvention Scheme (SSS) to support the promotion and development of their respective sports. From 2020-21 onwards, the Government has substantially increased the yearly subvention provided under the SSS progressively from about \$300 million in 2019-20 to over \$500 million in 2023-24. The additional subvention aims to enhance the promotion and development of sports in the community, youth training programmes, public participation, squad training at all levels and overseas exchange programmes/competitions. This would help various sports improve the performance of their athletes and increase their chances of becoming elite sports.

In addition, the Government has implemented the Five-Year Development Programme for Team Sports since 2018, covering eight team sports with team size of five or more featured in the Asian Games and the Asian Winter Games, namely baseball, basketball, handball, hockey, ice hockey, softball, volleyball and water polo. The Programme provides additional funding for the eight relevant NSAs to formulate and implement training programmes for the Hong Kong teams. This Programme aims to help enhance the performance of team sports progressively, and increase their chances of attaining elite sports status in the future.

(3) The Government attaches great importance to the all-round development of elite athletes and is committed to supporting their dual career development in sports and education, which would attract more junior athletes with sports potential to become full-time 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 and increasing the number of funded study programmes to two for each eligible full-time athlete, as well as increasing 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 (CUHK), School of Continuing and Professional Studies, CUHK, the Hong Kong Baptist University, the University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Lingnan University, the 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 full-time athletes and provide flexible study arrangements. 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 full-time junior athletes have benefited from the integrated and flexible school curriculum offered by four local secondary schools.

The above-mentioned support measures on dual career development would help us identify more junior athletes with sports potential for full-time training, so as to provide sufficient new forces to elite sports in Hong Kong. With the full support of the HKSI, the number of full-time junior athletes has increased by 452 per cent from 23 in 2007-08 to 127 in 2021-22 (as at August 2021).

(4) 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 HKSI has also been providing one-off cash grants to eligible retired athletes through the Elite Athletes Performance Recognition Scheme under the HKAF since 2015. In addition, the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) has launched the Retired Athletes Transformation Programme since 2016 to provide retired athletes with employment opportunities in schools and sports organisations. These measures provide support to both able-bodied and disabled retired athletes.

The Social Welfare Department also provides various funding support to athletes with disabilities through the Hong Kong Paralympians Fund, including the employment facilitating grant for eligible retired/retiring athletes so as to assist them in their job attachment or vocational training.

(5) The Government is committed to promoting sports in the community. In 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, the Government's expenditures on promoting sports in the community were around \$4.3 billion, \$4.8 billion and \$5.1 billion respectively, accounting for approximately 85 per cent of the Government's total expenditure in sports development every year. The estimated expenditure for promoting sports in the community is \$5.4 billion in 2021-22. We have yet to collate estimates for expenditures in the years of 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The HAB, the LCSD, the Education Bureau and the Department of Health actively work with the relevant NSAs, recreation and sports organisations and community groups in organising a wide variety of community sports activities

and large-scale sports events across the territory, including the Hong Kong Games, the Sport for All Day, sports training courses, competitions and recreational activities, for people from different social strata, age groups, abilities and interests. In the past three years, the LCSD organised over 79 000 recreation and sports programmes in the community, attracting an attendance of 600 000 people.

To encourage the community to exercise more during the epidemic, the LCSD has launched the Edutainment Channel, a one-stop online resource bank, for the public to access a wide variety of sports demonstration videos at home, and participate in online interactive sports training courses. As at mid-August 2021, 48 sports-related videos have been uploaded to the Edutainment Channel, with a total viewership of around 350 000.

The Government is also committed to promoting the development of sports in schools and encouraging students to develop a habit of exercising regularly. The School Sports Programme (SSP) organised by the LCSD in partnership with various NSAs, is implemented in line with the daily schedule of schools to provide students with progressive sports training. Students may select suitable sports programmes according to their physical fitness level and interests under the SSP. Over the years, the SSP covers nearly 90 per cent of the primary, secondary and special schools in the territory. In the past three years, over 15 900 sports activities were organised at schools, benefitting a total of 1.42 million students.

To understand the latest physical fitness conditions and exercising habits of the public, we have launched a new round of Territory-wide Physical Fitness Survey for the Community last month, following the Physical Fitness Tests for the Community conducted in 2005 and 2011. Through regular and standardised physical fitness tests, the Government aims at developing a systematic database on the physical fitness of the people in Hong Kong. It will also facilitate the Government's understanding of the physical fitness conditions of the public for the formulation of appropriate measures for promoting sports in the community. The survey is in progress and is expected to be completed by early next year.