

# LCQ9: Five-Year Development Programme for Team Sports

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (January 24):

Question:

The Five-Year Development Programme for Team Sports (the Programme), launched in 2018, aims to provide additional funding to the national sports associations (NSAs) of eight team sports (namely baseball, basketball, handball, hockey, ice hockey, softball, volleyball and water polo) and provide allowances to members of the Hong Kong teams in the relevant sports, so as to help enhance the performance of these team sports progressively and increase their chances of attaining elite sports status in the future. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government advised at the meeting of the Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports of this Council on November 13 last year that the effectiveness of the Programme was under review and an announcement would be made in due course, of the relevant assessment results or preliminary assessment results;

(2) of the respective results of the aforesaid eight team sports in various competitions during the operation of the Programme (set out in a table);

(3) as the Government, in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2022-2023, indicated that it had set aside \$130 million for continuing the implementation of the Programme, of a breakdown of the expenditure from the funding to date and the remaining balance and, for each team sport, of the respective (i) amounts of funding received by the NSAs concerned, and (ii) numbers of athletes receiving the funding; and

(4) as the Director of Audit's Report No. 74 published by the Audit Commission in 2020 recommended that the authorities closely monitor the implementation of the Programme, including deliberating with the Coordinating Committee for the Five-Year Development Programme for Team Sports (the Coordinating Committee) on how best to accomplish the aims and ultimate goal of the Programme, of the approach adopted by the authorities following their deliberation with the Coordinating Committee and the relevant outcomes?

Reply:

President,

The Government launched the Development Programme for Team Sports

2018-2023 (previously known as the Five-Year Development Programme for Team Sports) (previous round of programme) in January 2018, which provided additional funding support to the national sports associations (NSAs) of eight team sports with team size of five and above featuring in the Asian Games (AG) (namely baseball, basketball, handball, hockey, ice hockey, softball, volleyball and water polo). The additional funding support aimed to enable the relevant NSAs to formulate and implement training programmes for Hong Kong teams (men and women's teams), and provide allowances to team members with a view to progressively enhancing their performance in the AG, and increase their chances of attaining elite sports status in the future.

As the 2022 Hangzhou AG (2022 AG) was postponed to September through October 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government extended the previous round of programme by one year to December 31, 2023 with the endorsement of the Sports Commission. Refinements were introduced to the programme starting from 2023, including replacing ice hockey with women's football to continue our support to the relevant NSAs in preparation for the AG.

My reply to the Hon Vincent Cheng's question is as follows:

(1) The previous round of programme ended on December 31, 2023. After the Hangzhou AG, the Commissioner for Sports visited the eight team sports supported under the previous round of programme in November 2023, and exchanged views with the representatives of the relevant NSAs, coaches and athletes on the development of each team sports and the needs of athletes. All of the NSAs expressed that the additional resources provided to them under the programme were conducive to the development of team sports. These resources helped them step up training and upgrade their gear and equipment. The athlete allowances were also a validation and recognition of their dedication to sports, which has encouraged them to enhance their performances. Six out of 11 teams supported by the programme have improved their performances.

After reviewing the effectiveness of the previous round of programme, the Government launched the Development Programme for Team Sports 2024-2027 (new round of programme) with the endorsement of the Sports Commission, which aims to continue provide additional funding support to the relevant NSAs of eight team sports (namely baseball, basketball, handball, hockey, softball, volleyball, men's water polo and women's football). On top of national squads, the programme is extended to members of the second-tier squads. The goal is to improve the teams' performances in the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026, and increase their chances of attaining elite status. The funding period for the new round of programme is from January 2024 to March 2027, which is expected to benefit about 430 athletes each year with an annual budget of around \$30 million.

The new round of programme has introduced targeted support including the provision of additional resources to develop second-tier squads, dedicated funding for the engagement of high-performance coaches and the strengthening of sports medicine support. The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau will

review the effectiveness of the development programme after the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026, including but not limited to the performances of each team sports at the AG, as well as the development progress of second-tier squads. Depending on results of the review, the Government will consider how to continue supporting team sports that meet the standards, and to focus resources on aligning with the long-term development direction of team sports.

The Government conducted a briefing on January 17, 2024 to provide relevant NSAs with the details of the new round of programme. We will monitor the implementation of the programme

(2) In the previous round of programme, the results of the relevant subsidised team sports at the 2018 Jakarta AG (2018 AG) and the 2022 AG are as follows:

| Sport      | Team  | Result (Note 1)   |                         |
|------------|-------|---|-------------------------|
|            |       | 2018 AG   | 2022 AG                 |
| Baseball   | Men   | 6th / 8 teams   | 6th / 8 teams           |
| Basketball | Men   | 13th / 13 teams   | 12th / 16 teams         |
|            | Women | 10th / 10 teams   | 9th / 12 teams          |
| Handball   | Men   | 8th / 13 teams  | 9th / 13 teams          |
|            | Women | 7th / 10 teams  | 5th / 9 teams           |
| Hockey     | Men   | 12th / 12 teams   | Not applicable (Note 2) |
|            | Women | 9th / 10 teams  | 9th / 10 teams          |
| Ice Hockey | Men   | 2017 Sapporo Asian Winter Games (AWG): Group 1<br>5th / 6 teams | Not applicable (Note 3) |
|            | Women | 2017 Sapporo AWG:<br>6th / 6 teams                              |                         |
| Softball   | Women | 7th / 7 teams   | 7th / 8 teams           |
| Volleyball | Men   | 19th / 20 teams   | 13-19th / 19 teams      |
|            | Women | 11th / 11 teams   | 10th / 13 teams         |
| Water Polo | Men   | 9th / 9 teams   | 7th / 8 teams           |
|            | Women | 6th / 6 teams   | Not applicable (Note 4) |

|          |       |                            |                |
|----------|-------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Football | Women | Not applicable<br>(Note 3) | 9th / 16 teams |
|----------|-------|----------------------------|----------------|

Note 1: Results were based on the announcement made by the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China

Note 2 : Men's hockey team were not qualified

Note 3: Women's football was qualified for the 2022 AG and has replaced ice hockey in the extended programme since 2023

Note 4: Women's water polo team did not participate in the 2022 AG as more time will be required for rebuilding the team

(3) The Government's total actual expenditure in the previous round of programme was approximately \$110 million, including \$40 million on training-related funding and \$70 million on athlete allowances. There is a total of around \$20 million unspent balance remaining from the \$130 million earmarked funding. The total actual amount of government funding received by the relevant NSAs and the total number of athletes receiving allowances from 2018 to 2023 are listed as follows:

| Sport                               | Amount of funding received (\$ million) | No. of athletes eligible for allowance (person) |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Baseball (men)                      | 12,367                                  | 2 013   |
| Basketball (men and women)          | 12,336                                  | 1 859   |
| Handball (men and women)            | 18,186                                  | 2 844   |
| Hockey (men and women)              | 19,354                                  | 2 946   |
| Ice Hockey (men and women) (Note 1) | 15,228                                  | 2 312   |
| Softball (women)                    | 6,562                                   | 1 028   |
| Volleyball (men and women)          | 13,584                                  | 2 156   |
| Water Polo (men and women) (Note 2) | 12,576                                  | 1 974   |
| Football (women) (Note 3)           | 1,644                                   | 261   |

Note 1: Subsidised period for ice hockey was from January 2018 to December 2022

Note 2: Subsidised period for women's water polo was from January 2018 to December 2022

Note 3: Subsidised period for women's football was from January to December 2023

(4) The Coordinating Committee (Committee) was composed of representatives from the former Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), the Leisure and Cultural Services

Department, the Hong Kong Sports Institute, the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China and the relevant NSAs to provide a platform for exchanging views on the implementation of training plans, further development plans and other strategic matters. According to our record, the Committee held meetings on December 21, 2017 and July 10, 2018. Starting from 2020, the former HAB (currently the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau) held regular review meetings with individual NSAs under the programme and conducted site visits to teams' training, which allowed for more in-depth discussions on their training and development plans, and provided more targeted recommendations and support to the teams.

The "Director of Audit's Report No. 74, April 2020" issued by the Audit Commission in 2022 pointed out that among the 12 teams participating in the 2018 AG, only three teams achieved the performance targets set before the Games. In this regard, the then Secretary for Home Affairs and the then Commissioner for Sports stated during a public hearing that the Hong Kong teams participating in the relevant team sports events of the 2018 AG had already been formed when the previous round of programme was launched in January 2018. Therefore, the Government's main focus in the previous round of programme was to provide venue support and resources for the team to hire coaches and supporting staff to systematically formulate and implement a five-year training plan with a view to improving their performances in the 2022 AG.

Whilst impacted by the three-year COVID-19 epidemic, six out of 11 participating teams showed improvement in their performances at the 2022 AG. We believe that the previous round of programme has played a positive role in enhancing the level of some of the team sports.