

## LCQ11: District Football Teams Training Scheme

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Following is a question by the Hon Audrey Eu and a written reply by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Professor Arthur K C Li, (in the absence of the Secretary for Home Affairs) at the Legislative Council today (June 20):

### Question:

Regarding the District Football Teams Training Scheme launched by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") and The Hong Kong Football Association Ltd. ("HKFA") in 2000, will the Government inform this Council :

- (a) of the latest progress of the above scheme;
- (b) of the support given to district football teams by the Government to promote a sense of belonging to the districts among their residents and foster the development of football as a sport in Hong Kong;
- (c) of the support provided by LCSD to district football teams which have been promoted to play the matches of the higher leagues of HKFA; and
- (d) whether LCSD has provided sufficient sports grounds for district football teams of the 18 districts to receive training and play matches in their respective districts; if it has, of the details; if not, the number of district football teams which are unable to receive training and play matches in their respective districts?

### Reply:

Madam President,

(a) Since 2000, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has been providing funding support to the Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA) for implementing the District Football Teams Training Scheme in the 18 districts. Under the scheme, systematic football training is provided to youngsters aged between 16 and 20. The purposes of the Scheme are to bring in new blood to the local football sector, as well as to enhance the sense of belonging of young football

players to their districts. So far, the Scheme has channelled many promising young football players to various division teams.

In 2002, under the coordination of the LCSD, the HKFA has invited the 18 District Councils (DCs) to form district football teams to play in the Third Division District Football Team League. Outstanding players under the District Football Teams Training Scheme were selected by the DCs to form district teams. The first League was held in 2002/03, with teams from 11 DCs taking part in it. Since the year 2003/04, all the 18 DCs have set up their own District Football Teams to play in the League organised by the HKFA. In 2003/04, the Tai Po Team and the Kwai Tsing Team performed exceedingly well and won the champion and first runner-up respectively in the League, and were promoted to the Second Division in the 2004/05. The Tai Po Team has subsequently made further progress by winning the runner-up in the Second Division League in 2005/06, and moved up to the First Division in 2006/07. The Yau Tsim Mong Team was also promoted to the Second Division in 2006/07.

(b) and (c) To support the development of District Football Teams, starting from the football season of 2004/05, the LCSD has reserved 36 free sessions at its turf pitches for each DC District Football Team to undergo training before the commencement of the League. The LCSD has also taken measures to facilitate the hiring of football pitches by District Football Teams for training purpose.

DCs also provide District Football Teams with funding support. In 2006/07, funding ranging from around \$50,000 to \$200,000 were provided by DCs to support District Football Teams.

On the other hand, the Government has actively assisted those District Football Teams which have been promoted to the First Division to solicit commercial sponsorship and encouraged the local community to support the football teams. Taking the Tai Po team as an example, under the coordination of the Government, it has totally secured over \$1.3 million sponsorship in 2006/07 as its development fund.

(d) At present, the LCSD provides 48 natural turf pitches, 25 artificial turf pitches and 229 hard surfaced pitches in the 18 districts for use by various organisations and members of the public. Apart from the Central and Western District, District Football Teams recognised by their respective DCs can undergo training in venues of their respective districts. As there is no existing turf pitch in the Central and Western District, the LCSD has made arrangements for the District Football Team of Central and Western District to use the turf pitches in the Eastern District or the Southern District. The LCSD plans to build an artificial turf pitch in the coming years under the Sun Yat

Sen Memorial Park Phase II Project for the Central and Western District.

Ends/Wednesday, June 20, 2007