

## Government's support for elite athletes

\*\*\*\*\*

The following is Home Affairs Bureau's response in response to media enquiries on the Government's support for elite athletes:

"The Home Affairs Bureau currently allocates \$130 million as recurrent funding to the Hong Kong Sports Institute for elite training.

To enable athletes to concentrate on their training, the Government has also invested \$8.5 million as a one-off start-up fund for the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC) to implement the Hong Kong Athletes Career and Education Programme in July. The programme aims to provide athletes with support in pursuit of higher education and vocational development opportunities upon their retirement from sports competitions.

Together with the sponsorship from the commercial sector and the resources sponsored by the SF&OC, the fund has now reached \$14 million.

Further, the Home Affairs Bureau has also decided from 2008-09 to provide an additional \$8 million as recurrent funding to the Hong Kong Sports Institute, in which half (\$4 million) is for direct financial support for athletes and the half (\$4 million) for strengthening the institute's elite training programme to expand the elite squad. The additional resources will enable more elite athletes to receive full-time training to further improve their standards.

In terms of educational opportunities for athletes, the bureau has reached consensus with eight University Grants Committee funded institutions. The institutions have agreed to continue and strengthen their support to Hong Kong's elite athletes enabling them to undertake sport training while at university, pursue higher education while concentrating on preparing for sport competitions as well as to take up their studies upon their retirement.

Through the University Sports Federation of Hong Kong, we have also gained the support of the other three institutions, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education and Chu Hai College of Higher Education to provide appropriate assistance to elite athletes.

On hardware, the Government will spend around \$1.8 billion for the

redevelopment of the Hong Kong Sports Institute. To tie in with the 2009 East Asian Games, the Government has invested more than \$1 billion in the construction of new sports venues and upgrading the existing facilities, which includes spending \$300 million for constructing the Tseung Kwan O Sports Ground, which will be up to the standards for holding international sport events, and improving the facilities of 13 existing venues, such as the Hong Kong Coliseum, Hong Kong Stadium and Queen Elizabeth Stadium and Kowloon Park Swimming Pool. All the works projects are expected to be completed in mid-2009.

The total operational expenditure for the East Asian Games is \$240 million. A total of \$66 million cash sponsorship has so far been received for the Games.

Ends/Friday, August 29, 2008