

LCQ11: Development of soccer

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Tai-fai and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (February 11):

Question :

Regarding the development of soccer in Hong Kong, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it has explored the causes for the drop of Hong Kong men's football team in the world ranking of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association from being 119th in 2003 to 152nd this year, as well as for Hong Kong being overtaken by Asian countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(b) as the information of the Hong Kong Football Association shows that the average attendance per match was only 919 in respect of the 95 matches of the first division competitions (League and Cup) held at the Mong Kok Stadium in 2006-2007, and the Government is currently planning to spend over \$200 million on the facility improvement works for the Mong Kok Stadium, including the provision of about 6,500 seats, whether it has assessed the average attendance per match for the aforesaid first division football matches to be held at the Mong Kok Stadium upon completion of the improvement works, and if the various facilities of the new venue will be fully utilised; and

(c) whether it has assessed if the current average ticket sales of each football match can cover the basic expenses of professional football teams; if the assessment result is in the negative, whether it will review the existing policy on the development of professional football; if it will not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(a) In the international arena, football has long been a highly competitive sport and in recent years there has been a gap in the pace of football development between Hong Kong and neighbouring regions. Taking into account views put forward by Members on June 4, 2008 when carrying a motion on “Promoting the development of local football” and with a view to further developing local football, we have decided to commission a consultancy study to examine the comparative aspects of football development in Hong Kong and in neighbouring regions, so as to help map out the long-term positioning of local football. The Hong Kong Football Association (HKFA) plays a leading role in promoting the development in Hong Kong, and we hope that the HKFA will also review the current state of local football, and refine its development strategy and detailed implementation programme.

(b) The planned works for the Mong Kok Stadium will improve the spectator stands and enhance levels of service. The attendance figures for first division matches (League and Cup) held at the Mong Kok Stadium in recent seasons show an upward trend in spectator numbers, from about 50,700 in 2005-06 to 78,600 in 2006-07, and over 100,700 in 2007-08. Furthermore, the number of first division matches held at the Mong Kok Stadium in these three seasons has also increased, from 84 in 2005-06 to 107 in 2006-07 and 124 in 2007-08. To meet the demand for organising events and activities which are currently limited by the size of the venue, after taking into account suggestions from the HKFA and the District Council we propose to provide about 6,500 individual seats in the Mong Kok Stadium. We believe that upon completion of the improvement works, the Mong Kok Stadium will be a better venue for promoting the development of football, as well as for staging large-scale community events.

(c) The Government provides funding annually to the HKFA for the promotion and development of football through the Sports Subvention Scheme. In the past few years, the average annual subvention has been about \$7 million. The subvented programmes include the organisation of and participation in international events, training for the National Squad, and the organisation of football training programmes for the young people. The HKFA finances its local leagues itself, and the association is not required to report on the financial position of the league to the Government.

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