

## Government supports SF&OC's "letter of intent" to host 2023 Asian Games

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The SAR Government has decided to support the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC) to submit a "letter of intent" to the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) to bid to host the 2023 Asian Games, the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, said today (June 25).

"The successful hosting of a large-scale international sports event such as the Asian Games will bring about significant benefits to Hong Kong," Mr Tsang said.

"The Government is committed to promoting the development of sports in Hong Kong. We believe that the hosting of the Asian Games would help encourage high levels of sports performance; promote wider public interest and participation in sports, as well as raise the morale of the community," he added.

Mr Tsang said the decision to support the SF&OC was made with the backing of the sports sector. Both the SF&OC membership and the Sports Commission have expressed support for a potential bid.

Besides, on January 6, 2010, the Legislative Council passed a motion on sports development that included a request for the Government to actively consider supporting a bid to host the Asian Games.

The OCA has set the deadlines of June 30, 2010, for the submission of a "letter of intent" and the end of 2010 for the submission of a formal bid to host the 2019 or 2023 Asian Games. The submission of a "letter of intent" does not amount to a formal bid.

"Notwithstanding the considerable benefits that the Asian Games would bring, given the scale of the event and the likely implications for our public finances, the support of the community is essential if Hong Kong is to formally bid for the right to host the Games by the end of this year," Mr Tsang stressed.

"Before deciding whether or not the Government should support a formal bid, a public consultation exercise will be conducted to gauge the views of the public," he said, adding that the final decision would be subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise and acceptance of the likely financial implications involved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

The Government will set up a Provisional Bid Committee with representation from the sports sector, business and community organisations and relevant government agencies as well as a Bid Team to take forward the detailed planning.

The relevant preparatory work includes a review of the OCA requirements as set out in the bid documents in respect of issues such as venue availability, accommodation for athletes and officials, and a detailed assessment of how Hong Kong can meet these requirements.

Estimates of the likely operational cost of running the Games, the capital costs to be incurred in providing suitable sports facilities and the cost of accommodating delegations in a purpose-built athletes' village will be prepared.

An assessment of the potential economic costs and benefits of hosting the Asian Games will also be made. The consultation exercise will be launched upon completion of the relevant preparatory work.

Noting that the OCA is inviting bids to host the Asian Games in 2019 or 2023, Mr Tsang said the Government's assessment was that it would be more advisable to bid for the Games in 2023.

"There are clear advantages in hosting the Asian Games in 2023," he said.

"This would give us more time to develop good quality venues that would meet the needs of sports development in Hong Kong and that would also be suitable for hosting Asian Games events.

"The building programme for the Asian Games would not overlap with the major infrastructure projects as many of them are expected to be substantially completed before 2023. It would also allow us to showcase a suite of new infrastructure projects to the rest of the world.

"In addition, the development of athletes from junior to internationally competitive level is typically a 10-year undertaking. The redevelopment of the Hong Kong Sports Institute into a world class elite sports training centre is due to be completed in 2013. By hosting the Asian Games in 2023, we could set a clear goal for the training of athletes to a level whereby we could expect to achieve good results at the Games," Mr

Tsang explained.

The Chief Executive-in-Council has approved the issue of a letter of support by the Government for the SF&OC to submit a "letter of intent" to bid to host the 2023 Asian Games, and the setting up of a Provisional Bid Committee and a Bid Team.

The Asian Games is held every four years. The OCA requires that any bid to host the Asian Games should be submitted by the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of the relevant member state or territory, together with a letter of support from the government concerned. As the NOC for Hong Kong, China, the SF&OC would be the bidding organisation for Hong Kong.

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