

Option to reduce cost proposed for 2023 Asian Games

The Venue Sub-Committee of the Asian Games Provisional Bid Committee (AGPBC) today (November 9) offered an alternative option which could potentially reduce the direct cost of hosting the Asian Games from the original estimate of about \$13.7 to 14.5 billion, to less than \$6 billion.

At the Venue Sub-Committee meeting today, members examined in detail the Government's strategy for the provision of venues if Hong Kong bids to host the Asian Games. Taking account of public concern over the possible cost of hosting the games, members considered that it would be viable to scale back the original plan to upgrade three proposed indoor sports centres in Yuen Long, Tai Po and Sha Tin.

"The alternative option would reduce the direct cost involved and still enable Hong Kong to provide competition venues up to the necessary international standards, without reducing the attractiveness of our bid," the Chairman of the Venue Sub-Committee, Mr Timothy Fok, said.

"This option would require the preliminary rounds of up to three events to be distributed among different venues. Although the spectator capacity of the three indoor sports centres would be reduced, it would be possible to provide temporary seating during the Games for about 1,000 to 1,200 people in each of the venues that would host the preliminary heats. The venues for holding the semi-finals and the finals of these three events would not be affected," Mr Fok added.

Members proposed that in addition to the three indoor sports centres, the preliminary heats for basketball, handball and volleyball could also take place at the Public Library and Indoor Recreation Centre in Yuen Long, at the Sports Centre in Fanling/Sheung Shui now under construction and at the existing Ma On Shan indoor sports centre. As a result of the proposed changes in the use of venues, wrestling and weightlifting would be relocated to the Tseung Kwan O Complex now under construction.

"The Government is keenly aware of the community's concern at the potential costs involved in hosting the Asian Games. We therefore welcome the option suggested by the Venue Sub-Committee that would reduce by more than half the direct cost of hosting the Games," Mr Tsang Tak-sing, the Secretary for Home Affairs, said.

Mr Tsang stressed that there would be no change to the Government's original plan to provide the three indoor sports centres and related facilities in Yuen Long, Tai Po and Sha Tin, regardless of whether or not they were upgraded.

The Government has extended the public consultation period for commenting on the possibility of Hong Kong bidding to host the 2023 Asian Games, and the deadline for the submission of views is now December 1, 2010.

"The option put forward by the Venue Sub-committee gives the public an opportunity to consider from a fresh perspective whether Hong Kong should bid to host the 2023 Games in the light of the potential reduced direct capital cost, the benefits that hosting the games could bring to Hong Kong and the opportunity for building up a strong sporting culture for our community and investing in our next generation," Mr Tsang said.

Ends/Tuesday, November 9, 2010

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