

## 2023 Asian Games will bring long-term benefits to HK

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The HKSAR Government has decided to support the submission of a formal bid by the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong and China (SF&OC) to the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) to host the 2023 Asian Games in Hong Kong.

A spokesman for the Home Affairs Bureau said today (December 14) that having carefully considered the results of the consultation exercise and the arguments for and against hosting the Games, the Government believed that it would be in the overall long-term interest of Hong Kong to proceed with the bid. The decision has been endorsed by the Executive Council.

"We believe the hosting of the Games would give a strong boost to sports development by providing improved facilities for the public, raising athletes' levels of performance and building a strong sports culture for our next generation. It would also enhance social cohesion," the spokesman said.

"Upon completion of the related sports venues, Hong Kong is likely to become an even more popular destination for holding major international sports events, which in turn would bring additional direct and indirect economic benefits."

As borne out by Hong Kong's recent experience in hosting the East Asian Games, the "home turf" advantage has had a significant effect on the performance of our athletes and this view was also echoed by the sports community when its representatives appeared before a recent public hearing conducted by the Legislative Council (LegCo)'s Home Affairs Panel.

"Moreover, as a sophisticated economy and a responsible member of the OCA, Hong Kong should no longer be content to be a participant only and it is our obligation to host the Asian Games as and when we have the necessary conditions and the capability to do so. This will also demonstrate our commitment to Olympism, and Hong Kong is not just concerned our own economic well-being," he added.

He said that it was widely accepted by different governments that hosting international sports events could provide long-term benefits to the host. Cities in different stages of development were keen to bid for international sport events.

On the views gathered in the public consultation, he said at the beginning public

views were divided with slightly more people expressing reservations on the bid. However, there was a noticeable swing of public opinion in favour of Hong Kong hosting the Games during the latter part of the consultation period, largely due to the good results scored by Hong Kong athletes in the Asian Games in Guangzhou and the impassioned pleas from our athletes.

"We have also a good track record in hosting international events such as the Sixth World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference held in 2005, Olympic Equestrian Event in 2008 and the East Asian Games in 2009. We should be capable of hosting the Asian Games in 2023 given that we will have more than 12 years to prepare for the Games," he added.

The HKSAR Government would proceed to seek the approval-in-principle by the LegCo Finance Committee of the financial implications of the bid.

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