

**Extract from the minutes of special meeting of  
the Panel on Home Affairs held on 9 July 2002**

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**I. Follow-up discussion on the Sports Policy Review**

The Chairman said that the purpose of the meeting was to hold more detailed discussion on the Report of the Sports Policy Review Team (the Report), particularly on the future administration structure for sport with the Hong Kong Sports Development Board (SDB), Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC), and the Administration, after having received views from over 50 deputations on the Report at the meeting on 22 June 2002.

Meeting with deputations

2. Members noted the further submissions from SP&OC and the Hong Kong, China Rowing Association respectively [LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2526/01-02(01) and (02)].

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr John HUNG of SDB briefed members on the views of SDB on the future administrative structure for sport as follows -

- (a) SDB technically supported any changes that were conducive to the overall delivery of sports in Hong Kong. It could hardly object to the dissolution of SDB if another sport authority was in a better position than SDB to take over the coordination of development of sport in Hong Kong;
- (b) SDB had great reservation about the improvements to the administrative structure for sport that could be brought along by the establishment of the proposed Sports Commission if the latter was only to be an advisory body without execution powers, and its functions and role very similar to those of SDB. If the set up of the Commission was targeted at achieving a change in the personnel of the sport authority, SDB considered that replacement of the entire membership of the Board could well serve the purpose, without the need to dissolve SDB; and
- (c) the Report had not provided details of the Sports Commission, such as its responsibilities and authority, composition, interface

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with SF&OC and national sports associations (NSAs) and authority over the former, whether there were any differences between the Commission and SDB in these areas and, most of all, why such a Commission was needed.

4. Mr John HUNG stressed that SDB had grave concerns about the Sports Policy Review Team's assumptions that changes in the administrative structure would solve all the key issues in sport and that the establishment of the Sports Commission would make all the problems disappear. He added that without providing detailed information on the Sports Commission and clear pros and cons of the three options listed in paragraph 8.15 of the Report, the Review Team had not made a convincing case that its proposed administrative structure for sport would bring major improvements to the current situation.

5. In response to the Chairman, Mr Ronnie WONG of SF&OC informed members that a committee consisted of twelve members of SF&OC had been formed to study the Report. The committee had consulted more than seventy NSAs and sport professionals who were of the view that the Report was very open, objective and comprehensive. It had also allowed for comments from the sports community. They all agreed that the Report was the best consultative paper on sport prepared by the Government.

6. Nevertheless, Mr Ronnie WONG said that he agreed with Mr John HUNG that the Report had not provided details of the responsibilities and composition of the Sports Commission. Whether the Commission would be accorded with executive powers and who would be appointed as members of the Commission were the major concerns of the sports community. Mr Ronnie WONG advised that SF&OC had put forth its suggestions on these two aspects in its submissions to the Panel. Besides increasing transparency in the appointment of the senior staff and members of the Commission, SF&OC believed that equally important was the acquisition of sufficient funding and resources for sport in areas such as elite training and sports venues.

Meeting with the Administration

7. In response to the concerns raised by SDB and SF&OC, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (3) (DS(HA)3) explained that the Sports Policy Review Team had identified two major problems in the existing administrative structure for sport, namely, the absence of a single organisation responsible for overall policy, planning, coordination and monitoring of sports development and a perceived overlap and lack of clarity in the delineation of responsibilities between the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and SDB. The Review Team had therefore recommended to tackle these problems by streamlining and simplifying the administrative structure for sport through the establishment of the Sports Commission. The Commission would enhance the

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coordination of the efforts and resources in sports development as well as the monitoring of the implementation of sports policy.

8. As regards the differences between SDB and the Sports Commission, DS(HA)3 explained that SDB had been entrusted with so many responsibilities that it could not concentrate on strategic policy planning. The Sports Commission would focus its efforts on this latter aspect while others would be responsible for implementing and executing sports policies and decisions. The role of the Commission would be similar to those of the advisory bodies established in other policy areas such as the Education Commission. It would be a high level advisory body responsible for advising the Government on strategic policy planning and funding as well as coordinating key activities in the sports sector. DS(HA)3 stressed that there would be a partnership relationship between the Sports Commission and the Government who would rely on the professional advice of the Commission in formulating sports policies. The joint efforts of the Government, the Sports Commission and the sports community would be crucial to the success of sports development in Hong Kong.

Discussion

*Roles and functions of the Hong Kong Sports Development Board*

9. Mr Andrew CHENG requested Mr John HUNG to elaborate on the improvements that could be introduced to the role and functions of SDB under the existing administrative structure so that the objective of creating a more efficient and transparent framework for sports administration could be achieved without the need for the establishment of the Sports Commission and hence the dissolution of SDB.

10. In response, Mr John HUNG reiterated that as explained clearly in its earlier submission to the Panel, SDB had discharged its functions in accordance with the SDB Ordinance very satisfactorily and had made significant contributions towards the sports development in Hong Kong over the past twelve years. He admitted that there had been problems with some members of its directorate staff over their relationship with SF&OC and NSAs but the problems were reciprocal. He assured members that with the changes introduced to the management of SDB under the leadership of Mrs Maureen CHAN as the Executive Director, the cooperation between SDB and sports organisations had been greatly improved.

11. Mr John HUNG continued to explain that there were two major functions of SDB, namely, sports policy planning and implementation of these policies. As regards the former function, SDB had produced two five-year strategic plans over the past years. Indeed, some of the recommendations put forth in the Report of the Sports Policy Review Team were similar to those

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formulated by SDB in these two plans and had been repeatedly pushed for by SDB. However, the two plans had not been completely discharged due to shortage of funds and lack of government commitment. As regards the executive function of SDB, Mr HUNG admitted that there had been criticisms and dissatisfaction from NSAs regarding the allocation of sports funding. He said that the shortage of funding and mismatch of the timing of the arrival of Government subvention and the applications for subsidies from NSAs could account for this problem. If a new authority was to be set up for the allocation of sports funding, it would still be confronted with the same problem unless the funding issues were addressed properly. He added that the uncertainty over the exact amount of Government subvention each year had rendered it extremely difficult for SDB to make long-term planning.

12. Mr John HUNG further pointed out that while shortage of funding had imposed restrictions on the functions and activities of SDB, the dissolution of the former Provisional Municipal Councils and the establishment of LCSD in 1999 had also affected the role of SDB. As mentioned in the Report, there was perceived overlap in the responsibilities of SDB and LCSD. Mr HUNG suggested that the Government should review the scope of activities and programmes of SDB and pass some of them onto LCSD as appropriate so that SDB could concentrate its efforts and resources on performing the remaining functions and responsibilities more effectively. The shortage in funding would then be reduced and some of the problems in the allocation of sports funding might also be solved. Mrs Maureen CHAN supplemented that it might be necessary for the Government to review and amend the SDB Ordinance so as to clearly delineate the functions and responsibilities of SDB, LCSD, the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), and SF&OC.

13. In response to a question from Ms Emily LAU about the staff morale of SDB, DS(HA)3 advised that the Administration had met with staff of SDB and assured them that appropriate arrangements would be made for them irrespective of the option to be adopted by the Government regarding the administrative structure for sport in future. Mr John HUNG informed members that this issue had been discussed at length at the last few board meetings of SDB. There had been grave concerns about staff morale and arrangements for staff whose contracts were due for renewal in the following six months. Because of the uncertainty about its future, SDB had also been cautious and signed only short-term contracts with outside contractors recently. He added that if there were situations regarding staff redundancy and their treatment, particularly if the Board was to be disbanded, then the Government had to inherit the problem. DS(HA)3 assured members that the Administration would continue to liaise with SDB and assist in tackling issues arising from the possible changes in the sports administrative structure.

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*The proposed Sports Commission*

14. Mrs Maureen CHAN of SDB pointed out that representatives from HAB, LCSD and SF&OC had already been appointed as members of SDB. She queried how the composition of the Sports Commission would differ from that of SDB that would enable it to become an higher level advisory body than SDB. Seeking similar clarification from the Administration, the Chairman also requested for further information on the powers of the Commission. DS(HA)3 clarified that the Government would attach much importance to the advice offered by the Commission and allocate sufficient resources to facilitate the implementation of the sports policies formulated by the Commission.

15. Mr Andrew CHENG said that he agreed with Mr John HUNG that the Report had not provided many details of the responsibilities and authority of the Sports Commission or the future sports funding mechanism. He had reservation on how the Government could convince the public that its proposed administrative structure for sport would be a better option than the existing one. In reply, DS(HA)3 reiterated that the Review Team had identified the problems in the existing sports administrative structure and considered that the establishment of the Sports Commission would help improve the situation greatly. He added that transparency in the allocation of sports funding would be increased and the existing funding procedures would be streamlined and simplified so that there would only be one single funding authority in future. The use of sports funding would also be reviewed and new sources of funding would be explored.

16. Referring to the views of SF&OC and NSAs on the administrative structure for sport, Mr Andrew CHENG commented that they were mainly concerned about the fair allocation of sports funding and supported the Government's proposal for an advisory Sports Commission. Mr CHENG opined that a macro approach should be adopted for sports development in Hong Kong rather than focusing on the distribution of resources. He was of the view that it would not be conducive to the development of sport in Hong Kong if the sport authority was to be converted from a statutory decision-making body to one that was purely advisory in nature without executive powers.

17. Mr Ronnie WONG responded that SDB had been operated in a "rule of man" style which had caused criticisms and dissatisfaction from NSAs over the allocation of sport resources. He said that this situation would be improved if the Sports Commission was made up of members from the sports community as suggested by SF&OC on previous occasions. He added that the Review Team had left room for the public and the sports community to voice out their views on the proposed Sports Commission and therefore had not provided many details of the Commission in the Report. He expected that the Government would draw up a more detailed proposal on the Commission after the consultation period based on the views collected.

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18. Mr Andrew CHENG further enquired how the situation of "rule of man" could be prevented in the operation of the Sports Commission. He also asked if improvements were made to the execution of sports policies as well as the funding mechanism, would the Government and NSAs agree to preserve the statutory status of the sport authority.

19. Mr Ronnie WONG replied that there was obvious overlap in the responsibilities and functions of LCSD and SDB, resulting in a waste of resources. It was therefore necessary to review the distribution of advisory and executive duties between the Sports Commission, LCSD and other related organisations. While believing that the decision on the statutory status of the sport authority should be left in the hands of the Government, Mr WONG remarked that the Sports Commission might also assume executive functions on top of its advisory role.

20. DS(HA)3 explained that changes to the existing administrative structure for sport had been recommended with a view to achieving clear delineation of responsibilities and hence better coordination in sports policies and activities between Government departments, the sports community and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate the development of sport in Hong Kong. The Government would welcome views from the public on the three options proposed in the Report.

21. Referring to the second paragraph of SF&OC's further submission, Mr John HUNG pointed out that despite SF&OC's support for the Sports Commission, there was the possibility that the latter might become the "agent" that might create "hurdles" in fostering mutual trust and effective communication between the Government and the sports sector as depicted in paragraph 2(b) of SF&OC's submission. As regards the need for a longer term comprehensive sports policy mentioned in paragraph 2(h) of the submission, Mr HUNG stressed that SDB had devised two five-year strategic plans already. However, because of shortage of funds and changes in its role and functions brought by the establishment of LCSD, these plans had not been implemented completely. He said that the new Sports Commission would face the same problem if the provision of Government subvention remained unchanged in future. He also pointed out that the Report of the Sports Policy Review Team had not elaborated on how the Sports Commission would interface and coordinate with SF&OC and NSAs. It was therefore not appropriate to assume that the Commission would out-perform SDB in this aspect.

*Management of sports organisations*

22. Mr Albert CHAN remarked that one of the problems hindering sports development in Hong Kong was that the non-professionals were leading the professionals. Not only was the overall sport development led by the

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Government, the sports organisations were also controlled by businessmen who did not possess sufficient knowledge in sport for providing professional leadership for the development of the sport items. He pointed out that there would not be a change in the persons in charge of some NSAs despite years of records of unsatisfactory performance of its athletes. He pointed out that this issue had not been addressed in the Report and invited comments from SF&OC.

23. In reply, Mr Ronnie WONG explained that the issue of non-professional leading the professionals would be resolved if the Government accepted the suggestions from SF&OC and NSAs and appoint their representatives as members of the Sports Commission. While admitting that the quality of the management of NSAs varied widely, Mr WONG advised that the Government, SDB or SF&OC had not involved themselves in the daily operation of NSAs directly as this was not advocated by the International Olympic Committee. Nevertheless, SF&OC would identify NSAs with management problems to the Government who would then exercise pressure on the latter for improvements through the control of subvention. In some cases, the Government had bypassed the NSAs concerned and provided subsidies to the athletes concerned directly to ensure that the latter would not suffer as a result of the poor management of the NSAs concerned. He assured members that SF&OC would examine the issue in further details and make recommendations to the Government as appropriate.

*Prospect of elite athletes*

24. Noting that the Report had only briefly mentioned about the educational and career prospect guidance support to be provided for full-time athletes, Mr Albert CHAN invited views from Mr Ronnie WONG on the improvement of career prospect for elite athletes. Mr WONG advised that SF&OC had already included recommendations on this aspect in its submissions to the Panel. Mrs Maureen CHAN informed members that SDB had contributed a lot to the improvement of career prospect for elite athletes. Besides offering them one-year employment in SDB upon their retirement to enable them to adapt to the transition, SDB also secured sponsorships for their further studies overseas or locally. Mrs CHAN said that SDB had assisted many retired athletes to build up a career of their own. She cited Ms CHAN Nim-chee as a prominent example, who had once been an excellent athlete in badminton and now became one of the managers of SDB.

*Way forward*

25. In response to Ms Emily LAU, DS(HA)3 advised that the Administration would provide more details of the proposed sports structure after the consultation period and revert to the Panel for further discussions. Mr John HUNG urged that the role, functions and powers of the Sports Commission should be clearly defined before a final decision was made on the

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administrative structure for sport. The Chairman remarked that since SDB was a statutory body, any changes to be made to it would need to be effected through legislative amendments. He requested the Administration to take into account the views of the Panel, the organisations concerned as well as members of the public in formulating the detailed set of proposals on sports development and revert to the Panel in due course.

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Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
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