

Olympics Inspiration

奧運激發運動潛能

Hong Kong's participation at the Olympic Games in Beijing reflects the growing popularity of winter sports
香港運動員赴京參加奧運賽事，可見冬季運動日益普及

Despite Hong Kong's snow-free climate, winter sports are growing in popularity at both the recreational and elite levels. Three local athletes qualified for the Beijing Winter Olympics last month – our biggest representation to date. HKGCC General Committee Member Edmond Yue spoke to *The Bulletin* after returning home from the event, which he attended in his role as Chairman of the Ski Association of Hong Kong.

The Covid prevention measures and closed loop system worked very well, Yue said, enabling the event to run smoothly even amid the pandemic.

"The success of the Beijing Winter Olympics can showcase China and can help promote winter sports on a recreational level as well as professional," he said.



The presence of Hong Kong athletes on the world stage is a fantastic boost for the city, and will also provide opportunities for businesses as winter sports grow in popularity. Sports culture has several different stages, Yue explained, ranging from recreational to elite, then professional – where commercialisation opportunities emerge.

In some jurisdictions, sports and elite athletes get a great deal of government support. "In Hong Kong, the total budget allocated to sports is not that high, and only around 20 sports have dedicated support from the Government," Yue said.

However, the Government recently announced that it will build Hong Kong's first international standard ice rink. While there are some indoor skiing facilities, the city's land shortage means that there is not a full-scale dry slope available. But Hong Kong will likely benefit from the growing focus on winter sports in the Mainland. Yue said that the Central Government has allocated resources to promote winter sports in the south of the country, including building more facilities in the Greater Bay Area.

Hong Kong is currently increasing its cooperation with the Mainland on skiing activities, and at the same time, China has also been working with the International Skiing Federation (FIS),

which may see more global contests happening in the Mainland.

The Hong Kong Ski Association is a full member of the FIS and has been working with the organization to make the sport more professional, which will provide more opportunities for businesses in areas including sponsorship. To encourage youngsters, it also participates in FIS's "Bring Children to the Snow" programme.

Winter sports are surprisingly popular in Hong Kong, and many people travel to Japan, Europe and the United States to ski, Yue said. In fact, there are around 20,000 regular skiers in the city.

"On a social level, skiing is very popular among Hong Kong people who enjoy travelling to different resorts," Yue said. "But promoting sports at the elite level is more difficult."

One of the reasons is that training at the highest level is not compatible with Hong Kong's school and university schedules. But this may also be changing, and Yue welcomed the move by The University of Hong Kong to provide more flexibility for elite athletes.

The presence of Hong Kong athletes at the Winter Olympics is likely to inspire a new generation of potential participants. With more support from the Government, businesses and local people, we hope to see our representation at the elite level continue to grow in future years.



香港氣候暖和無雪，冬季運動（無論作為康體或精英運動）卻在這座無雪之城日漸興起。冬季奧林匹克運動會上月假北京舉行，香港共有三位運動員取得參賽資格，港隊參賽人數更為歷屆最多。總商會理事余國賢在開幕禮上以中國香港滑雪總會會長的身份率領港隊進場，並在返港後接受《工商月刊》訪問。

余國賢表示，防疫措施和閉環系統行之有效，讓賽事在疫情期間仍能順利進行。

「北京冬奧圓滿舉行，既展示了中國的實力，亦有助於在康樂和專業競技層面推廣冬季運動。」他說。

香港運動員登上國際體育舞台，對香港來說絕對是一大鼓舞，而冬季運動日漸興起，也將為企業創造機遇。余國賢解釋，體育文化分為康樂、精英和專業三個不同發展階段，為商業化提供平台。

在一些國家，體育和精英運動員可獲政府給予大量支援。「相對之下，香港的體育撥款較少，而且全港只有約20個體育項目獲政府重點資助。」余國賢說。

然而，政府最近宣布將興建全港首個符合國際標準的溜冰場。香港雖有一些室內滑雪設施，但礙於土地不足，迄今仍沒有標準乾式滑雪場可供使用。不過，隨着冬季運動在內地日益受到重視，香港有望從中受惠。余國賢指出，中央政府已調配資源在南方推廣冬季運動，包括在大灣區增建相關設施。



香港現正就滑雪活動加緊與內地合作，而中國亦一直與國際滑雪總會（FIS）合作，冀日後有更多國際賽事在內地舉行。

作為FIS成員，中國香港滑雪總會一直與該組織攜手推動滑雪運動的專業發展，從而在體育贊助等領域為企業開創更多商機。為鼓勵青年參與冰雪運動，該會還參加了FIS舉辦的「Bring Children to the Snow」推廣計劃。

余國賢表示，冬季運動在香港大受歡迎，不少人更遠赴日本、歐美等地滑雪，實在令人驚喜。事實上，全港約二萬人有定期滑雪的習慣。

他說：「在社會層面，滑雪運動深受熱愛周遊列國的港人歡迎，但要推動運動精英化則較為困難。」

其中一項難處是高階訓練未能配合本地學校和大學的課業時間表。然而，這個情況可能正在改變——余國賢歡迎香港大學作出特別安排，為精英運動員提供更大的彈性。

香港運動員躋身冬季奧運會，有助激勵新一代發揮潛能。在政府、商界和市民的大力支持下，我們期望未來會有更多精英運動員代表香港出賽。