

Responding to the National 15th Five-Year Plan and Hong Kong's First Five-Year Plan

Proposal on the Development of Tennis and Emerging Racquet Sports in Hong Kong

2026



OBJECTIVE

This proposal sets out a strategic blueprint for the holistic development of tennis and emerging racquet sports in Hong Kong, including pickleball, padel and other related disciplines.

Through enhanced Greater Bay Area collaboration, the hosting of international events, facilities enhancement, industry development, talent nurturing and community-wide participation programmes, the proposal seeks to elevate Hong Kong's position in the international tennis landscape and within the Greater Bay Area. It also aims to generate economic, cultural and social benefits through sports development, in support of the strategic directions of the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China ("the 15th Five-Year Plan") and the First Five-Year Plan for the Economic and Social Development of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("Hong Kong's First Five-Year Plan").

By leveraging Hong Kong's role as a "super connector" and "super value-adder", this proposal aims to create practical opportunities for both Hong Kong and national sports development, and to position Hong Kong as an important international gateway for Chinese tennis and racquet sports.

01

Introduction:

Hong Kong's Global Positioning in Tennis and Emerging Racquet Sports and Alignment with National Planning

Tennis and racquet sports in the global sports industry

1. Tennis is one of the world's five leading professional sports. Its events attract over one billion viewers annually and carry significant commercial, branding and city-promotion value. In recent years, emerging racquet sports, including pickleball and padel, have also grown rapidly across North America, Europe and Asia, forming new sports industries with strong participation bases and considerable economic potential. Many international cities, including London, New York and Paris, use top-tier tennis and racquet sports events as platforms for sports diplomacy and the projection of city soft power.
2. From an economic perspective, the global tennis sponsorship market was valued at over US\$3 billion in 2025 and is expected to grow to US\$4 billion by 2033. Wimbledon provides a clear example of the long-term commercial and cultural value of major tennis events, with sponsorship revenue reaching US\$124.7 million in 2025. At the same time, pickleball and other emerging racquet sports have become new engines of industry growth. The global pickleball apparel and equipment market was valued at approximately US\$3 billion in 2025. Professional leagues and cross-sector brand partnerships have also emerged in the United States and major Asian cities, creating further commercial and tourism opportunities.
3. Internationally, tennis has long served as a highly recognisable "city brand" and "a platform for sports diplomacy". Pickleball and other emerging racquet sports are also becoming important tools for governments and sports cities to promote mass participation and build international brand identity. Around the world, international financial centres use major sports events to attract high-net-worth individuals, multinational corporations and global brands, driving tourism, increasing city exposure and creating distinctive cultural diplomacy impact.

Hong Kong's positioning and opportunities

4. Hong Kong already possesses the necessary foundation to develop into a major tennis city in Asia. It is one of the few Asian cities that hosts both ATP and WTA international tour events, and the third Asian city capable of staging ATP and WTA events in the same city. This reflects Hong Kong's distinctive position in the Asian professional tennis landscape. In 2025, Hong Kong once again won the WTA International Tournament of the Year award and, for the first time, received the WTA Tournament Progress Award, recognising its event delivery capability and professional standards. Hong Kong also successfully brought UTS to Asia for the first time, further demonstrating its ability to host innovative international tennis IP and high-level sports entertainment events.
5. Looking ahead, Hong Kong should make it a key objective to secure the hosting rights for ATP 500 and WTA 500 events, benchmarking itself against leading Asian tennis cities such as Tokyo. This would enhance the quality of player fields, event value, media exposure and international brand impact, while further consolidating Hong Kong's role as an international tennis gateway for southern China and the Greater Bay Area.
6. For Hong Kong, this represents an important opportunity to align with national development directions, strengthen international connectivity and perform its role as a "super connector" and "super value-adder". As an international financial centre and a meeting point of Chinese and Western cultures, Hong Kong has natural advantages in hosting high-level sports events. Through tennis and emerging racquet sports events, Hong Kong can help enhance the overall brand, event level and international influence of Chinese tennis, while showcasing the city's confidence and diversity.
7. In the long run, Hong Kong can leverage the platform and international network of the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association to develop into a "new gateway for Chinese tennis and racquet sports", creating new opportunities and making practical contributions to sports development in Hong Kong and the nation.

02

Current Development and Achievements of Tennis and Emerging Racquet Sports in Hong Kong

Breakthroughs by Hong Kong players

8. Hong Kong tennis players have made encouraging progress in recent years and are increasingly achieving breakthroughs on the international stage. Coleman Wong Chak-lam, one of Hong Kong's leading young players, has reached the highest-ever ranking for a Hong Kong men's tennis player, at world No. 92. His success has not only inspired greater interest in tennis among young people, but also demonstrated the confidence and capability of a new generation of Hong Kong athletes.
9. At team level, the Hong Kong team won bronze in the U20 men's team event at the 15th National Games, marking Hong Kong tennis' first-ever team medal at the National Games. This achievement represents a new level of performance by Hong Kong's elite tennis athletes. The women's doubles team has also shown steady progress, demonstrating strong medium- to long-term development potential.

Continued progress in tennis and pickleball participation

10. At the community level, the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association has continued to work with different sectors to promote a range of community programmes with encouraging results. The "HKJC Tennis Rocks" programme has reached over 13,000 students across 75 schools, providing introductory training for primary school students and students with special educational needs, and successfully broadening grassroots exposure to tennis.
11. The "HKJC Tennis Serves Programme", launched in September 2025, is a three-year initiative aimed at promoting an intergenerational and inclusive sports culture. More than 20 schools and around 900 elderly participants have already taken part in tennis activities under the programme. Pickleball training courses have also been introduced in 12 schools, promoting the wider development of both tennis and pickleball at community level.
12. Other programmes for people with special needs, including students with SEN, persons with physical disabilities and hearing-impaired participants, have also been rolled out, benefiting more than 100 participants. Overall participation numbers and categories continue to grow year by year, showing that community promotion is progressing steadily and that tennis is becoming part of everyday life for more members of the public.

03

Greater Bay Area Collaboration and Integration into the National Strategy of Building a Leading Sports Nation

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The national 15th Five-Year Plan sets out the goal of accelerating the development of China into a leading sports nation, promoting coordinated development across mass fitness, elite sports, sports industry, sports technology and sports culture. Hong Kong's First Five-Year Plan also emphasises the need for Hong Kong to proactively align with national development, deepen cooperation with Mainland cities, and perform its role as a "super connector" and "super value-adder". The future development of tennis and emerging racquet sports in Hong Kong should take Greater Bay Area collaboration as an important entry point. Through event coordination, elite training, sports science, talent exchange, sports tourism and mass participation, Hong Kong can fully integrate into the national strategy of building a leading sports nation. This proposal also directly addresses the key consultation directions under Hong Kong's First Five-Year Plan in relation to sports development, including promoting community sports and mass fitness, advancing elite sports, making effective use of sports infrastructure and the "M" Mark system to promote "sports + mega events", and deepening sports exchanges within the Greater Bay Area.

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In recent years, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau has actively promoted elite sports development and emphasised the use of sports science, sports medicine and professional support to raise athletes' performance. The Hong Kong, China Tennis Association will actively respond to this direction by upgrading Greater Bay Area collaboration from general exchange to a more institutionalised, regular and professional model. A regional cooperation platform covering tennis, pickleball and other emerging racquet sports can be established. By combining Hong Kong's international networks with the training and competition resources of Mainland cities, a more complete development pathway can be provided for Hong Kong athletes, coaches, sports science and medical support personnel.

Building a Greater Bay Area Platform for Joint Training and Elite Talent Development

- 15.** In elite training, strategic links should be strengthened between the Hong Kong Sports Institute and Mainland tennis centres to establish an institutionalised “Greater Bay Area Elite Development System for Tennis and Racquet Sports”. This would combine the strengths of both sides in coaching resources, venues and talent development, promote coach exchange and joint training for young players, and make good use of Greater Bay Area exchange competitions as practical competition platforms. Hong Kong athletes should also be encouraged to participate in overseas training camps. This would improve match experience and gradually establish a three-tier training network covering local training, regional collaboration and the international tour.
- 16.** In future, Hong Kong may consider working with sports bureaux and tennis associations in Greater Bay Area cities to develop cross-boundary talent exchange, positioning Hong Kong as a “Greater Bay Area Tennis and Racquet Sports Training Centre”. This would promote joint training, specialised sports science collaboration and a shared competition system, further integrating regional training resources, facilitating exchanges among high-level coaches and top players, and building a sustainable professional ecosystem.

Active participation in Mainland leagues and competitions

- 17.** Hong Kong’s status as an international city gives it unique advantages in hosting China-themed events and regional events. For example, representative event brands such as a “Greater Bay Area Series” could be explored to facilitate regional resource flow and attract global media, international brands and commercial partners. By developing sports culture and proprietary IP with Greater Bay Area characteristics, the market value of events can be further expanded and the international recognition of Chinese tennis events enhanced.
- 18.** Higher-tier international events, such as future ATP 500 and WTA 500 events in Hong Kong, can be positioned as important platforms for attracting talent, motivating elite players and driving sports industry development. They would also help promote coordinated development among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in event alignment, talent development, sports tourism and industry cooperation. With Hong Kong’s experience as the third Asian city to host ATP and WTA events in the same city, as well as its successful introduction of UTS to Asia, Hong Kong is well placed to serve as a Greater Bay Area platform for high-level international tennis events, attracting global players, brands and media attention.
- 19.** For tennis, pickleball and other emerging racquet sports, Hong Kong can explore wild card exchanges, qualifying draw places, youth category invitations and representative team participation arrangements with Mainland event organisers and relevant associations. This would enable Hong Kong players to participate more systematically in events held in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and other Mainland cities. At the same time, Hong Kong may reserve exchange places in local international and junior events to invite players from Mainland Greater Bay Area cities to compete in Hong Kong.
- 20.** Through more active participation in Mainland leagues and competitions, Hong Kong athletes can gain more high-quality match experience, while local coaches can observe different training models and tactical trends. In the long run, this will help Hong Kong build a deeper elite talent pool and lay a stronger foundation for better results at the National Games, Asian competitions, international tours and world-class events.

Strengthening elite sports science and medical exchange

- 21.** To further strengthen elite sports development, cross-boundary talent exchange can cover support areas such as sports medicine, strength and conditioning, sports psychology, nutrition management, event operations and sports administration. Hong Kong can work with Guangdong and Macao to establish a “Talent Exchange Internship Programme”, allowing sports scientists, physiotherapists, strength and conditioning coaches and event management professionals to undertake short-term placements in different cities. This would promote the sharing of research outcomes, complement talent resources and align professional standards. It would also help raise the level of sports science and support services across the Greater Bay Area and reinforce Hong Kong’s role as a high-end sports talent hub in the Asia-Pacific region.

Promoting “multi-destination” sports tourism

- 22.** The concept of “multi-destination travel” connects Hong Kong with Greater Bay Area cities such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Macao through sports, culture, business and leisure activities, allowing visitors to experience sports events and cultural characteristics in multiple cities within one trip.
- 23.** Tennis and racquet sports events can become core tourism attractions. For example, the Hong Kong Tennis Open could be combined with the Guangzhou Open to create a cross-city spectator route. Greater Bay Area leagues for pickleball and padel could also be paired with “sports + tourism festival” activities. It is recommended that the Government work with tourism organisations to launch a “Greater Bay Area Sports Pass” or sports-themed travel packages, integrating ticketing, transport and accommodation offers to support the implementation of new cross-boundary tourism models.

Promoting “multi-destination” sports tourism

- 24.** To better develop the China tennis season, the following areas are recommended:

- a Event coordination:** Work with Greater Bay Area cities on event scheduling, positioning and resource allocation to enhance the overall attractiveness of regional events;
- b Player exchange:** Promote wild card exchanges, youth invitations, qualifying places and representative team exchange to create more high-level competition opportunities for Hong Kong players;
- c Elite training:** Establish a Greater Bay Area elite development pathway through joint training, youth camps, coach exchanges and sports science support;
- d Sports Science and Sports Medicine:** Strengthen professional exchange in strength and conditioning, injury prevention, rehabilitation, sports psychology, nutrition management and data analysis;
- e Brand promotion:** Jointly promote events, city branding and sports culture under themes such as “Greater Bay Area Tennis Week” or “Greater Bay Area Racquet Sports Festival”;
- f Commercial collaboration:** Explore cross-city and cross-event sponsorship models to attract brands from finance, tourism, aviation, hospitality, retail, automotive and technology sectors;
- g Sports tourism:** Develop spectator packages, training camps, cultural experiences and accommodation and transport offers to promote “multi-destination” sports tourism;
- h Emerging sports:** Use pickleball, padel and other sports to promote community experiences, corporate activities, school programmes and Greater Bay Area exchange competitions, expanding mass participation.

04

Deepening Linkages with the China tennis season

- 25.** With the rapid development of Chinese tennis in recent years, the Mainland has gradually formed a China tennis season with international influence. Cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Wuhan host ATP, WTA and Chinese-branded events of different levels, creating a multi-layered tennis ecosystem covering top-tier professional events, women's tour events, junior tournaments and community activities. As an international city, an important Greater Bay Area node and China's external-facing window, Hong Kong should integrate more proactively into the China tennis season and form complementary synergies with major Mainland tennis cities, thereby enhancing the overall brand, event level and international influence of Chinese tennis.

The value Hong Kong can bring to the China tennis season and new sports IP

- 26.** Hong Kong can further strengthen the international influence of the China tennis season. The season is already an important part of the Asian professional tennis landscape. Hong Kong, with its image as an international financial centre and a meeting point of Chinese and Western cultures, as well as its mature experience in operating international events, can add stronger international communications, player services, media exposure and brand connectivity. By serving as an important node in the China tennis season, Hong Kong can increase the season's appeal to overseas players, coaching teams, international media and sponsors, and strengthen its position as a major professional tennis platform in Asia and globally.
- 27.** Hong Kong can also bring greater commercial and brand value to the China tennis season. Hong Kong has long been home to international brands, financial institutions, multinational corporations and high-end client networks. It is well suited to developing sports sponsorship, corporate hospitality, naming rights, VIP boxes, sports tourism and cross-sector brand collaboration. If Hong Kong events and major Mainland events are packaged together as a more comprehensive China tennis season sponsorship and promotion proposition, this would help attract more international brands and, through Hong Kong's international media reach and multilingual communication capabilities, showcase the development of Chinese tennis, city vitality and the achievements of building a leading sports nation to overseas markets.
- 28.** Hong Kong can further serve as the southern Greater Bay Area hub of the China tennis season. At present, high-level ATP and WTA events in the Mainland are mainly concentrated in northern, eastern and central China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan and Ningbo. While southern China already has event foundations in Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong, there remains room to enhance the professional event landscape at ATP 500, WTA 500 and higher levels. If Hong Kong successfully secures ATP 500 and WTA 500 events, it would help strengthen the high-level tennis landscape in southern China, create a more balanced national layout alongside Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan and Ningbo, and further raise the overall level and regional coverage of the China tennis season.
- 29.** Hong Kong can also serve as a pilot platform for new sports IP and Greater Bay Area event collaboration. Hong Kong is geographically close to Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Macao and Zhuhai, and has mature cross-boundary transport and tourism facilities. In future, event scheduling, wild card exchange, player services, tourism products and joint promotion can be used to build brands such as "Greater Bay Area Tennis Week" or "Greater Bay Area Racquet Sports Festival". Hong Kong's successful introduction of UTS to Asia shows that it has the capability to host new international sports IP. If further combined with pickleball, padel and other emerging racquet sports, the China tennis season can extend from professional competition to mass participation, sports tourism and emerging sports industries.

Opportunities the China tennis season can bring to Hong Kong

- 30.** The China tennis season can bring market, audience and sports economy opportunities to Hong Kong. The Mainland's large tennis population, spectator base, corporate resources and consumer market can provide more stable support for Hong Kong events. If Hong Kong strengthens event coordination with Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Wuhan and other cities, it will help attract more Mainland spectators to Hong Kong, driving consumption in hotels, food and beverage, retail, transport and tourism, and strengthening the economic benefits of Hong Kong as an international sports events city.
- 31.** The China tennis season can also enhance Hong Kong events' attractiveness to players and create better conditions for event upgrades. Professional players consider regional event continuity, transport convenience, training facilities and player services when planning their schedules. If Hong Kong strengthens linkages with major Mainland events and supports this with Greater Bay Area transport, practice venues, accommodation and logistics arrangements, it will help attract more highly ranked players to include Hong Kong in their Asian swing. This would improve the line-ups of ATP and WTA events and lay the foundation for pursuing ATP 500 and WTA 500 status.
- 32.** At the same time, the China tennis season can create greater room for policy coordination, talent development and industry growth. Stronger linkages between Hong Kong's events and the China tennis season can help secure more cross-boundary collaboration, resource alignment and policy support. By working with Mainland events, training bases and youth development platforms, Hong Kong players can access more high-level competitions, joint training and exchange opportunities, establishing a development ladder from local events to Greater Bay Area competitions, the China tennis season and the international tour.
- 33.** In the long run, with Government support, the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association can establish regular communication mechanisms with relevant Mainland authorities, event organisers and international sports organisations to jointly study the overall planning, brand promotion, event upgrades and talent development of the China tennis season. By combining Hong Kong's international networks with the Mainland's market scale, the China tennis season can be further developed into a globally recognisable Asian sports brand, while Hong Kong can play the role of international gateway and value-added platform.
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Mass Participation: Supporting Pickleball and Other Emerging Racquet Sports

Development of pickleball and emerging racquet sports

- 34.** “Sport For All” is an important foundation for the sustainable development of sports in Hong Kong. Emerging racquet sports, particularly pickleball, have relatively low entry barriers, easy-to-understand rules, flexible venue requirements, strong social appeal and suitability for different age groups. They are especially suitable for promoting mass participation, community health and intergenerational inclusion. Through systematic promotion of pickleball, Hong Kong can expand everyday sports participation beyond elite sports and build a broader racquet sports participation base.
- 35.** The Hong Kong, China Tennis Association has been committed to organising various pickleball activities, events and courses to promote the sport in Hong Kong. These include supporting the staging of the “PPA Tour Asia Hong Kong Open 2025”, which attracted more than 600 players, as well as working with The Hong Kong Jockey Club to establish the “Primary School Pickleball Programme” and “Senior Pickleball Training Classes”. These initiatives use mass participation as an entry point to bring pickleball to people of different age groups.
- 36.** On this basis, pickleball can also be included in the Government’s “Sport For All Day” and related themed sports days. Through community experiences, school demonstrations, elderly-friendly activities and inclusive projects, public awareness and participation in emerging racquet sports can be further enhanced.
- 37.** Since 2025, the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association has organised pickleball representative team selection events and led the team to compete in the World Cup, where it won runner-up in the open category. The latest selection event has also been completed, and 16 representatives are now undergoing training in preparation for the World Cup in September 2026. These activities demonstrate Hong Kong’s significant progress in promoting the institutionalised and professional development of pickleball. Pickleball can form a bridge between mass participation and elite training, creating a complete pathway covering community promotion, school participation, local activities and representative team development.

Complementarity and coordination framework for tennis, pickleball and emerging racquet sports

- 38.** Tennis has a mature competitive system, international events and strong brand value, while pickleball offers high accessibility, low entry barriers and strong social participation advantages. If the two sports can be developed in a coordinated way across venues, coaching, schools, communities and events, Hong Kong can build a more complete racquet sports ecosystem.
- 39.** Emerging racquet sports can also bring new industry and community opportunities to Hong Kong, including sports equipment, apparel, coaching services, venue operations, event planning, corporate wellness programmes and sports tourism. If regulatory, training and competition systems can be established early, Hong Kong can gain a first-mover advantage in Asia's emerging racquet sports market.
- 40.** The development of emerging racquet sports in Hong Kong is still at an early stage and currently relies mainly on private sports clubs, sports centres and individual venues. Padel venues are limited, coaching capacity for emerging racquet sports is insufficient, and promotion activities remain fragmented. These are common challenges at the current stage.
- 41.** As the governing body for tennis, pickleball and other emerging racquet sports in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association is gradually building a coordination and support framework for racquet sports, including:
- Working with other international racquet sports federations and regional organisations to develop local competition rules and referee systems;
 - Introducing coaching certification systems for racquet sports and promoting coach exchange among different disciplines;
 - Organising community and corporate promotional activities to attract public participation and brand collaboration;
 - Leveraging tennis' strengths in coaching resources, international networks and administrative experience to create synergies and support the development and promotion of other racquet sports;
 - Continuing to enhance the governance, financial transparency, risk management and stakeholder communication mechanisms of the Association and related programmes, in line with governance requirements promoted by the Government and the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China.

Establishing dedicated funding mechanisms

- 42.** To support the long-term development of racquet sports, the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association recommends the establishment of dedicated funding mechanisms to support competitions, venue development, facility enhancement and community promotion projects for emerging racquet sports. As the leading platform, the Association can integrate membership management, coaching certification and activity approval processes across racquet sports, creating a more efficient administrative structure and raising the level of synergy and professionalism.

- 43.** The Association will also actively develop corporate and brand partnership models to attract local and international sponsors to participate in the promotion and industrialisation of racquet sports. Drawing on tennis partnership models, corporate title-sponsored events, cross-sector experience activities and sports tourism projects can be introduced to enhance Hong Kong's profile as a regional racquet sports platform while creating sustainable commercial returns and media attention.
- 44.** At the education and training level, youth and school programmes should be promoted through physical education curricula, inter-school competitions and teacher training. This would gradually build a development ladder from grassroots to professional levels. The low entry barrier and high participation appeal of emerging racquet sports can help promote a "school-to-community" sports culture and can be extended to youth talent development and future Hong Kong representative teams, thereby strengthening the reserve base for racquet sports.
- 45.** Hong Kong's international background and sports management experience allow it to play a connecting and demonstration role in the Greater Bay Area. Looking ahead, the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association will continue to promote the institutionalised development of emerging racquet sports and work with the Government and industry to build on mass participation, strengthen international connections, increase grassroots participation, create more industry and brand collaboration opportunities, and make pickleball and other emerging racquet sports new drivers of Hong Kong's sports development.
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Bottlenecks and Solutions for the Development of Tennis and Other Racquet Sports in Hong Kong

6.1 Mega-event development:

Event — relatively low-tier and lack of brand positioning

Current event level and limited attractiveness

- 46.** At present, Hong Kong's ATP and WTA 250 events are relatively low-tier within the international tour system, limiting their attractiveness to top global players and international sponsors. With the expansion of the Greater Bay Area sports market and the gradual maturation of Hong Kong's event brand, now is a critical time to actively pursue higher-tier events, such as ATP 500 or WTA 500, in Hong Kong. An upgrade would significantly enhance player fields, event value and global media exposure, further consolidating Hong Kong's international position as an important tennis hub in Asia.
- 47.** Hong Kong's current ATP 250 event rights will expire in 2028. Although there may still be opportunities to continue the event through leasing arrangements not directly with the current operator, IMG, if applications and negotiations for upgrading and renewal are not initiated early, there is a risk of a gap in events and declining market attention.
- 48.** The Mainland already hosts several high-level events, including the WTA 1000 China Open in Beijing and the ATP 1000 Shanghai Masters. Internationally, Tokyo hosts an ATP 500 event, while emerging markets such as India and South Korea are also actively seeking event upgrades. By comparison, Hong Kong's current 250-level events struggle to attract top-10 players, affecting overall brand value.

Strategic objectives and pathways

- 49.** In view of Hong Kong's market scale and city characteristics, Hong Kong should set "securing ATP 500 or WTA 500 event rights" as a medium-term objective, with "pursuing a 1000-level event in the long term" as a development direction.
- 50.** There are two main pathways to achieving this goal:
- Applying to the ATP for a new slot: seeking a new event slot aligned with the Asia-Pacific season;
 - Acquiring existing event rights through the secondary market: approaching potential sellers of established events in South America or Europe.

Strategic objectives and pathways

- 51.** Upgrading to a 500-level event would require the following conditions:
- Venue capacity of 10,000 to 15,000 seats to meet international event requirements;
 - Policy, venue and financial support from the Government;
 - A strong group of commercial sponsors to ensure long-term operational sustainability.
- 52.** It is proposed that the investment required for acquisition and upgrade be supported by Government guarantee, bank-led financing, and recouped through title sponsorship rights. The proposed structure is as follows:
- Financing arrangements based on a 30-year long-term repayment period, aligned with venue asset depreciation;
 - Annual repayment of interest only, with principal repaid progressively through event surpluses;
 - Inviting corporations such as banks to serve as principal title sponsors;
 - Introducing other corporations, including luxury goods, finance, automotive and beverage brands, as secondary sponsors with naming, box and advertising rights, sharing interest and operating costs.
- 53.** Future major tennis and racquet sports events can further incorporate a “ticket-tail economy” model by partnering with nearby shopping malls, restaurants, retailers, hotels and transport operators. Spectators could enjoy dining, shopping, accommodation and transport offers with their event tickets, converting event footfall into actual consumption and expanding the multiplier effect of sports events on the local economy.
- 54.** Repayment sources can include ticket revenue, broadcasting rights income, sponsorship fees and commercial use of venues, such as concerts and cross-sport events. This would create a diversified revenue structure and ultimately achieve a model of “supporting events through events and supporting venues through venues”, leading to financial self-sufficiency and long-term development.
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6.2 Mega-event development: facility level — ageing facilities and insufficient functionality

55. Hong Kong currently has several sports venues capable of hosting international-level events, but each has different strengths and limitations in specifications, configuration and functional positioning. It is necessary to differentiate their uses, adopt flexible configurations and build a city-level major event venue network based on the principle of combining professional capability with multi-purpose functionality.

Victoria Park: A landmark venue with significant scope for upgrading

56. Victoria Park has long been one of Hong Kong's most historic tennis centres, hosting local and international events over the years. It carries both cultural and city significance. Its unique location along Victoria Harbour and next to the city centre gives it convenient transport access and makes it one of the few sports facilities located in a core commercial district. However, the current venue does not meet the requirements of higher-tier events, including insufficient court size, limited seating capacity and a lack of all-weather facilities.

57. It is recommended that Victoria Park be comprehensively upgraded while preserving its landmark character:

- Redevelop the venue and increase seating capacity to around 10,000;
- Add a retractable roof to improve event stability and expand usage.

58. The new Victoria Park venue can be designed as a multi-purpose space for tennis competitions as well as concerts, exhibitions and other major sports events, increasing utilisation and revenue potential. A naming rights model with private enterprises may also be considered to attract corporate investment, share part of the construction costs and increase corporate participation.

Kai Tak Sports Park and AsiaWorld-Expo: Complementary venues offering operational flexibility

59. Kai Tak Sports Park and AsiaWorld-Expo are large-scale multi-purpose facilities with the potential to host exhibition or hybrid events, including activities comparable to NBA-standard event venues. However, they currently lack practice court configurations and professional player support facilities, meaning they do not fully meet the technical requirements of tennis tour events. Functional modifications may be considered in future to provide suitable practice spaces and temporary support zones as short- to medium-term auxiliary venues.

60. At the same time, Kai Tak Sports Park, as one of Hong Kong's most important recent integrated sports and entertainment infrastructures, can serve as a major "sports entertainment platform" within the tennis and racquet sports events ecosystem. It can host exhibition matches, opening activities, fan festivals, brand experiences, corporate hospitality and cross-sector entertainment programmes, complementing Victoria Park and Hong Kong Stadium and further promoting "sports + mega events" and integration among culture, sports and tourism.

Hong Kong Stadium as an interim solution from 2028 to 2032

- 61.** To bridge the Victoria Park redevelopment period and support the application timeline for ATP 500 and WTA 500 events, Hong Kong Stadium is recommended as a transitional competition venue to maintain the continuity of Hong Kong's tennis brand.
- 62.** The proposed arrangement is as follows:
- Set up a temporary competition venue each year, accommodating around 7,000 to 10,000 spectators;
 - Part of the temporary infrastructure, such as the court base, could be supported by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, while other specialised facilities, including court equipment and technical setup, would be borne by the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association and event organisers or sponsors;
 - Use South China Athletic Association, Hong Kong Indian Recreation Club and Craigengower Cricket Club as supporting practice venues;
 - Draw reference from the "Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium" model, combining a major integrated sports and entertainment experience.
- 63.** During the Victoria Park redevelopment period, Hong Kong Stadium is recommended as the temporary host venue, with major international events in Hong Kong, including ATP, WTA and Davis Cup events, relocated there. Kai Tak Sports Park and AsiaWorld-Expo may host exhibition events, such as the UTS series, during the same period.

Proposed timeline and overall planning

- 64.** The proposed timeline is as follows:
- 2028–2032: Implement the Hong Kong Stadium interim solution while pursuing ATP 500 and WTA 500 events;
 - Concurrent phase: Kai Tak Sports Park and AsiaWorld-Expo to host exhibition matches and warm-up events;
 - From 2028: Commence redevelopment works for Victoria Park Tennis Stadium;
 - 2032: Complete the new Victoria Park venue, which will become the core venue for international tennis events and major activities in Hong Kong.
- 65.** Regarding the active pursuit of ATP 500 and WTA 500 events, as well as the overall planning of Victoria Park redevelopment and interim venue arrangements, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau has maintained close collaboration and communication with the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association and is progressively studying and implementing feasible options to ensure that the planning direction aligns with Hong Kong's long-term objectives for major sports events.

6.3 Industry development: review of the “M” Mark system and financial self-sustainability strategy

Current funding ceiling under the “M” Mark system

- 66.** Hong Kong’s current “M” Mark system is an important policy tool for promoting major sports events. However, the existing funding ceiling of HK\$15 million has limited leverage for events that need to attract top international players and major broadcasting arrangements. It is therefore difficult for the system to provide a decisive incentive for event upgrades.

Cash flow and funding operation issues

- 67.** The current disbursement procedures for “M” Mark funding take time, often creating short-term cash flow pressure for organisers before events. To ensure smoother event operations and improve preparation efficiency, the following new mechanism is recommended:
- A “Government-bank linked loan guarantee scheme”, under which the Government provides funding guarantees to organisers of approved “M” Mark events;
 - Partner banks to immediately provide interest-free or low-interest loans equivalent to around 80% of the approved funding amount as temporary working capital;
 - After event settlement, the actual funding disbursement would be used to offset the loan, thereby shortening the cash flow gap.

Tax treatment of surpluses

- 68.** It is recommended that the tax treatment of surpluses from “M” Mark events be reviewed, with consideration given to allowing part of audited surpluses to be treated as tax-exempt or subject to deferred taxation, provided that the funds are reinvested in local sports development, such as grassroots training, youth development or venue improvement. This would strengthen the reinvestment cycle for events and enhance organisers’ operational motivation and accountability.

Development direction

- 69.** In the medium to long term, the Hong Kong, China Tennis Association supports financial self-sustainability as the ultimate objective for the development of major sports events in Hong Kong. The “M” Mark system should gradually transform from a pure funding mechanism into a “brand supervision and quality certification system”, ensuring both event scale and professional standards while enhancing external promotion and sponsorship appeal.
- 70.** The Hong Kong, China Tennis Association is also actively building long-term partnerships with major corporations. Through sustained sponsorship, ticketing returns and brand exposure, win-win outcomes can be achieved, strengthening Hong Kong’s market competitiveness and profile as an international sports events city.

6.4 Elite development: review of the Hong Kong Sports Institute system

The importance of maintaining tennis as an “A” tier elite sport at the Hong Kong Sports Institute

71. Maintaining tennis as an “A” tier elite sport at the Hong Kong Sports Institute is crucial to the long-term development of tennis in Hong Kong. “A” tier status not only represents long-term Government support and resource assurance for the sport, but also directly affects athletes’ training environment, competition support and coaching arrangements. If tennis can continue to be included in the Hong Kong Sports Institute’s “A” tier elite sport system, athletes will have stable and sufficient resources, systematic training programmes and more opportunities to compete in world-class events, thereby raising the overall performance level and long-term development potential of local players.

Differences between tennis and other sports

72. However, tennis has a competition system that differs from most traditional sports. It does not have a regular “World Championship”, and the Olympic Games is not its only highest-level international benchmark. Its top events are mainly the Grand Slams, Davis Cup, Billie Jean King Cup and international tour events. The number of world-class events is limited, entry thresholds are high and competition is extremely intense.

73. It must be noted that Olympic tennis competition is far more intense than in many other sports. In a highly professionalised global environment, Olympic tennis places are almost monopolised by the world’s top players. In other sports, athletes may be able to break through via regional qualification or group-stage systems. Tennis players, however, must overcome the dual high thresholds of international tour points and world rankings. Therefore, if Hong Kong tennis is to make breakthroughs at Olympic level, it must move beyond short-termism and comprehensively reshape its long-term elite development system, while systematically helping players accumulate international competition experience.

74. As a result, the current Hong Kong Sports Institute elite sport assessment mechanism, which uses medals at international championships as a major measurement standard, cannot fully reflect the actual competitive intensity and progress of tennis players.

Reviewing the assessment method for tennis under the “A” tier elite sport system

75. To ensure that the assessment mechanism better reflects the characteristics of tennis, it is recommended that the Hong Kong Sports Institute review the assessment criteria for tennis under the “A” tier elite sport system. For example, more competition points could be introduced as an objective measurement basis, with weighted scoring for different levels of events.

76. Certain existing performance thresholds could be adjusted with appropriate flexibility to ensure that strict elite certification standards are maintained while more accurately reflecting tennis players’ progress and performance within the tour system. This would help establish a fairer evaluation mechanism and encourage athletes to continue competing internationally, thereby enhancing Hong Kong’s overall competitive position in tennis.

6.5 Popularisation:

Government-business partnership to support mass sports participation

Commercial sector support

- 77.** Building a sustainable popularisation system requires active participation from the commercial sector and wider community resources. Corporate sponsorship, scholarships and career transition support programmes can be introduced to ease financial pressure on lower- and mid-ranked players. This would help improve the elite development pathway while expanding grassroots and youth participation, making tennis, pickleball and other racquet sports sustainable choices for more members of the public.
- 78.** In addition, the demonstration effect of higher-tier events, such as potential future ATP 500 and WTA 500 events, should be fully leveraged to stimulate youth interest and participation. By hosting major events and related activities, such as student spectator days and community tennis programmes, young people's understanding and identification with tennis culture can be further strengthened, promoting popularisation and elite development in parallel.

Inclusive participation and community development

- 79.** The Hong Kong, China Tennis Association has already implemented a number of representative participation programmes covering different age groups and communities with special needs, with encouraging early results. These programmes effectively promote inclusion and community participation, reflecting the diverse value of tennis, pickleball and other racquet sports. Examples include:
- The "Senior Tennis Rocks" programme, which covers 14 districts across Hong Kong and has engaged more than 620 elderly participants;
 - "Special Tennis Rocks", which enables dozens of students from special schools and families from the deaf community to take part in training;
 - The "Wheelchair Tennis Programme", which has trained four players and two coaches and formed a representative team to compete in the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities;
 - The "LSSA Outreach Programme", which serves around 60 students with special educational needs;
 - Partnerships with The Hong Kong Jockey Club to establish the "Primary School Pickleball Programme" and "Senior Pickleball Training Classes", promoting pickleball among different age groups.
- 80.** However, further manpower and financial resources are required to expand the scope of support and participant numbers. Although these programmes have established a good foundation, their long-term scaling-up is limited by funding and venue constraints. In future, a sustainable model jointly supported by businesses and the Government should be introduced, including dedicated funds, to ensure continued support for people of different ages, ability levels and communities, so that "Sport for All" can continue to be realised.

6.6

Establishing the Hong Kong Tennis and Emerging Racquet Sports Development Steering Committee

- 81.** To comprehensively promote the long-term development of tennis and emerging racquet sports in Hong Kong, including pickleball and padel, and to align with the directions of the national 15th Five-Year Plan and Hong Kong's First Five-Year Plan, it is recommended that a Hong Kong Tennis and Emerging Racquet Sports Development Steering Committee be established to coordinate major related matters.
- 82.** The core mission of the Steering Committee would be to promote the overall enhancement and long-term development of tennis and emerging racquet sports in Hong Kong, particularly in relation to industry development, and to increase the contribution of tennis and emerging racquet sports to Hong Kong's economy. Through pro-active engagement with international sports organisations such as the ATP and WTA, the Committee would also support the upgrading of Hong Kong events and enhance their international influence.
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CONCLUSION:

Hong Kong as a “New Gateway for Chinese Tennis and Emerging Racquet Sports”

- 83.** With its international advantages, well-developed infrastructure and highly professional sports management system, Hong Kong is well positioned to become an important bridge for the development of tennis, pickleball and related racquet sports in China. By bringing together three pillars — international event brands, the sports industry economy and mass participation platforms — Hong Kong can play multiple roles and contribute to the overall advancement of national sports development.
- 84.** In the short term, up to 2028, Hong Kong should focus on securing ATP 500 and WTA 500 international events, using high-level events as a breakthrough for city branding and industry development. At the same time, Hong Kong should continue to support pickleball and other racquet sports community programmes, showcasing its organisational capability and professional standards on the international sports stage.
- 85.** The medium-term objective, up to 2032, should be to complete the redevelopment of Victoria Park and create a flagship tennis venue representative of southern China. The new facility will serve as a multi-purpose platform for hosting international events, developing regional elite talent and promoting sports tourism. It can also flexibly host pickleball, padel and other competitions and exchanges, supporting the long-term development of Hong Kong's sports economy.
- 86.** The long-term vision is for tennis and other racquet sports in Hong Kong to become a sports diplomacy platform connecting China and the world. Through event exchange, youth training and professional collaboration, Hong Kong can play a bridging role in international sports governance, brand promotion and talent development, advancing the internationalisation of the Chinese sports brand and continuing to contribute to cultural exchange and national image building.
- 87.** Looking ahead, tennis and other racquet sports in Hong Kong should continue to develop through an integrated strategy: with sporting professionalism as the foundation, supported by industry development and social popularisation. This would create a development model with international standards, local characteristics and regional influence. Through policy support, industry collaboration and community participation, Hong Kong can become an important new gateway for bringing Chinese tennis to the world stage.