

LCQ19: Provision of water dispensers in public facilities

Following is a question by the Hon Frederick Fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (June 25):

Question:

Some members of the public have recently relayed to me that some of the large parks and leisure grounds (e.g. the West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade, etc.) under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) currently do not have water dispensers installed, and only provide drinks vending machines, causing inconvenience to users of these facilities. On the other hand, earlier on an investigation has found that the bacteria levels in the drinking water from the water dispensers at the parks and sports grounds under LCSD are higher than the standard set by the World Health Organization and the United States for safe drinking water. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the current percentage of parks and leisure grounds under LCSD at which water dispensers are provided, the factors of consideration for deciding whether or not water dispensers are to be provided at a particular venue, and whether it will provide water dispensers at venues such as the West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade, etc.; and

(b) whether last year, the authorities regularly collected water samples for laboratory tests from the water dispensers at the venues under their management; if so, of the test results; if not, the reasons for that; and whether the authorities will, focusing on the results of the above investigation, take measures to safeguard the health of users of the water dispensers (including enhancing sanitisation and sterilisation of water dispensers, replacing the existing water dispensers with safer new models, and educating members of the public on how to use water dispensers correctly, etc.)?

Reply:

Madam President,

My reply to the question is as follows:

(a) Drinking fountains are provided at about one-fifth of the leisure venues managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). In light of the fact that members of the public will be sweating a lot after exercise and replenishment of water is instantly needed, drinking fountains have been mainly installed in active recreational facilities such as squash courts, badminton courts and soccer pitches.

As the West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade (the Promenade) is mainly a passive leisure facility for members of the public to spend their leisure time, the LCSD has not provided any drinking fountains at the Promenade. However, for the visitors' convenience, the Department has arranged for the provision of vending machines for sale of drinks by contractors at the venue.

(b) All drinking fountains at LCSD venues are connected to the water pipes managed by the Water Supplies Department for provision of drinking water. The water quality not only meets the sanitary standard laid down by the World Health Organization (WHO), but all the drinking fountains have also been installed with a filter cartridge/an ultra-violet steriliser to ensure the purity of the water. The LCSD has all along carried out maintenance and regular cleansing of the drinking fountains according to the guidelines provided by the drinking fountain manufacturers. The venue staff have also frequently monitored the operation of the drinking fountains and the amount of water dispensed and cleansed the surface of the basins and water outlets, etc.

As it takes time to test the water samples and the hygienic condition of the drinking fountains may have already changed upon the completion of the water examination report, the LCSD has not collected any water samples from the drinking fountains for laboratory tests. According to the guidelines issued by the Department of Health in April this year, the most important point for ensuring the hygienic condition of the drinking fountains is that users should know how to keep the drinking fountains clean. If a user does not use the drinking fountain in a proper or hygienic way, such as letting his/her mouth touch the mouthpiece of the drinking fountain when drinking water from it or spitting into the fountain, the fountain will be contaminated instantly. Therefore, the LCSD has, apart from stepping up efforts to cleanse and disinfect the drinking fountains, displayed next to all drinking fountains a copy of the advice and notice issued by the Department of Health on the hygienic use of drinking fountains to educate the public on the proper and hygienic use of the drinking fountains.

Ends/Wednesday, June 25, 2008