

LCQ17:Promoting sport for all

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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 (December 16):

Question:

According to the consultancy study "Sport for All - Participation Patterns of Hong Kong People in Physical Activities" published earlier by the authorities, over half of the respondents failed to meet the level of the "baseline indicator" of physical activity level, i.e. at least an accumulation of 30 minutes a day and at least 3 days a week in moderate or vigorous physical activities. Moreover, three of the sports they participated in most frequently were jogging, swimming and badminton; and more than half of the respondents used mainly the leisure facilities of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) or other government departments. Based on the above study findings, the Community Sports Committee proposed to further promote Sport for All in the community through education and upgrading services from time to time, so that more people will be encouraged to actively participate in sports and physical activities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) what specific strategies the authorities have adopted to promote physical activities (including those at family, community, school and workplace levels, as well as in other aspects of daily life) through education among members of the public so as to facilitate them to meet the level of the "baseline indicator";

(b) given that entries for the "Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon 2010" which was open for registration earlier were full in no time, which reflected the level of enthusiasm of the public in participating in jogging and confirmed the findings of the aforesaid study on the sport with the most frequent participation, whether the authorities will, in response to the findings of the study, consider improving and increasing the sports facilities concerned, including whether they will:

(i) consider the provision of jogging tracks with vibration-absorbing materials on the wider pedestrian walkways, along existing waterfront areas and those under planning, as well as on the pedestrian walkways adjacent to cycling tracks, etc.; and consider providing more jogging tracks or resurfacing jogging tracks with those materials in

parks; if so, of the specific plans and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(ii) consider how to make good use of outdoor public swimming pools which are closed in winter, including converting them into heated swimming pools or making use of the space to set up temporary sports facilities, etc.; and

(iii) review the utilisation of the badminton courts under LCSD at present, and encourage the Hong Kong Housing Authority and private housing estates to provide small-scale indoor badminton courts; if they will, of the details; and

(c) in addition to the measures to step up promotion and education as well as improve the hardware, whether the authorities will consider providing other incentives, such as allowing free use of leisure facilities managed by LCSD one day per week or month, or even during the less popular sessions in a day; and encouraging or subsidising employers to organise sports activities for their employees or provide specific time each week during working hours for sports, etc., so as to encourage the public to participate in physical activities; if it will not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

Mr President,

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(a) Promoting "Sport for All" is one of the Government's sports policy objectives. Currently, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is adopting a two-phased approach to implementing this policy. First, LCSD is promoting the importance and benefits of regular exercise to the community through public education. Thereafter, LCSD will promote community-wide participation and encourage the public to take part in sports activities by providing a diverse range of activities.

The focus of the public education phase, which started in June this year, is to explain the findings of the Consultancy Study on "Sport for All - the Participation Patterns of Hong Kong People in Physical Activities" (Consultancy Study) to stakeholders and to enlist their support for promoting "Sport for All" in the community, as well as to conduct publicity campaigns through various channels to

target stakeholders and people belonging to different groups. At present, LCSD is introducing the findings of the Consultancy Study to the relevant committees of the 18 District Councils (DCs) inviting the DCs to support the promotion of sport in the community. At the school level, the Education Bureau will introduce the findings of the Consultancy Study to kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, in addition to encouraging schools to attach greater importance to sports through the Student Sports Activities Co-ordinating Sub-committee. At the community level, we will step up promotion and education efforts by organising large-scale sports carnivals, producing Announcements of Public Interests and publicity materials, disseminating the contents of the Consultancy Study and other publicity information through government web pages, broadcasting publicity materials at LCSD venues, schools, and through different media such as Roadshow and television. We will also introduce the findings of the Consultancy Study to the business sector, provide them with information on LCSD sports venues, and distribute to them publicity materials on sport and physical activities so as to encourage employers and employees alike to participate in sports and physical activities.

The second phase of work, under which we will promote community-wide participation, will start in April next year. We will conduct a comprehensive review of the existing community sports activities and public demand for sports facilities in the light of the findings of the Consultancy Study. We will also design and provide more sports and physical activities suitable for people from different age groups in collaboration with National Sports Associations (NSAs). Moreover, we plan to conduct a similar consultancy study once every five years to collect data on public participation in sports and physical activities to allow us to understand better the factors affecting levels of participation, so that we can provide facilities and services that will better serve the public.

(b) LCSD provides a wide range of sports facilities in districts throughout the territory to meet the needs of the public. Where practicable, the department provides additional facilities that are more popular, in the light of population growth and after considering the views of the relevant DC and members of the public.

(i) As regards jogging tracks, the LCSD will use shock-absorbing surfacing when constructing new jogging tracks and resurfacing existing ones in parks under its management so as to provide better protection for joggers. In the coming five years, the LCSD will construct 14 additional jogging tracks in various districts. As for the suggestion of providing jogging tracks with shock-absorbing surfacing on the wider

pedestrian walkways, along existing waterfront areas and those under planning, as well as on the pedestrian walkways adjacent to cycling tracks, according to the requirements for public footpaths specified by the "Transport Planning And Design Manual", the width of public footpaths has to complement the design of adjacent facilities such as carriageways or cycleways. The available space and expected volume of pedestrian traffic at each location also needs to be taken into account. Providing a jogging track with shock-absorbing surfacing on a footpath will take up part of its width. Apart from affecting pedestrian movement, this may also affect the use of handcarts, bicycles or even emergency vehicles. In addition, shock-absorbing surfacing materials are less durable than the materials currently used for surfacing footpaths. They are also more liable to cause accidents when worn or damaged, and require frequent maintenance. Given these considerations, the Highways Department does not have any plans to study the provision of jogging tracks on footpaths under its management.

(ii) For swimming facilities, in the coming five years LCSD will provide 11 new facilities with indoor heated swimming pools, some of which will be converted from existing outdoor swimming pools. These projects include the redevelopment of the Victoria Park and Kwun Tong Swimming Pools, the reprovisioning of Kennedy Town Swimming Pool and conversion of the secondary pool at Lai Chi Kok Park Swimming Pool.

(iii) Badminton courts under the management of LCSD have a relatively high average utilisation rate of 82%. We will provide 64 additional badminton courts in various districts in the coming five years.

Separately, there are established guidelines on recreational facilities for both public housing and private residential properties. As regards the provision of ancillary facilities for public housing developments, the Housing Authority (HA), in consultation with relevant government departments, provides recreational facilities in its public housing development projects for use by its tenants in accordance with the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. Under exceptional circumstances and subject to the availability of resources as well as without affecting the overall development potential, the HA may consider providing additional small indoor venues in suitable projects.

For private residential properties, the government encourages the provision of recreational facilities. If a developer provides recreational facilities (including indoor

badminton courts) in such properties for the exclusive use of owners and their bona fide visitors, subject to the merits of each case, the developer may apply for exclusion of the floor area of such recreational facilities from the calculation of gross floor area pursuant to the Building (Planning) Regulations (Cap. 123 Sub. Leg. F), outline zoning plan and relevant conditions of the land lease concerned (if applicable). Following the Council for Sustainable Development's recent public engagement exercise, the Administration will review this policy in accordance with the views collated and the advice of the Council.

(c) LCSD has been implementing the "Free Use Scheme" to allow schools, NSAs, district sports associations (DSAs) and subvented non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to apply for free use of main arenas and activity rooms of sports centres, squash courts, hockey pitches and artificial turf bowling greens under LCSD management during non-peak hours (from 7am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) from September every year to June the following year. In addition, to help organisations arrange recreation and sports activities to encourage members of the public or employees to participate more actively in sport, LCSD also gives schools, NSAs, DSAs, NGOs, registered organisations and institutions priority in reserving recreation and sports facilities 3 to 12 calendar months in advance.

Further, LCSD also offers half-price concessionary rates for the hire of facilities to encourage members of the public to develop a habit of doing exercise. Students and senior citizens aged 60 or above can enjoy half-price concessionary rates when using swimming pools and facilities at water sports centres during any session and land-based recreation and sports facilities during non-peak hours. For schools and NGOs, a half-price concessionary rate is offered for the use of swimming pools at specific hours and the land-based recreation and sports facilities during non-peak hours. People with disabilities and recognised disability service agencies are entitled to half-price concessionary rates for using all types of recreation and sports facilities during any session.

To promote "Sport for All" and to encourage the public to participate in sport, the LCSD organises a wide variety of training courses, recreation and sports activities, and sports competitions through its District Leisure Services Offices for public participation. Moreover, various major events and territory-wide programmes including the Corporate Games and the Masters Games are also organised. The LCSD also organises diversified free programmes for different target groups, including the elderly, people with disabilities and young people at risk. To promote further the

culture of "Sport for All" in the community and to strengthen the public's sense of belonging to their own districts, the LCSD has organised the biennial Hong Kong Games (HKG) since 2007. The 2nd HKG was held in May 2009 and a total of 2,307 athletes participated.

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