

LCQ12: Recreation and sports facilities

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Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (December 21):

Question:

From time to time there are members of the public who relay to me that as recreation venues managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) are always fully booked, it is difficult to hire a venue successfully, and that even though at present advance bookings can be made within 30 days from the current date, the venues are often fully booked on the first day when advance bookings are accepted. They have further pointed out that there are quite a number of online touting activities of reserved sessions of such venues. They also think that the authorities should build more recreation venues to promote a culture of sports for all. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) among the aforesaid online touting cases in the past five years, of the number of convicted cases and the relevant penalties; whether it had initiated investigation to ascertain if such touting activities involved syndicated operations;

(b) whether it will strictly implement the procedures for verifying the identity of hirers by requesting hirers to produce the hiring permits and their identification documents at the same time when they use the venues, so as to eradicate such touting activities; whether it will consider reviewing and introducing other procedures to verify the identity of hirers; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(c) whether LCSD has examined the causes of and solutions for the problem that recreation venues available for booking by members of the public and organisations are always fully booked; if it has, of the causes; if not, whether it will consider conducting the relevant study, and of the details;

(d) apart from making reference to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (the Guidelines), of the factors that the authorities will take into account in considering the construction of recreation venues, and the respective weighting of various factors of consideration;

(e) whether the authorities will consider reviewing the standards of provision of various recreation venues (including sports centres, soccer pitches, sports grounds, swimming pools and parks) as set out in the Guidelines, and lowering the ratio of population set for the provision of relevant venues; if they will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(f) whether advance planning will be made in certain new development areas so that recreation venues will be constructed before residents of major housing estates in the areas move in and the population there increases significantly, so as to enable the residents to use these facilities as early as possible?

Reply:

President,

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

(a) and (b) According to the "Conditions of Use of Recreation and Sports Facilities" issued by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the hirer of LCSD facilities must be one of the users of the reserved facilities and must be present during the booked sessions. The hirer must produce a valid permit or approval letter for verification and registration before using the facilities. It is also stipulated that the hirer is required to produce his or her identification document at the check-in counter for verification.

At present, venue staff at LCSD facilities strictly implement the above measures to ensure that the hirers take up the booking in person. If the person who produces the permit is found not to be the hirer of the facilities, he or she will not be permitted to use the facilities.

As regards online touting, the LCSD has conducted investigations and sought advice from the Police and the Department of Justice, but there was insufficient evidence to bring charges. As a result, there have been no prosecutions for online touting related to sports venues in the past five years.

(c) To promote "Sport for All", LCSD sports facilities are available for hire by the public and by organisations for competition or training with a view to promoting sports development and encouraging the public to exercise more. However, as the

demand for recreation facilities from both organisations and individual users is increasing and particularly, as most users choose to hire LCSD facilities on weekday evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, many popular LCSD venues are fully booked during these peak periods.

We are committed to providing more sports facilities. Since 2007, we have completed projects or upgraded facilities at a total cost of over \$6.1 billion. We have increased the supply of popular sports facilities such as football pitches and sports centres. Specifically, there has always been strong demand for football pitches, but a natural turf pitch can only provide up to 60 sessions per month whilst an artificial turf pitch can offer as many as 270 sessions. The LCSD therefore plans to build more new artificial turf pitches and convert some existing natural turf pitches into artificial turf pitches in order to provide a total of 37 third generation artificial turf pitches in the next five years. As regards sport centres, five new ones have been opened since 2006, including Siu Sai Wan Sports Centre which opened to public in the middle of this year; Hang Hau Sports Centre will open by the end of December. One sports centre in North District and two sports centres in Yuen Long are under construction and will open next year. The LCSD will from time to time review public demand for different types of sports facility and build new sports facilities or upgrade existing ones.

(d) and (e) In general, we make reference to the guidelines in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) when planning the development of recreation and sports facilities at district level. Whilst the HKPSG set standards for the provision of facilities according to population level, we will also take account of other factors when planning new facilities, such as policy objectives for sports development, utilisation rates of existing facilities, public preference for different types of sports as indicated by studies and surveys, advice of District Councils and site availability. In other words, the HKPSG is not the only factor that we consider when planning the provision of new recreation and sports facilities; other factors are also of great importance. Since each case is different, the relative significance of various factors may also change with different circumstances, but generally districts with a clear shortage of facilities will be given priority for the provision of new facilities. Besides, the Government from time to time reviews the standards for the provision of sports facilities in the HKPSG and revises these when necessary. When planning for new facilities, the LCSD makes reference to the prevailing HKPSG.

(f) The LCSD is committed to planning and building various sports facilities to meet

the needs of local residents. When carrying out projects, we will fully consider the projections of population distribution and growth in various districts over the years. Taking advice from District Councils, we conduct the planning process for sports facilities with the aim of ensuring that the provision of facilities is compatible with population growth.

Ends/Wednesday, December 21, 2011

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