

LCQ13: Clubs and clubhouses of HKJC

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Sing-chi and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 18):

Question:

At present, the Government has granted land to the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) under private recreational leases (PRLs) to set up clubs and clubhouses, and most of these clubs and clubhouses are for members' use only and are not open to the general public. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows the number of HKJC members at present; the number of clubs and clubhouses managed by HKJC, as well as their respective areas, purposes and average number of users in each month (broken down by name of the clubs and clubhouses); which of them are set up on land granted under the aforesaid PRLs; and among such clubs and clubhouses, the ratio of those which are open to the public and those which are for HKJC members' use only;

(b) whether it knows the criteria adopted by HKJC at present for determining whether to open such clubs and clubhouses to the public; if it knows, of such criteria; whether HKJC has any plan to open such clubs and clubhouses to the public; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(c) whether the authorities will discuss with HKJC the formulation of a set of rules or guidelines and a concrete timetable, requiring HKJC to open a certain percentage of areas in its clubs and clubhouses for use by the general public; if they will, of the details, and whether discussion will be conducted in one go when the land lease for the Sha Tin Town Lot is due to expire in the middle of this year; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

We have explained to the Legislative Council in detail the historical basis and practical considerations in respect of the policy on Private Recreational Leases

(PRLs). Lessees of PRLs, which are non-profit making organisations including social and welfare organisations, uniformed groups, "national sports associations" (NSAs) and district sports associations, have all made contributions to the promotion of sports and the provision of sports and recreational facilities in the past few decades.

Among the 73 PRLs, 55 have expired or will expire between November last year and December this year. These include the PRL held by the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) in respect of the Sha Tin Racecourse. In the past, most of the lessees have opened up their sports and recreational facilities for the use of the general public and outside bodies. We propose that, in renewing their leases, lessees should be required to open up their facilities more extensively to outside bodies, such as schools, NSAs and social and welfare organisations, so as to complement our policy objectives for sports development.

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

(a) We understand that at present, the HKJC has a total membership of approximately 28 000, and runs three clubhouses in Hong Kong, namely the Sha Tin Clubhouse at Sha Tin Racecourse, the Happy Valley Clubhouse and the Beas River Country Club. Except for the Sha Tin Clubhouse, the other clubhouses are built on private land that is not held under PRLs.

The lot held by the HKJC in Sha Tin under a PRL has a total area of around 682 300 square metres with major facilities such as the Sha Tin Racecourse, the Penfold Park and the Sha Tin Clubhouse. Built, maintained and managed by the HKJC, the Penfold Park is in the centre of the racecourse. The landscaped area in the Park has always been open for public use free of charge, and the equestrian facilities in the Park are available to the Hong Kong Equestrian Federation and equestrian athletes for competition and training. The grandstand of the Sha Tin Racecourse is open to the public on race days and during morning trackwork hours. The facilities in the Sha Tin Clubhouse, including squash courts, a billiard room and a gym, are for the use of HKJC members and their families and guests. A total of about 560 000 visits were made to the facilities in the Clubhouse in 2011.

(b) and (c) As mentioned above, we consider that all PRL lessees, taking account of the respective conditions of their clubs, should open up their facilities more extensively to eligible outside bodies upon lease renewal. In this regard, the Home Affairs Bureau informed all lessees (including the HKJC) in writing in August 2011

of this requirement and conducted a briefing in September to explain to PRL lessees the specific guidelines on increasing access. These include:

- (i) requiring lessees to allow use of their facilities by outside bodies for 50 hours per month or more;
- (ii) requiring lessees to give priority to outside bodies to hire certain designated sessions;
- (iii) giving outside bodies the option of booking sports facilities of lessees directly, rather than having to go through a "competent authority";
- (iv) allowing NSAs to use the facilities of lessees for training or competitions for a minimum of 10 hours per month;
- (v) the definitions of eligible outside bodies; and
- (vi) the Government's arrangements for strengthening the monitoring of and publicity for the above arrangements.

We also issued a questionnaire to help lessees formulate detailed proposals for the implementation of the enhanced access requirement. In their proposals, lessees have also been asked to provide us with details of their publicity measures, charges and application procedures. We have begun receiving the proposals from lessees, including the HKJC. The HKJC has proposed to open up most of the sports facilities in the Sha Tin Clubhouse for use by outside bodies.

We have also begun discussion with PRL lessees individually to ensure that they would comply with our increased access requirements. Once the detailed arrangements and other specific matters in relation to the modification of lease conditions have been finalised, the Lands Department will prepare formal lease renewal documents which will incorporate the requirements for opening up facilities for the use of outside bodies. PRL lessees will be required to abide by the above conditions after lease renewal.

Ends/Wednesday, January 18, 2012

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