

HAB responds to Ombudsman's investigation report

With regard to the release of the Ombudsman's investigation report on the Administration of Government Policy on Private Recreational Leases (PRLs) today (September 19), a spokesman for the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) gave the following response:

The HAB accepts the recommendations of the report in general. The HAB has all along recognised that the lessees with land granted under PRLs to operate sports and recreational facilities have made a significant contribution to sports development in Hong Kong. The objective of the PRL policy is to require the sports clubs to benefit society by opening up their facilities to outside eligible bodies to a certain extent whilst upholding respect and recognition of the contributions by these sports clubs in promoting sports development in Hong Kong. The focus of the PRL policy is not so much on "continuing to provide job opportunities", as suggested in the Ombudsman's report.

The HAB considers it reasonable to demand the sports clubs to pledge the opening up of their facilities to a minimum requirement (that is, at least 50 hours per month). The HAB has invited all lessees to open their facilities to a larger extent according to their circumstances. Indeed, all the submissions by the lessees received under the "Scheme to Implement the Greater Access Requirements" (the Scheme) showed that the opening hours pledged to outside eligible bodies had exceeded 50 hours, with some far exceeding the minimum hours required. The HAB is studying the submissions in depth with all the lessees with a view to implementing them as soon as possible.

When renewing the leases, the HAB has enhanced publicity measures which include uploading information about the facilities available for the use of eligible bodies onto the Internet, as well as reminding eligible outside bodies of such provisions through competent authorities and newspaper advertisements. The HAB has also prepared for the implementation of various monitoring measures (including the setting up of a database), with an aim to understand the usage of lessees' sports facilities by outside bodies after the lease renewals.

In its brief to the Legislative Council last year, the HAB committed itself to conducting a comprehensive review of the lease policy with relevant policy bureaux and departments after completion of the upcoming lease renewal exercise. The review

will look into the policy in terms of sports development, land use, public expectations, interests of the sports clubs, their members and stakeholders, with the objective of formulating the way forward for PRLs.

Ends/Wednesday, September 19, 2012

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