

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CSTB175

(Question Serial No. 0667)

Head: (95) Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Recreation and Sports

Controlling Officer: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Vincent LIU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism

Question:

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department mentioned in Programme (1) that it would continue to improve the arrangements for the booking and allocation of sports facilities and enrolment to sports programmes through further enhancement to the computerised booking system and administrative measures. In fact, some members of the public opined that touting activities remained prevalent despite the implementation of real-name registration, and venue users had to resort to paying higher prices to third parties. The conditions for taking up booked sessions also cause inconvenience to the public. In this connection, would the Government inform this Committee of the following:

- 1) The effectiveness of the enhanced computerised booking system and measures, and whether they were able to eradicate touting activities in 2022-23;
- 2) The respective numbers of irregularities identified and warnings issued during inspections of hirers or venue users in 2022-23;
- 3) Whether the mechanism of taking up booked sessions will be reviewed to reduce inconvenience caused to users;
- 4) Whether it will introduce new measures to further combat touting activities, such as setting up reporting hotlines to allow members of the public to report such activities?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Kin-por (LegCo internal reference no.: 29)

Reply:

- 1) The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has all along attached great importance to the unauthorised transfer of booked sessions or touting, and has taken a multi-pronged approach in combating touting activities in recent years, including enhancement of the booking system, imposing of penalty arrangements and stepping up of inspections. The LCSD introduced various measures to combat touting activities between April and May and in November 2022 respectively and has attained a certain degree of effectiveness, including:

- a) enhancing the system to facilitate booking of facilities by genuine users logging in to the Leisure Link e-Services System (LLES) via “iAM Smart”. Under the new arrangement, since each Hong Kong Identity Card number can only be registered with 1 account bound to 1 smartphone only, if booking is made with an authenticated identity via “iAM Smart”, CAPTCHA input is not required for logging in to the system. This is a simpler and faster way to log in compared to the normal computer login procedure, thus increasing the chance of successfully booking facilities. According to record, the percentage of users logging in to the LLES via “iAM Smart” during the busiest period in the morning (7:00 – 7:15 am) has increased from 42% on 17 May 2022 to 71% on 26 February 2023. This shows that the new arrangement not only encourages the use of “iAM Smart” among the public, but is also effective in strengthening the authentication of identity of patrons to the benefit of genuine users of facilities and minimising the chances for touting;
 - b) on combating suspected touts who book multiple sessions of facilities, reducing the maximum number of non-peak hour sessions of fee-charging recreation and sports facilities that each person can book from 4 hours to 2 hours per day for the same type of facility in each venue; and
 - c) adjusting the service hours of various Leisure Link booking channels to combat the deployment of “queuing gangs”, which line up at the Leisure Link booking counters and self-service kiosks, by those who are suspected of engaging in touting activities. From our observations, after pushing back the starting time of booking service at counters and Leisure Link self-service kiosks by 15 minutes, there has been virtually no queue at the Leisure Link booking counters and self-service kiosks.
- 2) According to the provisions under the Conditions of Use of the LCSD’s Recreation and Sports Facilities (Conditions of Use), the hirer must be present during the booked sessions of the facilities. Random inspections by venue staff will be conducted during the hired periods. If the hirer is not present to use the facilities, it will result in 1 count of breaching the conditions of use. 2 counts of breach within 30 consecutive days will incur suspension of the hirer’s right to book any of the department’s fee-charging facilities for 90 days. Enforcement of requiring the hirer to be present during the booked sessions of the facilities has been tightened from May 2022, and the measure of suspending the hirer’s rights to book facilities for 90 days upon 2 counts of breach has also been implemented. From May 2022 to mid-March 2023, a total of 1 404 hirers or users were found absent during the booked sessions of the facilities, and among them, 41 hirers had accumulated 2 counts of breach and were suspended from booking the fee-charging facilities of the LCSD for 90 days.
 - 3) It is stipulated in the Conditions of Use that hirers must produce the original of their identification documents for verification and registration at the check-in counter before using the facilities. To address the problem of hirers transferring the turf soccer pitches to others for use, the LCSD rolled out a new measure in November. Hirers are required to enter the Leisure Link patron numbers of 4 other users of the facility when submitting balloting applications for turf soccer pitches online, 3 of which must check in with the

hirer and be present during the booked sessions of the facility. The new measure makes it more difficult for those who engage in touting activities to transfer the booked facilities to others while minimising the inconvenience caused to genuine users. The LCSD will continue to pay close attention to touting activities, and will proactively look into and timely review the check-in conditions and mechanism.

- 4) After launching various measures to combat touting activities, the LCSD regularly reviews the situation and will roll out new measures where necessary. At present, the LCSD receives information from the public on suspected touting cases from time to time via different channels, such as by phone, email and mostly the government hotline of 1823. Managed by the Efficiency Office, the hotline is backed up by a dedicated team which handles cases round the clock and refers them through a well-developed system to the districts/venues concerned for follow-up.

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