

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CSTB278

(Question Serial No. 0937)

Head: (95) Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

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:

In Programme (1), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department states that it will continue to develop the SmartPLAY system and implement the enhanced functions of Phase 2. In fact, there has been feedback from the general public that even with the adoption of real-name registration and more convenient mobile application, cases of touting still exist and legitimate users of venues need to buy the right of use from third parties at higher prices. In this connection, would the Government inform this Committee of the following:

- 1) the effectiveness of the measures adopted in the SmartPLAY system in stamping out touting activities in 2023-24;
- 2) the number of breaches found when the identities of hirers or users were checked during inspections and the total number of warnings issued in 2023-24; and
- 3) whether the mechanisms of SmartPLAY will be reviewed, such as the prevention of venue booking by any programs or bots, so as to raise the usage rate of venues by legitimate users.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Kin-por (LegCo internal reference no.: 20)

Reply:

- 1) The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has all along been paying attention to the unauthorised transfer or touting activities in relation to recreation and sports facilities. In recent years, the LCSD has adopted a multi-pronged approach to combating touting activities, including enhancing the booking arrangement, imposing penalty arrangements and stepping up inspections etc. To combat the touting of recreation and sports facilities more effectively, the LCSD has already incorporated functions preventing touting of venues in the design of the SmartPLAY system, including:
 - a) real-name registration;

- b) the new function of allocating certain recreation and sports facilities by ballot on top of the first-come-first-served allocation mechanism;
- c) requiring the hirer, when submitting balloting application for turf soccer pitches or booking on a first-come-first-served basis, to fill in the account numbers of 4 other SmartPLAY users with whom the hirer will use the facility, 3 of whom are required to check in together with the hirer and be present during the use of the booked session;
- d) requiring members of the public, when booking facilities via the SmartPLAY system and when checking in, to declare and undertake that they will be present during the use of the booked session(s) and that the user permit will not be transferred by any means. Anyone failing to do so may commit the offence of fraud under section 16A of the Theft Ordinance (Cap. 210) and be liable to prosecution and imprisonment of up to 14 years upon conviction; and
- e) allowing hirers to cancel bookings up to 1 day before the booked session via different channels, including the internet/mobile app/smart self-service stations, but the cancelled session(s) will not be immediately released for booking on the new system to prevent using the cancellation of booking as a means of transferring the user permit of the booked session for touting activities. Cancelled session(s), including those of turf soccer pitches, will be posted on the LCSD website and at the section titled “Cancelled sessions to be released for booking” on the system at 1 am on the following day. They will be available for booking again from 7 am on the same day through various booking channels on a first-come-first-served basis.

The LCSD will continue to keep an eye on the effectiveness of the new measures, and will further enhance the SmartPLAY system and launch more anti-touting measures when needed.

- 2) According to the “Conditions of Use of Recreation and Sports Facilities” of the LCSD, the hirer must be present during the use of the booked session(s). Venue staff will conduct random inspections during the booked sessions. If the hirer is found absent during the use of the booked session(s), it will be counted as 1 breach. Any hirer who has 2 breaches within 60 consecutive days will be suspended from booking fee-charging facilities under the LCSD for 90 days. From 1 April 2023 to 29 February 2024, a total of 821 hirers or users of facilities were found to be absent during the use of the booked session(s), and among them, 18 hirers have been suspended from booking fee-charging facilities under the LCSD for 90 days due to 2 accumulated breaches.
- 3) To effectively stamp out login by computer programs, the SmartPLAY system adopts a new generation of Web Application Firewall and anti-bot solution. Once unusual login or booking is detected, the anti-bot solution will instantly conduct analysis and intercept bot access.