

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

HAB176

(Question Serial No. 1985)

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 (Ms Michelle LI)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Home Affairs

Question:

The average usage rates of natural turf pitches managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) in the past years remained at 100% and the expected average usage rate in 2016 is also 100%. Please provide the following information:

- (1) The number of artificial turf pitches managed by the LCSD increased by two in the past two years. Why did the average usage rates of natural turf pitches not fall as a result?
- (2) The average usage rate of artificial turf pitches decreased by 2% in 2015 compared with that of 2014 while there was an increase in supply. What are the reasons as assessed by the Department? Is it a proof that artificial turf pitches are not accepted by the public as a substitute for natural turf pitches?
- (3) Does the Department have any plan to provide more new artificial and natural turf pitches? If so, what are their locations, the expenditures involved and the dates of completion?
- (4) Some professional football players criticised that the design of artificial turf pitches would increase their risk of injury, and the rubber granules in artificial turf would also affect the environment. A study conducted in 2015 even pointed out that the granules might be carcinogenic. The average usage rate of the artificial turf pitches managed by the LCSD in 2015 is only 72% while the usage rate of natural turf pitches has consistently remained at 100%. Will the Government consider increasing the number of natural turf pitches in addition to providing more artificial turf pitches?

Asked by: Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai (Member Question No. 29)

Reply:

- (1) & (2) Owing to the keen demand for turf football pitches in Hong Kong, the natural turf pitches managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) are always used to their full capacity despite the steady increase in the number of artificial turf pitches from 28 to 37 between 2010 and 2015.

Artificial turf pitches can be used for 270 sessions per month, which is four times that of the natural turf pitches (60 sessions per month) due to the need for turf maintenance. Whilst the number of used sessions of artificial turf pitches has increased by 3.3% from 69 897 in 2014 to 72 213 in 2015, the average usage rate dropped slightly by two percentage points, mainly due to the increase in the total number of available sessions.

- (3) In view of the advantages and popularity of artificial turf football pitches, the LCSD plans to provide two more Third-Generation (3G) pitches in 2016 by converting existing natural turf pitches. In addition, a 7 a-side artificial turf football pitch will be provided under an open space project in Sham Shui Po District. The estimated cost of the project is about \$122 million and the target completion date is 2017-18.

- (4) 3G artificial turf pitches are approved by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association as suitable for football activities, including training and competitions, and are used by many countries and regions for football training and competitions to make up for the shortage of natural turf pitches. Both the Hong Kong Football Association and Hong Kong Rugby Union support the use and additional provision of 3G artificial turf pitches.

When planning new football pitches and before deciding on the turf system to be used, the LCSD will take into account the demand of the population and individual communities for natural and artificial turf football pitches as well as the views of the District Councils and “national sports associations” concerned.

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