

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

HAB446

(Question Serial No. 3872)

Head: (95) Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational Expenses

Programme: (1) Recreation and Sports

Controlling Officer: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Ms Michelle LI)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Home Affairs

Question:

- (a) Given the poor quality of the turf, various sports events held at the Hong Kong Stadium in the past years were affected. What measures were taken by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) in the past to improve the turf quality of the Stadium? Please provide the implementation dates of the measures and the expenditures involved respectively.
- (b) Will the LCSD allocate additional resources to improve the turf quality of the Stadium in 2016-17? If so, what are the details and the estimated expenditure involved?
- (c) What are the staff establishment, functions, responsibilities and staff salaries of the Sports Turf Management Section established by the LCSD in 2014? Is there any change in the above resources in 2015-16 and 2016-17? If so, what are the details?
- (d) Did the LCSD provide its staff with training on turf management and maintenance in the past? If so, what were the details of the training and the expenditure involved? Will the Department provide additional/further training in this respect in 2016-17? If so, what are the details and the estimated expenditure involved?

Asked by: Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok (Member Question No. 358)

Reply:

- (a) To enhance the quality of the turf pitch at the Hong Kong Stadium (HKS), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has adopted an enhanced turf maintenance programme and a stricter approach to scheduling events. The key measures that were implemented in recent years include the following -
 - (i) an Expert Group on the HKS Turf Pitch (Expert Group) was set up in 2013 to provide advice on the medium and long-term improvement measures to enhance the quality of the Stadium turf pitch;

- (ii) in line with the Expert Group's advice and as a sustainable improvement measure to enhance the long-term quality and durability of the turf pitch at the HKS, the HKS Turf Pitch Reconstruction Project was carried out in 2015-16 with the full technical and financial support of the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC). The project involved comprehensive improvement measures including the complete removal of the existing turf and soil, replacement of the underground irrigation and drainage systems, reconstruction of a new pitch reinforced sand profile and laying of new turf. The project was wholly funded by HKJC;
 - (iii) the LCSD has set up a specialised Sports Turf Management Section (STMS) since May 2014 to offer professional advice and technical support for the management and maintenance of natural turf pitches including HKS. The annual staff cost is around \$3.4 million;
 - (iv) to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the regular maintenance of the turf pitch, the LCSD has engaged more skilled workers and procured more advanced equipment and tools such as turf growth lights and turf fans to improve microclimate at HKS for healthy turf growth;
 - (v) the LCSD has reviewed the hiring arrangements and events scheduling of HKS in consultation with stakeholders and major users in order to strike a better balance between maintaining turf quality and meeting users' demand; and
 - (vi) the LCSD has stepped up its in-depth training on turf management and maintenance as part of its on-going training programmes.
- (b) The LCSD has set aside around \$7.1 million for acquisition of additional advanced tools and equipment to enhance day-to-day maintenance of the HKS turf pitch in 2016-17.
- (c) The STMS comprises four time-limited posts with a head recruited through an international search to provide professional advice and technical support for the turf management and maintenance of natural turf sports pitches managed by the LCSD, in particular the HKS pitch and other pitches designated for the Hong Kong Premier League. The estimated staff cost of the STMS is around \$3.4 million in 2015-16 and of similar level in 2016-17.
- (d) In 2014-15 and 2015-16, the LCSD provided enhanced turf management training to a total of 1 029 staff through in-house, local and overseas training courses. The total expenditure incurred was about \$2.8 million. In 2016-17, the LCSD will continue to provide basic and in-depth training courses on turf management and maintenance for staff, including those of HKS. In addition to in-house training courses for some 300 staff, the LCSD will provide training opportunities for 190 staff to pursue two overseas programmes and three local programmes to enhance colleagues' expertise and knowledge in the field. The estimated expenditure involved is about \$1.4 million in 2016-17.