

## LCQ2: Management of sick leave in civil service

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Fok and a reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

The 2024 Policy Address proposed to strengthen civil service management. However, there are views pointing out that the figure of over 100 suspected cases of sick leave abuse by civil servants every year reflects that there is room for improvement in the fairness and transparency of the relevant sick leave management mechanism. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has conducted a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the management of sick leave in the civil service, and set out in a table the relevant data on sick leave taken by civil servants in each government department in the past three years, including the number of civil servants who took sick leave and the total number of days of sick leave taken by them, as well as the details of the management methods concerning frequent sick leave and prolonged sick leave; if not, of the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will consider amending the Civil Service Regulations in a timely manner to introduce a more rigorous audit mechanism for sick leave, such as requiring that a civil servant who has taken sick leave in excess of a certain number of days must receive an independent medical assessment by a Medical Board, and conducting in-depth investigations into suspected cases of sick leave abuse and taking more stringent disciplinary actions; and

(3) of the number of cases of prolonged sick leave taken by civil servants due to injuries sustained while on duty which eventually turned out to be suspected cases of sick leave abuse in each of the past five years; how the authorities assessed the relevant circumstances of such cases?

Reply:

President,

The civil service is a vital force for the Government to achieve good governance and maintain high-quality public services. As a good employer, the Government attaches great importance to the physical and mental well-being of its employees and protects their occupational safety. According to the terms and conditions of service, civil servants who are injured on duty, sick, unwell, or in need of medical treatment may apply for sick leave to help them recover and return to work as soon as possible. The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has a comprehensive and stringent sick leave management mechanism, which provides clear guidelines for all bureaux and departments (B/Ds) to

manage sick leave applications from civil servants under their purview. This ensures that sick or injured employees are given the necessary time to recover and rest, while achieving effective and fair sick leave management and handling suspected abuse of sick leave cases in a serious manner. The sick leave management mechanism is clearly and thoroughly stipulated in the Civil Service Regulations (CSRs) which are highly transparent and accessible by all civil servants at all times.

The replies to the respective parts of the question are as follows:

(1) and (2) To comprehensively and systematically understand the overall situation on the taking of sick leave by civil servants, the CSB regularly collects and analyses civil service sick leave data from all B/Ds. If it is observed that the number of sick leave days taken by civil servants or the number of staff having taken prolonged sick leave in a particular B/D shows a noticeable upward trend, we will require the departmental management to strengthen supervision, examine the reasons behind, review the effectiveness of its internal sick leave management arrangements and enhance the measures in sick leave management.

Civil servants' sick leave is categorised into duty-related sick leave and non-duty related sick leave. In 2022, the total number of duty-related sick leave days taken by civil servants was about 100 000 days, while in 2023 and 2024, it was about 80 000 days per year. As for non-duty related sick leave, the total number of non-duty related sick leave days taken by civil servants in 2022 was about 0.9 million days. During the COVID-19 pandemic that year, civil servants who were issued with isolation orders for being tested positive were granted authorised absence without taking sick leave. From early 2023 onwards, as the Government ceased issuing isolation orders, civil servants who are tested positive for COVID-19 have to apply for sick leave according to the normal procedures. Against this backdrop, the total numbers of non-duty related sick leave days taken by civil servants in 2023 and 2024 were about 1.2 million days and 1.1 million days respectively.

Regarding the number of civil servants taking sick leave, the 2024 figures show that out of about 173 000 civil servants, about 30 per cent did not take any sick leave throughout the year, about 40 per cent took between half a day to five days of sick leave; about 15 per cent took between five and a half to 10 days; and those who took more than 10 days of sick leave accounted for only 15 per cent of the total civil service strength. Civil servants who took a relatively long period of sick leave include cases of serious injury on duty and serious illnesses which require medical treatment for tens of days to even several months. The distribution of sick leave days in 2023 is largely similar.

It is incumbent upon the departmental management to closely monitor the sick leave taken by their staff and identify cases of suspected abuse at an early stage so that appropriate actions can be taken promptly. According to the CSRs, if a staff member is suspected of abusing sick leave, the departmental management may require him/her to attend before a Government or the Hospital Authority (HA) medical officer or clinic. In such cases, regardless of the duration of the sick leave, the staff member must produce a

medical certificate issued by the Government or the HA medical officer or clinic to be granted sick leave.

For prolonged sick leave cases, the CSRs stipulate that departmental management is generally required to convene a Medical Board consisting of three medical officers to independently assess the health condition of any civil servant who has taken more than 91 consecutive days of sick leave that are not related to injury on duty. B/Ds may withhold the grant of sick leave to the officer unless with the Board's recommendation to grant sick leave to the officer. If the grant of sick leave is withheld from the officer, the officer should immediately apply for vacation leave or unpaid leave to cover the period of absence, otherwise the case may be regarded as unauthorised absence. If an investigation reveals abuse, falsification or other breach of regulations, the departmental management may take disciplinary action accordingly. If a case involves criminal elements, the departmental management will also report it to the relevant law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the existing mechanism has in fact incorporated the arrangements suggested in part (2) of the question.

(3) A civil servant who is injured while on duty for reason not owing to his own serious and wilful misconduct may apply for sick leave on full pay. Most civil servants injured while on duty will seek treatment from medical officers or clinics of the Government or the HA. In case a department has any doubt over whether the sick leave applied for is related to injury on duty, it will collect relevant information and conduct an investigation, such as requesting relevant medical reports and police investigation reports (if applicable), obtaining details of the case from witness, and arranging the officer concerned to undergo medical assessment, so as to prevent false declaration of injury on duty cases. The Government does not keep the statistics requested in the question.

---

## **Postal services to Grenada subject to delay**

â€‹Hongkong Post announced today (May 28) that, as advised by the postal administration of Grenada, due to the impact of a strike, mail delivery services to the country are subject to delay.

---

# 15th National Games Fencing test event to be held this weekend

â€‹The Challenge Cups Fencing Championships, which is also the 15th National Games (NG) Fencing test event, will be held at Kai Tak Arena, Kai Tak Sports Park this weekend (May 31 and June 1).

â€‹The competition event will start at 9am on both days with the participation of over 500 athletes. The event, featuring the open and veteran divisions, consists of men's and women's épée, foil and sabre competitions. The épée competition will be staged on the first day, and the foil and sabre competitions will be staged on the next day.

Tickets are distributed to the public through the Fencing Association of Hong Kong, China. Members of the public may [register for tickets online](#) from 9am tomorrow (May 29) while stocks last. Those who possess a ticket will undergo a security check at the entrance of Kai Tak Arena and watch the event in the public viewing area. Moreover, a small number of tickets have been reserved for on-site distribution in two sessions. Members of the public who are interested may obtain a ticket at the entrance on level UG of Kai Tak Arena at 9am or 2.30pm on the event days for admission. Each person is entitled to one ticket with free seating on a first-come, first-served basis while stocks last.

â€‹Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) will provide live broadcasts of parts of the events via RTHK TV 32 and webcast. For details, please visit the RTHK weblink ([www.rthk.hk/nationalgames](http://www.rthk.hk/nationalgames)) and their YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/RTHK](http://www.youtube.com/RTHK)).

â€‹The General Administration of Sport of China in an announcement on May 19 revealed the competition schedule for the 15th NG. The dates of competition events to take place in Hong Kong can be found on the thematic page for the 15th NG (Hong Kong) ([www.2025nationalgames.gov.hk/en/ng/schedule.html](http://www.2025nationalgames.gov.hk/en/ng/schedule.html)).

â€‹For more information on the 15th NG, the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 9th National Special Olympic Games in Hong Kong, please visit the thematic website ([www.2025nationalgames.gov.hk/en/index.html](http://www.2025nationalgames.gov.hk/en/index.html)), as well as the Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/2025nationalgames.hk](https://www.facebook.com/2025nationalgames.hk)) and Instagram page ([www.instagram.com/2025nationalgames.hk](https://www.instagram.com/2025nationalgames.hk)).

---

## LCQ10: Arts and mega events

Following is a question by the Hon Dominic Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question: There are views that while Hong Kong has successfully hosted international mega events such as Art Basel Hong Kong in recent years, Singapore has introduced many large-scale events (e.g. concerts by world-renowned singers) through cross-departmental collaboration and dedicated mechanisms, also with notably significant results. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will, with reference to the experience of the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises, consider setting up a Committee for Attracting Major Events to coordinate work for attracting major international mega arts events and provide one-stop administrative support to organisers (e.g. assistance with approvals, coordination of venue hiring and cross-border logistics, and provision of ancillary support); if so, of the specific plans (e.g. the terms of reference of the committee and implementation timetable); if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the respective numbers of large-scale arts events and mega events held in Hong Kong in each of the past five years, and the total amount of resources allocated by the authorities to such events and mega events, together with a breakdown of the amount of subsidies provided by the authorities by name of event; and, among such events and mega events, the percentage of world-class international arts events and mega events (e.g. mega events on the scale of the Venice Biennale);

(3) as it has been learnt that Singapore attracts organizers to hold large-scale arts events and mega events by upgrading venues (e.g. Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay) and providing flexible subsidies, whether the authorities have assessed the competitiveness gap between Hong Kong's existing venues (e.g. the West Kowloon Cultural District) and those in Singapore; whether it will formulate long-term plans for hardware upgrades and rental concessions to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness in hosting mega events; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) in order to leverage the benefits of regional collaboration, whether the authorities have plans to collaborate with Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) in taking forward a collaborative initiative on mega arts events, attracting global event organisers to hold mega events in GBA through joint event planning and preparation, introduction of transportation packages and joint promotional efforts; if so, of the specific cooperation framework and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Dominic Lee is as follows:

(1) The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) has been striving to consolidate Hong Kong's position as the capital of international mega arts and cultural events by hosting and supporting more large-scale, diverse and innovative arts and cultural events, thereby providing a platform for East-meets-West international cultural exchange while promoting mega event economy. Furthermore, the Hong Kong Tourism Board has established the Mega Events Development and Advancement Division, which serves as the first point of contact for mega events, and collaborates with stakeholders, such as organisers of mega arts events, to render them various kinds of support, including helping organisers to search venues, arranging site recces, advising on event planning such as date and content and assisting with publicity.

(2) The CSTB set up the Mega Arts and Cultural Events (ACE) Fund in April 2023 to attract and support the staging of international or large-scale arts and cultural events in Hong Kong, with a view to fostering Hong Kong's development as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. The Mega ACE Fund has supported 21 mega arts and cultural events so far, in which 11 events have been successfully held in other countries or regions. Among others, the internationally renowned pop culture mega event ComplexCon and the art fair ART021 Hong Kong Contemporary Art Fair were brought to Hong Kong for the first time with the support of the Mega ACE Fund. Details are in the Annex.

(3) The CSTB, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), endeavour to provide venues for various arts and cultural activities. First of all, with its official commissioning on March 1 this year, the Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP) provides Hong Kong with the largest and most state-of-the-art venues, including a 50 000-seat Kai Tak Stadium (equipped with a retractable roof and an innovative pitch system), a 10 000-seat Kai Tak Arena (with column-free design and various operational models and seating configurations) and a 5 000-seat Kai Tak Youth Sports Ground. In the past two months, multiple mega sports and entertainment events were successfully held at the KTSP, including large-scale concerts by renowned international and regional bands as well as local singers, which were well received by both citizens and tourists. There will be more entertainment events to be staged at different venues of the KTSP later this year, demonstrating the attractiveness and competitive advantages of its facilities.

Moreover, we have been allocating resources for building new performance venues and upgrading existing facilities. First, for venues under the LCSD, the newly constructed East Kowloon Cultural Centre as well as the upgraded Tai Po Civic Centre and Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre are expected to be in full operation in 2025. The New Territories East Cultural Centre is also currently under construction. In addition, the Xiqu Centre, the first major performing arts venue of the WKCD, was officially opened in 2019. The WestK Performing Arts Centre of WKCD, which will comprise a 1 450-seat Grand Theatre and a few theatres in smaller scale, is scheduled to be completed in 2026.

Apart from increasing the number of venues, we also provide facilitation to presenters through enhancing the venue booking arrangements. For example, performance venues under the LCSD currently provide special booking arrangements for large-scale events or programmes that require early planning with special reasons (such as performances involving renowned overseas artists). Presenters can submit booking applications to the LCSD one year in advance and will be given priority consideration to facilitate the organising of mega events. In order to make more precise use of venue resources and release more booking slots for use by different arts groups, we are currently reviewing the usage and hiring arrangements of the LCSD's performance venues to address to the needs of the arts and culture sector and provide venues for large-scale arts and cultural events. The result will be announced in due course.

(4) The Government has been maintaining close contact with arts and cultural institutions in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) to co-organise large-scale arts and cultural events. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT), the People's Government of Guangdong Province, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and the Government of the Macao SAR have been jointly presenting the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival (Festival) since 2019. The Festival aims to build a cultural brand of the GBA through presentation and promotion of diversified activities in different cities of the region. At the same time, it aims to encourage audiences from the Mainland and overseas to visit Hong Kong and other cities of the GBA to enjoy performances, exhibitions and other selected activities during the Festival. As the host city of the fourth edition in 2024, Hong Kong planned and coordinated more than 770 live performances, exhibitions and exchange activities as well as over 70 online programmes, attracting more than 2.16 million attendees and over 46 million online viewership. The Festival in 2025 is scheduled for the third quarter.

On the heritage and museum front, the LCSD will collaborate with various institutions and cultural venues in the GBA from 2024 to 2026 to organise the Ink Art Ensembles exhibition series. The series features five exhibitions in four key cities of the GBA—Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Foshan, and Dongguan. Moreover, the 2024 Hong Kong-Macao Visual Art Biennale, jointly presented by the MoCT, the CSTB, and the Secretariat for Social Affairs and Culture of the Macao SAR, includes a Hong Kong section curated by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. With the theme of Cultural Integration, the exhibition features a series of artworks across various media. The biennale completed its first two stops in Hangzhou and Nanjing in October 2024 and March 2025 respectively and will continue its tour to Beijing and GBA cities, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen, from June to September 2025.

Hong Kong will continue to participate in different mega events of the GBA, fostering cultural integration and talent exchanges of the three places, jointly pursuing the inheritance and development of the fine traditions of Chinese culture and opening up international markets, with a view to taking forward the idea of Jointly Developing a Cultured Bay Area as promulgated in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

---

## LCQ7: Identifying calls from government departments and public organisations

Following is a question by the Hon Duncan Chiu and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

It has been reported that telephone frauds have occurred frequently in Hong Kong in recent years and to avoid being defrauded, quite a number of members of the public prefer not answering calls from non-traditional telephone numbers with prefixes of "3" or "5", etc, telephone numbers not found in their phone contacts and without caller numbers. However, there are views pointing out that such calls may also include those from government departments and public organisations, such as public hospitals, the Police and Immigration Department, etc, and refusal to answer these calls may result in wastage and ineffective use of some public resources as well as affect the use of public services by members of the public. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the major prefixes of existing fixed-line telephone numbers of government departments, public organisations and public hospitals, and the respective percentages of telephone numbers with the relevant prefixes;
- (2) whether it has examined the actual situation of the effect of frequent occurrence of telephone fraud on the contact made by various government departments and public organisations with members of the public by phone, including the telephone number prefixes which were most affected, the five government departments and public organisations which were most affected, and the estimated number of members of the public who have not been successfully contacted;
- (3) regarding the failure of staff of government departments and public organisations to effectively contact members of the public by their office fixed-line telephones, whether follow-up mechanism and guidelines have currently been put in place, including the circumstances under which the responsible personnel are allowed to follow up using their private mobile phones; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and whether it will formulate the relevant mechanism and guidelines in the future; and
- (4) whether consideration will be given to reorganise and centralise the allocation of telephone numbers of government departments and public organisations with specified prefixes, so as to facilitate identification by



members of the public and reduce the chance of refusal to answer calls?

Reply:

President,

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) has been devising and implementing a series of preventive measures from the perspective of telecommunications services to assist the Hong Kong Police Force (Police) in combating phone deception at the source. In response to the question raised by the Hon Duncan Chiu, having consulted OFCA and the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau, our consolidated reply is as follows:

Government departments and public organisations will enter into commercial service contracts with telecommunications service providers respectively based on their own operational needs for suitable telephone services and obtain office phone numbers. In addition, OFCA has established a mechanism to provide designated telephone numbers for government departments or public organisations in need of hotline numbers or communication with the public. Examples include the Government's one-stop service hotline 1823, the Police's Anti-Deception Coordination Centre hotline 18222, the Customs and Excise Department's reporting hotline 1828080, the Immigration Department's service hotline 1868, and the Home Affairs Department's "Care Team" inquiry number 182111. The operational arrangements for these phone numbers and actual interface with the public will be determined by the respective government departments and public organisations in accordance with their mode of operation, service nature and needs for communicating with the public. OFCA does not centrally collect or maintain related data or information.

Currently, government departments and public organisations involve hundreds of thousands of telephone numbers and users, with varying nature and requirements for phone services when communicating with the public. If all government departments and public organisations needed to restructure and be uniformly allocated with telephone numbers of designated prefixes, and massively revamp the existing telephone systems as well as hotline/office phone numbers, the whole process would be complex and time-consuming. In particular, there would be a need to put in place transitional arrangements, and all users should be informed of the updated phone numbers. It could instead cause confusion and inconvenience to the public during such a period. Therefore, the suggestion to uniformly allocate telephone numbers with designated prefixes for all government departments and public organisations may not be the most effective way to prevent phone deception. In fact, the tactics of phone deception are ever-changing. Criminals may use other means to impersonate government calls. In this connection, OFCA will continue to work with the telecommunications industry and the Police to mitigate the risk of phone deception on various fronts, including requiring telecommunications service operators to block/suspend suspected fraudulent phone numbers and websites, intercept suspicious calls starting with "+852", send voice alerts or text messages to all mobile users for overseas calls prefixed with "+852", and play voice alerts for newly activated prepaid SIM cards, so as to assist the public in guarding against suspicious calls and messages.

To enhance the regulation and security of mobile device usage by government staff members and to effectively mitigate the risk of leaking sensitive government information, the Digital Policy Office has issued the "Practice Guide for Mobile Security" (Guide). Among others, the Guide requires government bureaux and departments, when considering the adoption of mobile devices in their operations, should first assess their needs for mobile devices and evaluate how mobile solutions can support their business operations. In addition, government bureaux and departments should establish a mobile security policy (including specifying the scope of mobile device use, business needs and security requirements) and formulate appropriate procedures to manage the use of such devices.

For privately owned mobile devices, the Guide specifies that, considering the associated security risks and the risk of data leakage caused by device loss, government bureaux and departments should not use privately owned mobile devices for official business in the absence of appropriate protective measures.