

## LCQ10: Implementation of five-day work week by Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Following is a question by the Hon Ho Kai-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

As at September 30 last year, around 75% of civil servants were working on a five-day work week (FDWW) pattern. Some trade union representatives have relayed that a relatively large number of staff members of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) are not arranged to work on a FDWW pattern. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the (i) staffing establishment and (ii) strength of civil servants under LCSD in each of the past three years and, among such civil servants, the number and percentage of those who worked on a FDWW pattern (together with a breakdown by grade and rank); and

(2) whether LCSD will arrange all of its staff members to work on a FDWW pattern as soon as possible; if so, of the details; if not, whether the authorities will review the four basic principles with which the various policy bureaux/government departments have to comply in implementing FDWW?

Reply:

President,

My reply to Hon Ho Kai-ming's question is as follows:

(1) According to the statistics provided by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the establishment, strength and number of civil servants working on a five-day week (FDW) basis as at September 30, 2016 and September 30, 2018 with breakdown by grade are set out in the table below:

Grades	(Number of civil servants as at September 30, 2016)			(Number of civil servants as at September 30, 2018)		
	Establishment	Strength	Number of officers on FDW	Establishment	Strength	Number of officers on FDW
Directorate grades	12	6	6 (0.1%)	12	11	11 (0.1%)

Departmental grades (Note 1)	3 567	3 512	2 355 (26.9%)	3 723	3 596	2 366 (26%)
General and common grades (Note 2)	4 647	4 403	2 314 (26.4%)	4 805	4 580	2 402 (26.3%)
Model Scale 1 grades (Note 3)	1 214	846	491 (5.6%)	1 213	930	507 (5.6%)
Total:	9 440	8 767	5 166 (58.9%)	9 753	9 117	5 286 (58%)

Figures in brackets denote the percentage of the total number of serving civil servants in the LCSD

Note 1: Departmental grades include Amenities Assistant, Cultural Services Assistant, Curator, Leisure Services Manager, Librarian, Manager (Cultural Services), Music Officer and Technical Officer (Cultural Services).

Note 2: General and common grades include Accounting Officer, Administrative Officer, Analyst/Programmer, Architect, Artisan, Building Services Engineer, Building Services Inspector, Calligraphist, Clerical Assistant, Clerical Officer, Clerk of Works, Computer Operator, Confidential Assistant, Executive Officer, Information Officer, Laboratory Technician, Maintenance Surveyor, Management Services Officer, Motor Driver, Office Assistant, Official Languages Officer, Personal Secretary, Photographer, Quantity Surveyor, Senior Artisan, Special Driver, Statistical Officer, Statistician, Structural Engineer, Supplies Assistant, Supplies Officer, Supplies Supervisor, Survey Officer, Technical Officer, Training Officer, Transport Services Officer, Treasury Accountant, Typist, Veterinary Laboratory Technician, Veterinary Officer and Works Supervisor.

Note 3: Model Scale 1 grades include Supplies Attendant, Workman I and Workman II.

(2) The LCSD will continue exploring possible options for wider implementation of FDW subject to the four basic principles (i.e. no additional staffing resources; no reduction in conditioned hours of service of individual staff; no reduction in emergency services; and continued provision of essential counter services on Saturdays/Sundays). In the past two years (i.e. starting from October 1, 2016), some parks and sports grounds of the LCSD had, after completion of trials, successfully migrated to work on FDW. For those venues where FDW cannot be implemented due to operational reasons, the LCSD will arrange the staff to work five days a week as far as practicable during overhaul of the venues or seasonal suspension of service.

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## LCQ12: Highly drug-resistant pathogens

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Chiang Lai-wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

It has been reported that the number of sickness cases caused by the infection of *Candida auris*, a species of fungi, is increasing in different places around the world. Given that such fungus is highly drug-resistant, and almost half of the patients concerned will die within 90 days, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States have added this pathogen to the list of "urgent threats". In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number of sickness cases confirmed to have been caused by the infection of *Candida auris* in each of the past five years; the treatments received by and the recovery situation of the patients concerned;

(2) given the extremely high fatality rate of sickness cases caused by the infection of *Candida auris*, whether the Government will require that (i) all such infection cases be notified under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap 599), and (ii) the patients concerned be isolated for receiving treatment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether the Government (i) conducted epidemiological studies on *Candida auris*, (ii) formulated measures to prevent the spread of such fungus in medical wards and the community, and (iii) introduced special drugs for treating the patients concerned, in the past five years; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will review the guidelines on the prescription of antibiotics for patients with a view to reducing the abusive use of antibiotics and avoiding the emergence of highly drug-resistant pathogens; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The High Level Steering Committee on Antimicrobial Resistance (HLSC), chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health, formulated a holistic strategy and action plan under a "One Health" framework. It has taken into account the recommendations put forward by the experts of HLSC' Expert Committee on Antimicrobial Resistance and considerations from the perspectives of human health, animal health and environmental well-being. In consultation with the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority

(HA), the reply to various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Chiang Lai-wan is as follows:

(1) There were no confirmed cases of *Candida auris* recorded by the HA in the past five years. In general, Echinocandin antifungal drugs, such as Anidulafungin or Micafungin, are the most effective medication for *Candida auris*. Doctors in public hospitals adjust the relevant treatment plans according to the antifungal susceptibility results. The actual time needed for treatment varies depending on patients' conditions and their clinical response to medication. For example, in the case of Candidemia, doctors determine the treatment duration having regard to the recovery progress of the patient concerned and whether the *Candida auris* in the bloodstream can be cleared. Such treatment usually takes about two to four weeks.

(2) The Government will consider a number of factors in determining whether a particular disease should be listed as a statutory notifiable infectious disease under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap 599). These factors include the epidemiological trend and severity of the disease, the potential risk of outbreak of the disease, the availability of reliable diagnostic methods, the availability of effective personal or public health intervention and other better surveillance methods, the surveillance and reporting requirements of the World Health Organization, international practices, the possibility of the disease being used as a biological weapon, etc. The DH keeps in view the evolution of infectious diseases and reviews the list of statutory notifiable infectious diseases from time to time, in order to strengthen disease surveillance and implement effective preventive and control measures on public health to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in Hong Kong.

According to the DH's records, there have been no reports of *Candida auris* outbreaks in Hong Kong so far. At present, *Candida auris* is not a notifiable infectious disease in most countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom, etc. The DH will continue to closely monitor the epidemiological situation and the latest development of *Candida auris*, and will review the relevant surveillance measures in a timely manner.

(3) As mentioned above, since there have been no reports of *Candida auris* outbreaks in Hong Kong so far, the DH has not conducted any epidemiological studies on the disease. The current relevant epidemiological data reflect overseas situations only. The DH will continue to closely monitor the epidemiological situation and the latest development of the disease.

The DH has been providing guidelines and advice on personal and environmental hygiene and isolation precautions to promote infection prevention and control in the community and healthcare settings, and also regularly organising training for relevant stakeholders to update their knowledge of infectious diseases and infection control. In principle, the infection control measures for *Candida auris* are the same as those for most multi-drug resistant organisms. The main measures include taking standard and contact precautions, maintaining hand and environmental hygiene, and

promoting the proper use of personal protective equipment. At the same time, the HA has also formulated guidelines on *Candida auris* and the necessary infection control measures.

Generally speaking, *Candida auris* is more drug-resistant than other candida. The drug category for treating the disease, however, is basically no different from the antifungal drugs generally used for treating serious fungal infections. All these drugs have been registered and are available in the local market. At present, the following special drugs for treating *Candida auris* are available in HA Drug Formulary: Echinocandin antifungal drugs (Anidulafungin, Caspofungin and Micafungin) and Lipid formulation amphotericin B antifungal drugs.

(4) To tackle the increasingly serious AMR problem, the HLSC launched the Hong Kong Strategy and Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (2017-2022) in 2017, which sets out the following six key areas of work:

- (i) Strengthen knowledge through surveillance and research;
- (ii) Optimise use of antimicrobials in humans and animals;
- (iii) Reduce incidence of infection through effective sanitation, hygiene and preventive measures;
- (iv) Improve awareness and understanding of AMR through effective communication, education and training;
- (v) Promote research on AMR; and
- (vi) Strengthen partnerships and foster engagement of relevant stakeholders.

The departments and organisations concerned have been taking actions according to the timetable set out in the Action Plan. To minimise abuse of antimicrobials through the promotion of their judicious use, the Advisory Group on Antibiotic Stewardship in Primary Care of the DH rolled out in 2017 the Antibiotic Stewardship Programme in Primary Care, providing doctors with evidence-based antibiotic prescription guidance for common infections in the community. The departments and organisations concerned will update the guidance notes in a timely manner based on local epidemiology and international best practices in order to optimise the use of antibiotics. For instance, the Interhospital Multi-disciplinary Programme on Antimicrobial ChemoTherapy, which provides guidelines on the use of antibiotics, was updated to the fifth edition in November 2017.

On public education, the DH has disseminated through different media a collection of health information, including the Guidance Notes on Antibiotic Use provided on social networks and the medication tips for patients regarding common communicable diseases, so as to enhance the public's understanding of AMR and help lower patients' expectation on prescription of antimicrobials.

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## LCQ4: Prices for private healthcare services

Following is a question by the Hon Tommy Cheung and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

In 2016, the Government rolled out, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Private Hospitals Association, a pilot programme for enhancing price transparency of private hospitals through a number of measures (the pilot programme). In November last year, this Council enacted the Private Healthcare Facilities Ordinance (Cap. 633), which contains provisions for regulating price transparency of private healthcare facilities ("PHFs"), but the relevant subsidiary legislation has yet to be made. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will, prior to the implementation of Cap. 633, enhance the pilot programme, such as requiring the various private hospitals to adopt a uniform format for publicising on their websites information on prices for healthcare services, so as to facilitate comparisons to be made by members of the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it is stipulated in section 61 of Cap. 633 that the licensee of a PHF must make available to the public, in the way prescribed by regulations, information about the prices of chargeable items and services provided in the facility as prescribed by regulations, of the timetable for and progress of enacting the relevant regulations; whether it will expedite the implementation of the relevant provisions; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as some members of the public are worried that the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme (VHIS) which has been implemented since last month will push up the prices for private healthcare services, whether the Government will (i) step up the regulation of the prices for private healthcare services, and (ii) require PHFs to provide healthcare services at packaged prices for members of the public who have joined VHIS to choose; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will consider enacting legislation to empower the Director of Health to vet and approve the prices for different classes of wards in private hospitals, so as to ensure that such prices are set at reasonable levels; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the questions raised by the Hon Tommy Cheung is as follows.

(1) and (2) In October 2016, the Government together with the Hong Kong Private Hospitals Association rolled out a Pilot Programme for Enhancing Price Transparency for Private Hospitals (the Pilot Programme). All private hospitals in Hong Kong have participated in the Pilot Programme and implemented three price transparency measures on a voluntary basis, namely publicising the fee schedules of major chargeable items, publicising the historical bill sizes statistics of 30 common treatments/procedures, and providing budget estimates for patients receiving 30 common and non-emergency treatments/procedures.

A number of improvements have been made to the Pilot Programme since introduction with a view to providing the public with more user-friendly price information. According to the current proposal under the Pilot Programme, private hospitals have to publish the price information of specified items with respect to all room classes and day/outpatient services. Private hospitals should also publish historical bill sizes statistics of 30 common treatments/procedures in a standardised format, which covers annual number of discharges, average length of stay, as well as the actual billing data for the 50th percentile and 90th percentile of each specified treatment/procedure. In addition, private hospitals have to provide budget estimate on a pilot basis according to the specified format recommended by the Department of Health. All private hospitals have uploaded relevant information to their dedicated webpages as requested under the Pilot Programme. The Department of Health has set up a dedicated website on the Pilot Programme ([www.orphf.gov.hk/Public](http://www.orphf.gov.hk/Public)) to facilitate public access to relevant information.

The Private Healthcare Facilities Ordinance (Cap. 633) was gazetted on November 30, 2018. The Ordinance stipulates the price transparency measures which the licensees of private healthcare facilities (including private hospitals) have to comply with, and empowers the Secretary for Food and Health to make regulations to provide for relevant matters. The Government is now working on the details of the proposed regulations in consultation with stakeholders, taking into account the experience gained from the Pilot Programme. The Government's target is to submit the relevant regulations to the Legislative Council for scrutiny in late 2019/early 2020.

(3) and (4) The Government is committed to enhancing price transparency of private healthcare facilities, so that the public could be better informed of price information before making decisions in meeting their medical needs, and make necessary financial arrangements in advance. Nonetheless, as private medical service by its very nature is no different from other business transactions between consenting parties where prices are determined by market force, the Government will not regulate the price level or price structure of services provided by private healthcare facilities. Allowing the market to determine prices on its own also encourages competition in terms of service quality and efficiency among healthcare services providers.

In addition to enhancing the price transparency of private healthcare facilities, the Government will continue to encourage private hospitals to provide more services at packaged charges. The provision of services at packaged charges will enhance price certainty and facilitate patients to make financial arrangements in advance. The Gleneagles Hong Kong Hospital, as well as the CUHK Medical Centre which will soon commence service, provide a certain percentage of services at packaged charges according to the relevant Service Deeds. The Government also encourages existing private hospitals undergoing expansion/redevelopment projects and new private hospitals to be developed mainly on private land to consider accepting special requirements, such as provision of services at packaged charges, as a means to enhancing the quality of private healthcare services which cater for public needs.

The Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme (VHIS) aims to regulate indemnity hospital insurance plans offered to individuals and enhance the quality and transparency of such plans. Certified Plans must meet the minimum benefit standard prescribed by VHIS. For example, the basic protection of Certified Plans should adopt standardised policy terms and conditions, as well as basic benefit coverage and benefit amounts. VHIS does not mandate private healthcare facilities to provide consumers of Certified Plans with healthcare services at packaged charges. Nonetheless, in order to facilitate consumers to prepare for their budget, upon receipt of the estimated charges provided for non-emergency surgical procedures, the insurers should provide consumers with claimable amount estimates of the procedures concerned for consumers' reference.

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## **LCQ3: Noise nuisance caused by music performances in parks**

Following is a question by the Hon Kwong Chun-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

It has been reported that from time to time, quite a number of people stage music performances without permission in the parks under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), and some performers generate loud noise by using amplifiers during their performances. For many years, Tuen Mun Park has been a black spot of music performances causing noise nuisance. Notwithstanding that LCSD has set up, at corners in the Park that are far away from residential areas, two self-entertainment zones for registered music activities without the use of amplifiers, very few music performers have applied for the use of the zones. They continue to use amplifiers to stage performances elsewhere in the Park, thereby causing noise nuisance to



visitors and nearby residents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of persons staging music performances in the parks under LCSD who were (i) issued warning letters by LCSD under the Noise Control Guidelines and (ii) prosecuted by the Noise Control Authority under the Noise Control Ordinance (Cap. 400), in the past three years for generating excessive noise; the number of convictions and, among them, the number of cases of repeated offences;

(2) whether the persons who stage performances, (i) with or (ii) without permission respectively, in the parks under LCSD and receive rewards or remunerations contravene the Pleasure Grounds Regulation (Cap. 132BC) or other legislation; and

(3) of the respective numbers of applications received and approved by LCSD in the past three years for staging performances in the self-entertainment zones in Tuen Mun Park; given that the authorities have recently proposed that Cap. 132BC be amended for more effective control of the noise nuisance problem in the parks under LCSD, whether LCSD has assessed if such measure can eradicate the noise problem caused by music performers staging performances in Tuen Mun Park?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Hon Kwong Chun-yu's question is as follows:

(1) The noises referred to in the "Noise Control Guidelines" fall under the regulation of the Noise Control Ordinance (Cap. 400), the provisions of which are enforced by the Director of Environmental Protection and the Commissioner of Police. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) takes enforcement actions in its public pleasure grounds (PPGs) to step up regulation of noise nuisance primarily under section 25 of the Pleasure Grounds Regulation (Cap. 132BC).

Section 25 of the Pleasure Grounds Regulation stipulates that "Save where the Director has, in writing, permitted the operation or playing of, or the making of any sounds by means of, any such instrument or the singing of any song, no person shall, in any pleasure ground, to the annoyance of any other user thereof operate or play, or make any sounds on, any musical or other instrument, including any gramophone or radio apparatus or sing any song."

Under normal circumstances, members of the public who play music instruments or sing songs in parks for self-entertainment will not be interfered by park keepers as long as these activities do not cause nuisance to other venue users. However, when excessive noise is generated from the activities and a complaint of annoyance is lodged to LCSD, management staff of the venue will advise the person concerned to lower the volume. If the

advice is ignored, the management staff will, having regard to the actual circumstances, consider instigating prosecution against the person(s) in breach of the regulation under section 25 of the Pleasure Grounds Regulation when there is a venue user who had been annoyed willing to act as prosecution witness and there is sufficient evidence. There were two successful prosecutions involving Tuen Mun Park in the past three years.

(2) At present, the Pleasure Grounds Regulation and other legislation do not prohibit members of the public from tipping others in the form of "lai see" in parks. Hence, performers who accept "lai see" from members of the public in parks are not in breach of the legislation. However, it is up to the court to adjudicate each prosecution case with regard to the circumstances of the case and evidences found.

LCSD will issue a letter of approval to the successful group applicant for using a LCSD venue for non-designated activities (e.g. performance activities). The letter will set out the conditions for hiring the leisure venue for non-designated use. For example, the hirer shall not allow any distribution or sale of refreshments or commodities, or charge admission fees or solicit donations from participants in the activity, or accept any form of pecuniary reward except prior permission has been given by LCSD. LCSD may demand the hirer to surrender the venue if the hirer breaches any of the department's conditions of use.

(3) Two self-entertainment zones and one Amphitheatre in Tuen Mun Park are available for application by groups for singing activities, etc. The numbers of applications received and approved regarding the above-mentioned self-entertainment zones and Amphitheatre in the past 3 years (May 2016 to April 2019) are set out in the table below:

Year	Number of applications		Total	Number of approved applications		
	Self-entertainment zone	Amphitheatre		Self-entertainment zone	Amphitheatre	Total
May 2016 to April 2017	423	745	1 168	370	304	674
May 2017 to April 2018	382	699	1 081	372	297	669
May 2018 to April 2019	390	812	1 202	370	279	649
Total	1 195	2 256	3 451	1 112	880	1 992

LCSD has been monitoring closely the noise nuisance problem and implemented a number of noise control measures such as designating suitable areas for activities by singing groups, conducting joint operation with the Police, strengthening manpower to monitor singing activities and drawing up house rules to regulate the use of speakers in designated parks, so as to mitigate and regulate the noise nuisance in parks. At present, if enforcement action is taken by LCSD under section 25 of the Pleasure Ground Regulation, it has to be established that a "venue user" had been annoyed, and the venue user has to be willing to serve as a prosecution witness. To address public demand for proper and effective regulation of noise nuisance in parks, we propose a simple legislative amendment to section 25 of Cap. 132BC by replacing "user thereof" with "person". The amendment will help promote responsible and respectful behaviours in PPGs and deter the irresponsible use of loudspeakers and similar equipment which cause annoyance to other park users, nearby residents or park keepers. Under the proposed amendment, LCSD park keepers and any other persons (in particular the nearby residents) who are annoyed by the noise may act as prosecution witnesses in LCSD's enforcement action. For more effective regulation of noise nuisance in PPGs, we aim to table the amendment regulation at meeting of the Legislative Council for negative vetting within this year.

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## **LCQ2: Prevention and control of ants**

Following is a question by Dr Hon Helena Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

It has been reported that a scholar in biology and ecology found ants belonging to the species of *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* in Hung Hom in November last year. The scholar pointed out that such species of ants was non-native to Hong Kong and would build nests in buildings. It would be difficult to eradicate the species if its population was to proliferate. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it found any *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* ants in Hong Kong last year; if so, set out the relevant details by district;
- (2) whether it will regularly monitor if ants of such species are found in various districts and publish the relevant data; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) of the measures in place to assist the public in dealing with the situation in which ants of such species are found at home and the community;

(4) of the measures in place to enable the public to grasp more information on whether the various species of ants are harmful to human being; and

(5) whether it will draw reference from overseas countries' quarantine work carried out on inbound aircraft and vessels, with a view to preventing the invasion of non-native pests; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(1) and (2) *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* is a general nuisance pest originated from South America. Like other ant species, *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* is not a vector for transmission of human diseases and poses no threat to public health, building structures or ecological environment. The Government therefore does not regularly monitor its whereabouts. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) received a report of *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* at an estate in Hung Hom in mid-December last year. Apart from that, the Government did not receive any other report of such species of ant in other places of Hong Kong.

(3) and (4) Handling of *Brachymyrmex patagonicus* is no different from that of ants in general. As sweet food attracts ants, keeping homes clean and storing sweet food in tightly sealed containers can avoid inviting ants. If ants are found at home, control measures targeted on household ants may be used, and appropriate registered pesticides may be applied when necessary. Professional pest control companies may be hired to provide ant control services.

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has provided on its website [information on ants and ant control measures](#) as well as [information on selecting a pest control company](#) for easy reference.

(5) Currently, plant quarantine measures implemented in Hong Kong aim at controlling plant pests. According to the Plant (Importation and Pest Control) Ordinance (Cap. 207), no person shall import any plant pest or any plant infected by or infested with a plant pest unless authorised by the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation. AFCD is responsible for the enforcement of the Ordinance with the assistance of the Customs and Excise Department. Plant Health Inspectors of AFCD stationed at entry points inspect consignments of imported plants, plant products and growing medium to ensure that they are accompanied by valid import documents and free from plant pests. If pests are found in a consignment, AFCD will reject its import and order to carry out quarantine treatment or destroy the consignment. The Government will continue to keep abreast of studies on prevention of non-native pest invasion, draw reference from other places and take appropriate measures as and when required.