

LCQ9: Hiring of venues in community halls and community centres

\*\*\*\*\*

Following is a question by the Hon Li Kwok-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (December 21):

Question:

Regarding the hiring of venues in the community halls and community centres under the Home Affairs Department by local organisations to organize community activities, will the Government inform this Council of:

(a) the number of complaints received by the Administration in each of the past three years that some people applied for hiring these venues in the names of different organisations so as to boost their chance of success; how the Administration followed up these complaints;

(b) the measures to curb such practice to ensure that all local organisations have equal chances to hire these venues; and

(c) the measures to prevent hirers from using these venues for profit-making activities?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) In the past three years, District Offices(DOs) received a total of three verbal complaints (two in 2004 and one in 2005) alleging that certain organisations submitted their hiring applications under different names in order to boost their chance of success. In investigating the complaints, DOs will first approach the complainant and the respondent to obtain details for analysis. Further action will

then be taken, such as explaining to both parties with a view to achieving a solution acceptable to them. Furthermore, DOs also review the rules in the light of the situation. Where necessary, the complaint cases will be discussed at the relevant CH/CC Management Committee meetings and followed up appropriately.

(b) The rules for hiring CHs/CCs are drawn up jointly by the CH/CC Management Committees and DOs having regard to local circumstances. The members of most CH/CC Management Committees are drawn from a wide spectrum of the local community, including District Councillors, local personalities, Chairmen of Mutual Aid Committees, representatives of local schools, as well as representatives of Government departments such as Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong Police Force, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, etc.. Such rules can, therefore, cater for the needs of the whole district and ensure that the booking procedure is open and transparent.

(c) Organisations wishing to organise activities in the CHs/CCs should submit their applications in accordance with the established rules. If exemption of venue charge is requested, the applicant has to provide an estimate of income and expenditure for the activity together with the relevant supporting documents (such as registration documents) when submitting the application. DO staff will examine the documents to make sure that no hirer will organise profit-making activities while venue charge is exempted. The staff will also carry out random checks on the activities by conducting site visits and document inspections. If the activities do not tally with the information submitted, the case will be dealt with in accordance with the established procedure, including asking the organisation concerned for an explanation and penalising it upon failure to give a reasonable explanation or repeated violations. For example, the organisation will be banned from submitting its applications for a certain period of time or be required to pay back the venue charge.

End/Wednesday, December 21, 2005