

LCQ19: Grading assessment of antiquities and monuments

Following is a question by the Hon Lau Wong-fat and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (May 16):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the current number of buildings completed before 1951 in each District Council ("DC") district, and among such buildings,
 - (i) the respective numbers of those which have been declared/classified as statutory monuments, Grade I, Grade II and Grade III historic buildings; and
 - (ii) the number of those which have yet to be given the grading assessment, and when they will be given such an assessment; and
- (b) how the relevant authorities conduct the consultation and grading assessment exercises for the conservation of antiquities and monuments in the various districts, of the role of DCs in this regard, and how DCs can specifically be involved in the relevant work?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a)(i) At present, there are 81 declared monuments, of which 63 are buildings and 18 are rock carvings, forts and archaeological sites. Apart from declared monuments, the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) has in the past years graded 497 historic buildings (Grade I - III). The grading system, which has no statutory authority, serves as an internal reference for the AAB. Historical buildings are graded primarily on the basis of their heritage values. The number of declared monuments and graded historic buildings in each of the 18 districts is listed at Annex.

(a)(ii) Since March 2005, an expert assessment panel under the AAB has been conducting a detailed heritage assessment of some 1,440 pre-1950 historic buildings in 18 districts, including those 497 graded historic buildings mentioned above. The assessment is underway and the results

will be forwarded to the AAB for further consideration.

(b) In accordance with the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance, the Antiquities Authority (i.e. Secretary for Home Affairs) may, after consultation with the AAB and with approval of the Chief Executive, by notice in the Gazette, declare any place, building, site or structure, which the Antiquities Authority considers to be of public interest by reason of its historical, archaeological or palaeontological significance, to be a monument for protection.

The Home Affairs Bureau is reviewing the built heritage conservation policy and the works involved. To enhance public participation in heritage conservation matters, we organised a series of public forums in January and February to gauge public views from regional organisations and professional bodies, stakeholder groups and the community on what and how to conserve our built heritage. From March to June, the Secretary for Home Affairs would attend the meetings of the 18 District Councils (DCs) to discuss the subject with DC members, with particular attention to historical buildings and sites in each of the relevant districts.

The Government places a lot of emphasis on the role and participation of the DCs in heritage conservation matters. We would continue to enhance communication and partnership with the DCs so that their views on built heritage conservation could be duly taken into account.

Ends/Wednesday, May 16, 2007

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