

Future development of museum services

The Government today (February 1) announced that the mode of governance of the 14 public museums currently managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will remain unchanged but their public missions will be strengthened and their identity and focus sharpened.

"Since the publication of the Recommendation Report by the Committee on Museums (CoM), the Administration has carefully examined the relevant factors and agrees that the services of public museums could be further improved as recommended by the CoM but this should be pursued under the existing mode of governance with greater public participation, in parallel with a new mode of governance for M+ in the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) to be examined by the WKCD Authority, a statutory body," the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, said.

He explained that the Administration had examined the mode of governance of overseas museums and found that it is not appropriate to advocate one single mode of governance that is universally applicable to and suitable for all museums. Different modes of governance could co-exist to suit the specific circumstances of the museums and the local environment.

"In Hong Kong, it is imperative that our public museums fulfill a broad range of important public missions in the coming years. These include the urgent tasks of developing cultural software and audience building for Hong Kong, promoting art and culture to the younger generation within and outside the school curriculum, nurturing and promoting local young artists, expanding the pool of museum expertise, and supporting the development of cultural and creative industries as one of the new economic pillars of Hong Kong.

"Public museums under the LCSD's management would be best placed to carry out the above public missions through close and effective co-ordination and collaboration with government and non-government agencies responsible for art education and promotion.

"With a decision taken on the mode of governance of public museums, we will take proactive steps to strengthen their public missions and their ability to fulfill them, sharpen their respective focus and identity, and strengthen their educational role, with

a view to reinforcing the development of Hong Kong's cultural software," Mr Tsang said.

He noted that to increase professional and community involvement in the operation of public museums, a panel of museum advisors would be set up for each of the three types of museums, namely art, history and science. These panels would comprise individuals of different backgrounds and expertise to advise the LCSD on the strategies for the development, promotion and management of public museums.

"I believe that this would further strengthen the current network of the public museums and opportunities for community involvement in their operation," Mr Tsang said.

In line with the CoM's recommendations, LCSD museums will also further enhance their operation by deepening and broadening the extent of public engagement and community involvement through closer dialogue and collaboration with various stakeholders including guest curators, collectors, District Councils, non-government organisations, the business sector and education institutions.

Successful examples of collaboration with guest curators include the "Hong Kong Art: Open Dialogue" organised by the Museum of Art where over 50 local and overseas independent curators were invited to submit proposals for thematic exhibitions and four of them staged very well-received exhibitions between 2007 and 2009. Seven "emerging" local artists were also invited to take part in "Louis Vuitton: A Passion for Creation", a blockbuster contemporary art exhibition in 2009 which attracted a record-breaking attendance of 120,000.

The LCSD is also striving to achieve a clearer identity and character for the individual public museums. For example, the Museum of Art is working to promote and position itself as a museum of regional significance with its invaluable and unique collection of ink art including the world-class Xubaizhai collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy and the representative works of modern and contemporary Hong Kong and Chinese masters such as Lin Fengmian, Zhao Shaoang and Wu Guanzhong. The Museum of History has an important role to play in the promotion of public history and a "Public History" exhibition series will be organised in collaboration with various community organisations on the history of Hong Kong, its people and the organisations concerned. These projects will involve not only academics and professionals but also the general public so as to leverage on their

creativity and collections.

On art promotion and education, the public museums have been working to forge a close working relationship with different government agencies, schools and academic institutions in developing art promotion and other programmes. The number of educational activities and the total number of participants have increased significantly, from about 1 500 and about 500,000 respectively in 2000/01 to about 3,400 and about 1 million respectively in 2008/09. A highlight of student participation was the seven-day Young Astronaut Training Camp jointly organised by the Hong Kong Space Museum and the China Astronaut Research and Training Centre in Beijing and Xichang in August 2009.

The CoM submitted its Recommendation Report to the Government in May 2007. Mr Tsang expressed sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Chairman and members of the CoM for their comprehensive recommendations on the long-term development of public museum services in Hong Kong.

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