

LCQ16:The opening hours of public museums

Following is a question by the Hon Emily Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (April 28):

Question:

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) manages 14 museums in total, and the opening hours on weekdays of most of them are from 10am to 6pm, which overlap with the working hours of the general public. In this connection, will the Executive Authorities inform this Council:

(a) why the opening hours of the aforesaid museums differ from one another; what criteria LCSD has adopted for determining the opening hours of the museums; of the number of museums which are still open after 6pm from Monday to Friday, together with a list of the name and opening hours of each of such museums, as well as their respective average hourly attendances before and after 6pm from Mondays to Fridays last year;

(b) whether in the past three years, reference had been made to the experience of overseas museums to facilitate a review of the opening hours of local museums; if so, of a list of the names of individual museums studied and the conclusions so obtained, as well as the proposals put forth by the Government in response to such conclusions; if not, the reasons for that; and

(c) whether they will consider aligning and extending the opening hours of the museums under LCSD for the convenience of the public and to increase attendances; if they will, of the proposed opening hours and the timetable for implementing the new opening hours; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(a) LCSD conducts surveys on a regular basis to analyse the public's demand and needs for museum services. The opening hours of the museums are determined or reviewed based on such factors as market demand, people's living mode, availability of manpower and other resources, etc. Most of the museums under LCSD open from

9am or 10am to 5pm or 6pm on weekdays, and major museums open till 7pm or 8pm on Saturdays or Sundays and public holidays. Experience shows that working people usually visit the museums on Saturdays, Sundays or public holidays.

Two museums, namely the Hong Kong Science Museum and Hong Kong Space Museum, remain open after 6pm from Mondays to Fridays. They are open to the public from 1pm to 9pm. Due to the large number of interactive exhibits on display in the two museums, the morning session from 10am to noon time is reserved for students visiting in groups as these group visits need to take a longer time. The average hourly attendances before and after 6pm from Mondays to Fridays of the Hong Kong Science Museum last year were 345 visitors and 64 visitors respectively, while that of the Stanley Ho Space Theatre (Note 1) of the Hong Kong Space Museum between July 2009 and March 2010 were 127 visitors and 95 visitors respectively. Generally speaking, there were more people visiting the museums before 6pm.

(b) In setting or reviewing the opening hours of its museums, LCSD makes reference to the experience of overseas museums, opinions of local visitors and the allocation of resources. As regards overseas experience, the Department has studied the experience of a number of museums outside Hong Kong. The studies showed that the opening hours of the museums concerned, including China Science and Technology Museum, British Museum, National Museum of Australia, Tate Modern and J. Paul Getty Museum etc., were in general from 9am or 10am to 5pm or 6pm on weekdays. On public holidays and school holidays as well as during periods when special exhibitions were held, the opening hours of some museums would be extended. LCSD also regularly reviews the opening hours of its museums to cater for the needs of visitors and to tie in with the programme arrangements. In particular, during some major and special exhibitions, the opening hours of the museums concerned would be extended to meet the needs of the public. For instance, during the exhibitions "Artists and Their Models – Masterpieces from the Centre Pompidou, Paris" (from September 30 to December 3, 2006) and "The Pride of China: Masterpieces of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy of the Jin, Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties from the Palace Museum" (from June 29 to August 11, 2007), the Hong Kong Museum of Art extended its opening hours to 8pm or 10pm to meet the public demand. The Hong Kong Science Museum also extended its opening hours by opening earlier at 9am and / or closing later at 10pm between December 6 and December 15, 2008 when the "Exhibition on China's First Spacewalk Mission" was staged.

(c) As the public's needs may vary from one museum to another, it would not be advisable to align the opening hours of the museums under LCSD. For instance, since a larger number of interactive exhibits are on display in the Hong Kong Science Museum and Hong Kong Space Museum, their morning sessions are reserved for schools to allow more time for the visiting students to operate these exhibits. The museums are then open to public visitors starting from 1pm till 9pm. LCSD gauges public opinions on current museum services, including the opening hours, through regular opinion surveys on museums. According to the opinion survey on its eight major museums (Note 2) conducted by LCSD in 2008, 91% of the visitors interviewed considered the opening hours of the eight major museums appropriate. LCSD will continue to review the opening hours of the museums from time to time, and make due adjustments to meet the needs of the public.

Notes:

(1) The Stanley Ho Space Theatre of the Hong Kong Space Museum was temporarily closed for improvement works between November 2008 and June 2009.

(2) The eight major museums are the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence, Hong Kong Museum of History, Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware, Hong Kong Science Museum, Hong Kong Space Museum and Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum.

Ends/Wednesday, April 28, 2010

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