

LCQ10:Performance venues for independent music and open-air concerts

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Following is a question by the Hon Audrey Eu and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (October 27):

Question:

Quite a number of music critics have all along criticised that Hong Kong lacks venues for live performance of independent music and open-air concerts, with the result that independent music has failed to develop prosperously, and Hong Kong does not have the conditions for hosting mega events for the music and tourism sectors, such as the Spring Scream Music Festival in Kenting of Taiwan, the Modern Sky Music Festival in Beijing and the Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts in the United Kingdom. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) what measures had been taken in the past three years to solve the problem of inadequate performance venues for independent musicians in Hong Kong;

(b) whether it has assessed if the number of performance venues for independent music has increased or decreased since the implementation of the policy on revitalising industrial buildings this April; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(c) whether it has studied if unused government premises can be converted for other uses and leased to independent musicians for use as performance venues; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(d) whether it had planned in the past three years to provide venues for use as performance venues of large open-air concerts; if it had, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply

President,

(a) Performance venues are currently provided by the Government to individuals and organisations through a variety of measures as follows –

(i) Fifteen performance venues under the management of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) are available for hire by individuals or organisations having regard to their performing art forms and needs. The piazzas of some of these venues have a suitable setting for organising open-air concerts, e.g. the Hong Kong Cultural Centre piazza and the Shatin Town Hall plaza. In addition to their core functions, the leisure and recreational venues under LCSD's management can also be used for staging other activities including concerts, subject to certain requirements such as noise level being met. The large-scale outdoor concert "Symphony Under The Stars" presented by the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra at the Happy Valley Racecourse Recreation Ground in recent years is a case in point.

(ii) Two fully-equipped performance venues are available for hire at the Youth Square in Chai Wan. Community halls at different districts are also suitable for holding various small-scale music activities.

(iii) LCSD has launched the "Open Stage" Pilot Scheme from July to December this year to provide more room for arts enthusiasts to showcase their creativity and performing talents. Specific zones at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre piazza, the Shatin Town Hall plaza and the Kwai Tsing Theatre plaza are designated as places for public performances by individuals or organisations. We welcome the staging of a wide spectrum of performing art forms such as acoustic band, instrumental music, percussion, dance and singing. The Scheme is implemented on a trial basis for six months and will be subject to review on its effectiveness.

Apart from the above measures, Government sites which are not required for long-term development in the near future or which are not covered by Outline Zoning Plan are open for applications by organisations for renting for the purposes of organising temporary performances or related activities. If the Government land under application is suitable for such temporary uses, the Lands Department (LandsD) will consider leasing the land in the form of a short term tenancy, provided that the application is supported by relevant policy bureaux and that there is no reasonable objection from relevant Government departments and the local community. LandsD has compiled a list of such vacant sites available for application by District Councils and district bodies for beautification or other suitable temporary uses.

In addition, non-Government venues, including the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Jockey Club Auditorium of the Hong Kong

Polytechnic University, Black Box Theatre of the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre, HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity, and the Avenue of Stars at Tsimshatsui promenade are available for application by individuals or organisations for staging performances. The Hong Kong Arts Centre also presents "Street Music Series" from time to time at its main entrance for musicians and songwriters to play music of different styles and interact with the audience, thus nurturing an outdoor music culture.

(b) The Hong Kong Arts Development Council started, in June 2010, a "Survey on the Current Status of Industrial Buildings for Arts Activities and Future Demand". The survey examines the current situation of the use of industrial buildings by arts practitioners and looks into their needs and concerns. It is expected that the survey and related analysis will be completed by the first half of 2011, and that the findings will provide reference information on the situation of arts activities at industrial buildings.

(c) Government premises are mainly for office use by bureaux/ departments or for the provision of public services. Under the current accommodation policy, surplus Government premises should first be put to suitable Government use by the Government Property Agency (GPA), failing which GPA will consider the suitability of opening such premises for commercial use. GPA will arrange the commercial letting of those surplus Government premises suitable for commercialisation through open tender, and interested parties may submit their bids for the premises concerned. At present, according to GPA records, there are no surplus Government premises that are suitable for use as performance venues or open-air concerts.

(d) To actively bring the arts and culture to the public and encourage public participation in the process so that the arts can better integrate with the community, we are considering various measures to provide a conducive environment for outdoor performances –

(i) A major planning design principle adopted by the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) Authority is to develop the WKCD into an integrated arts and cultural district with intrinsic arts and cultural components in public spaces, inside and outside of individual arts and cultural facilities, in the infrastructure as well as in landscaping. Echoing this fundamental principle, all the three Conceptual Plan Options now being displayed under the Stage 2 public engagement exercise allow the possibility of organising a variety of arts and cultural activities including outdoor performances in public open spaces. Taking into account the views collated, the

WKCD Authority will select one of the Conceptual Plan Options early next year to form the basis for the preparation of a detailed Development Plan.

(ii) Depending on their designated uses, some of the historic buildings can provide space for arts and cultural activities after revitalisation. For example, the revitalisation project of the Central Police Station Compound, of which the detailed programming plan is being developed, is capable of providing multi-purpose space for educational activities and performing arts, including a place for outdoor performances.

(iii) In planning new district areas, the Administration will consider whether there is a need to reserve land for conducting open-air performances (including music concerts) where appropriate. For instance, under the development plan of the Wan Chai Development Phase II, the area west of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre has been designated as an "Arts and Cultural Precinct", with a view to complementing the development of the arts and exhibitions. The preliminary proposal includes open-air performance venues in the Precinct, the details of which are to be worked out at the detailed design stage.

Ends/Wednesday, October 27, 2010

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