

## LCQ9: Operation of Girl Guides Association

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Following is a question by the Hon Leung Kwok-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

After I pointed out in 2010 that the president of the Hong Kong Girl Guides Association (the Association) (who was the wife of the Chief Executive (CE) of the last term), which is a statutory body, had breached the regulations in appointing its Hong Kong's Chief Commissioner who was already overage, I further uncovered that the Association hosted banquets with tens of tables in a hotel or in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) each year for its annual dinner party. On September 16, 2010, the Association also mistakenly pointed out through the media that "the sale of raffle tickets had been conducted for more than 20 years and the percentage of refund to its units had never been in the region of 50%", and refused to distribute refund to its units at a maximum percentage of 50% starting from the sale of the 1 001st ticket. I have learnt that the Association has issued letters to the business sector in recent months, using the invitation of the wife of the new-term CE (new CE's wife) to the charity premiere (premiere) on July 2 this year as a pretext to raise \$600,000 in the title sponsorship and other sponsorships at various levels. Quite a number of parents, members of women's groups, staff members of the Association, unit guiders and members of the business sector have relayed to me that the public felt offended by the Association creating opportunities for collusion between the Government and the business sector. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows if the office of the next president of the Association will be held by the new CE's wife; if so, when she will do so; if not, whether she will not hold the office within the term of the new-term CE (i.e. from 2012 to 2017);

(b) whether the Government of the new term will appoint more civil servants to the administrative structure of the Association to review the Association's arrangements of spending money on holding annual dinner parties in hotels or exhibition venues; if it will, when such appointments will be made and of the number of persons to be appointed; if not, the reason for that;

(c) whether it knows if the president of the Association had ever contacted any person operating gambling establishments in Macao when attending the activities of the Association in the past five years; if she had, the number of such contacts;

(d) whether it knows if the president of the Association had ever attended any annual dinner party of the Association in the past five year; if she had, whether any person from the business sector had been invited to meet her at the dinner parties; if so, the number of such invitees; whether it has assessed if such an arrangement will give rise to possible collusion between the Government and the business sector; if not, of the reasons for that;

(e) whether it knows the sum of money raised by the Association in the premiere held in early July this year;

(f) whether it knows why the Association has used the attendance of the new CE's wife as a pretext to get around and raise money from the business sector;

(g) given that the Association appointed an overage Hong Kong's Chief Commissioner, which was in breach of regulations, whether it will hold the Director of Bureau (DoB) concerned, who is a principal official under the accountability system, politically accountable and require him to step down for failure to monitor the Association; if it will, when the DoB will step down; if not, of the reasons for that; whether it has penalised any civil servant who is responsible for monitoring the Association; if it has, of the penalties; if not, the reasons for that;

(h) given that the Government granted a site in Yau Tsim Mong District to the Association three years ago for construction of its new headquarters but no construction works have commenced yet, whether the Government will resume the site immediately; if it will, of the time to do so; if not, whether it will continue to leave this government site idle; and

(i) whether the Home Affairs Bureau and the Audit Commission have assessed if it is a proper arrangement for government-subsidised charities to spend money holding annual general meetings in high-class hotels or HKCEC each year; if they have, of the details, and whether the Secretary for Home Affairs and the Director of Audit will order immediately the government department(s) concerned to intervene and investigate such charities?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association (the Association) is an independent statutory non-governmental organisation. The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) provides subvention for its youth development activities. My reply to the question raised by Hon Leung Kwok-hung is as follows:

(a) According to Article 12.01 of the Constitution of the Association, "the President of the Association should be the wife of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region". As we understand, the Association has sent an invitation letter to the wife of the fourth term Chief Executive in accordance with the above article. It has not received a reply yet.

(b) The holding of annual dinner parties is an internal matter of the Association. According to its Constitution, the Council is responsible for controlling and managing the affairs of the Association. The composition of the Council is set out in its Constitution. As invited by the Association, the HAB has assigned an officer to be one of the appointed representatives of the Council. However, the Government is not involved in such exact internal operational matters as organising a dinner of the Association.

(c) According to the Association, activities of different scales are held every year and members from different sectors of the community will be invited in the light of the nature of activities. The President and the guests will have opportunities to exchange with each other on these occasions in general. The Association, however, does not record the circumstances of such exchange.

(d) The Association's activity arrangements are its internal matters. As we understand, all those invited to the annual dinner of the Association are supporters of the guiding movement under Girl Guides from all walks of life. The Association does not keep the statistics of how many of these guests are from the business sector. Just like any other community organisations, it is normal for the guiding movement under Girl Guides to receive support from the business sector. In the past five years, the former President of the Association attended the annual dinner but had stayed there only for a short period of time. The Association does not record the general exchanges between the President

and the guests.

(e)&(f) The fund-raising activities of the Association are its internal matters. As we understand, the wife of the Chief Executive did not accept the invitation of the Association to its charity film premiere held in July. About HK\$1 million has been raised so far for funding the guiding movement under Girl Guides and the Lang Lang Music World.

(g) The election and appointment of the Association's Hong Kong Chief Commissioner (HKCC) is an internal matter of the Association. As we understand, the Association passed a resolution at an Extraordinary General Meeting on October 13, 2010 to confirm the election and appointment of its HKCC in 2007, as well as all decision made by her during her term of office. The incumbent HKCC elected on January 8, 2011 is also within the age limit stipulated in the Association's Policy, Organisation and Rules.

(h) The Association is actively exploring the development options of its new headquarters. Depending on the proposal of the Association, the Government may have further decision on the use and development of the site concerned, which is currently leased out on a short-term tenancy for temporary car park purpose.

(i) The Association's activity arrangements are internal matters of the Association. According to the Association, the expenditure of such dinner parties is borne by participants of the event or other sponsors, and no daily operational fund of the Association and no public money are involved. The sum of money raised will be used by the Association on Girl Guides development and for organising activities. The Association is an independent non-governmental organisation and the Government has no intention to interfere with its internal matters.

Ends/Wednesday, July 4, 2012

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