

立法會
Legislative Council

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the Administration)

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LegCo Panel on Home Affairs

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Monday, 5 February 2001 at 9:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members Present : Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Members Absent : Hon CHOY So-yuk (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

Public Officers Attending : Mr Arthur NG Sek-hon, JP
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (3)
(Culture and Sport)

Miss CHOI Suk-kuen
Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Culture)

Mr Michael MAK Kin-lam
Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Libraries and Development)

Mr CHUNG Ling-hoi
Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Performing Arts)

Clerk in Attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)2

Staff in Attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)6

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I. Criteria for inviting officiating guests, guest speakers and other guests to cultural activities or inauguration ceremonies of cultural facilities
[Paper Nos. CB(2)781/00-01(01), (02) and CB(2)808/00-01(01)]

The Chairman welcomed representatives of the Administration to the special meeting.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Culture) (DDLCS(C)) briefed members on the Administration's paper which was tabled at the meeting [Paper No. CB(2)808/00-01(01)].

Period for hosting the fourth Hong Kong Literature Festival (HKLF)

3. The Chairman enquired about the period for hosting the fourth HKLF. He informed members that he had written to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) on 10 January 2001 enquiring about the fourth HKLF [Paper No. CB(2)781/00-01(01)]. However, the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services had not mentioned the period for hosting HKLF in his reply dated 29 January 2001 [Paper No. CB(2)781/00-01(02)].

4. In response, DDLCS(C) explained that LCSD initially planned to host the fourth HKLF sometime between June and July 2001. However, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) had recently proposed to co-organise with LCSD a series of arts and cultural activities, including the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) in April 2001 and the HKLF at a later date. The proposal was made in line with HKADC's three-year development plan drawn up early this year. Moreover, LCSD considered it necessary to enhance and enrich the programmes of the HKIFF and the HKLF. It also held the view that HKADC's participation would facilitate availability of resources and programme arrangements. Currently, LCSD was holding in-depth discussions with HKADC on the arrangements for hosting the HKIFF, and had yet to work out a timetable for hosting the HKLF with HKADC.

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5. Miss Cyd HO was worried that the Administration would infinitely defer the conduct of the fourth HKLF as a result of the incident of Mr GAO Xingjian. She sought an undertaking from the Administration to conduct the fourth HKLF within year 2001, and invite some internationally renowned overseas Chinese writers to participate in the event so as to facilitate a cross-territorial exchange in arts and culture.

6. DDLCS(C) responded that the fourth HKLF would definitely be held. The time and relevant details for hosting the HKLF would be announced once LCSO and HKADC had concluded their discussion. She pointed out that the last three HKLFs had not been held on a yearly basis and LCSO had invited famous overseas scholars to participate in the activities of each HKLF.

Arrangement for inviting guests to cultural activities

7. Miss Cyd HO expressed concern about the criteria and arrangement for sending out complimentary tickets to invite guests to cultural activities. She pointed out that LCSO had recently invited Mr LI Yundi, the Gold Medal Winner of the fourteenth Frédéric Chopin International Piano Competition, to give a public performance in Hong Kong, and had reserved about 30% of the admission tickets as complimentary tickets. As the performance was a great attraction, many people interested in piano recitals could not procure the admission tickets. On the other hand, many guests who were given complimentary tickets did not show up and as a result, there were many vacant seats in the performance venue. She questioned how LCSO had determined the number of complimentary tickets for the performance. She acknowledged that while attendance of guests would be of assistance in promoting arts and culture, it was also important that those who were eager to enjoy the performance were able to do so.

8. DDLCS(C) explained that with the kind assistance of the Community Chest, LCSO had been able to invite Mr LI Yundi to conduct a performance on 7 January 2001. After further discussion, the two parties agreed that LCSO should be responsible for providing the performance venue and ticketing arrangement. It would also reserve 400 tickets at the public offer prices for the Community Chest for fund-raising purposes. As far as she knew, the Community Chest had subsequently re-sold the 400 tickets at higher prices. In line with the usual practice, LCSO had sent out the 200 complimentary tickets to invite guests to Mr LI Yundi's performance. As the performance was very popular, all tickets for public admission were sold out on the first day of sale. In view of this, LCSO had already invited Mr LI Yundi to consider coming to Hong Kong again to give performance and was awaiting his reply.

9. Miss Cyd HO was of the view that when guests had failed to show up, flexibility should be exercised in dealing with seats left vacant at a performance,

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especially those popular ones. She proposed that the Administration should consider giving such vacant seats to members of the public waiting outside the performance venue at a reasonable time after the performance had started. She considered that such an arrangement would not only allow more interested persons to enjoy the performance, but also reflect the host organisation's respect towards the performing artist. The Chairman also remarked that from the perspective of resources utilisation, the Administration should consider adopting a more flexible ticketing arrangement so that more people would have the opportunity to enjoy their favourite arts and cultural performances.

Invitation of officiating guests, guest speakers and other guests to cultural activities or inauguration ceremonies of cultural facilities

10. Members noted that it was LCSD's established practice to invite officiating guests to inauguration ceremonies of large-scale facilities. These officiating guests normally included senior government officials, representatives of government departments involved in the works projects (e.g. Architectural Services Department), representatives of bodies and organisations which had close working relationship with LCSD (e.g. Culture and Heritage Commission), major donors and sponsors. If the project concerned was a community facility, LCSD would also consider inviting the chairperson of the relevant District Council. Mr WONG Sing-chi asked about the reasons for inviting Mr CHOW Yun-fat as an officiating guest for the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Film Archive.

11. DDLCS(C) responded that apart from Mr CHOW Yun-fat, LCSD had invited other guests such as the Secretary for Home Affairs, the Director of Architectural Services and the Chairman of the Eastern District Council to the opening ceremony of the Film Archive. She explained that in addition to Mr CHOW Yun-fat's donation of a print of "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" to the Film Archive in his capacity as the production company's representative, LCSD had also taken into consideration of the fact that Mr CHOW was representative in the film industry. She pointed out that by commending donors, LCSD hoped to attract more film production companies and independent filmmakers to donate prints to the Film Archive. She added that the Film Archive currently had a collection of some 3 800 film prints, the vast majority of which were donated by the companies and individuals concerned.

12. Mr WONG Sing-chi asked whether the Administration would consider inviting Mr GAO Xingjian to attend the HKLF or other cultural activities as an officiating guest given his high standing and remarkable achievement in literature. The Chairman shared the view. He pointed out that the Administration had given Mr GAO a cold shoulder during his recent visit to Hong Kong as a guest speaker. In marked contrast with the cordial reception given to Mr LI Yundi earlier, the Administration had given an impression of being discriminatory.

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The Chairman also held the view that as the Nobel laureate in literature, Mr GAO enjoyed an international standing higher than that of Mr LI. He anticipated that to promote development of arts and culture, LCSD should actively consider inviting Mr GAO to Hong Kong to attend large-scale cultural activities and inauguration ceremonies of cultural facilities, such as the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Central Library and the activities of the fourth HKLF.

13. In response, DDLCS(C) said that LCSD would continue to draw up attendance lists of guests for major cultural activities or inauguration ceremonies of facilities in accordance with the purpose, theme and programmes of each arts and cultural event in consultation with advisers of relevant fields. The guest list would generally include principal officials in relevant government departments as well as people with remarkable achievement and of high repute in relevant fields. She pointed out that LCSD was actively planning matters relating to the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Central Library and a guest list had yet to be drawn up. As for the HKLF, LCSD was still holding discussion with HKADC on the theme, programmes and the timetable of the Festival as well as other details, the guest list had yet to be decided.

14. Mr Albert CHAN said that ever since the Central Government had made known its stance, there had been a sharp change in the Administration's attitude towards the invitation of Mr GAO Xingjian as an officiating guest for large-scale cultural activities or inauguration ceremonies of cultural facilities. At the outset, LCSD had publicised its plan to invite Mr GAO to attend the HKLF as a guest speaker. However, the latest development was that the Administration had changed its attitude and cold-shouldered Mr GAO during his visit to Hong Kong. In view of the Administration's stance in dealing with the issue of Falun Gong, he was of the view that there were various indications that the Administration had increasingly toed the Central Government's line in running the internal affairs of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Moreover, it seemed that political considerations had prevailed over conventions and practices when the Administration dealt with the affairs of HKSAR. The Chairman had also expressed concern that cultural activities were subject to political interference. He also doubted whether the Culture and Heritage Commission would discharge the function of promoting the development of culture and the arts effectively, given that it was not a community-led body and its members were appointed by the Government.

15. DDLCS(C) explained that while Mr LI Yundi had come to Hong Kong to give a performance at LCSD's invitation, Mr GAO Xingjian had come as a guest speaker at the invitation of two universities and a media agency. As such, the two events were different in nature and should not be considered as parallel cases. As the host organisation, LCSD should extend courtesies to guests visiting Hong Kong at its invitation by making etiquette arrangements. She added that although Mr GAO's visit in Hong Kong was not organised by the Administration,

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the Secretary for Home Affairs and herself had attended Mr GAO's seminars held in the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the City University of Hong Kong respectively.

16. Mr Albert CHAN further asked whether the Administration had ever sent out an invitation to Mr GAO Xingjian as it had earlier indicated the wish to invite Mr GAO to come to Hong Kong as a guest for cultural activities; and if not, whether the Administration had made a decision on the matter.

17. DDLCS(C) clarified that when the Administration expressed the wish to invite Mr GAO, HKADC had not proposed co-organising with LCSD the HKLF as well as other arts and cultural activities. Now that LCSD had accepted HKADC's proposal for co-operation, it should consult and collaborate with HKADC on the arrangements for the fourth HKLF. Therefore, LCSD had yet to discuss matters relating to the guest list.

18. The Chairman said that members were concerned that decision in respect of the period for hosting the HKLF and the guest list was delayed because of political considerations. Mr Albert CHAN said that it was difficult to believe that the Administration had changed its original plan on the ground that LCSD would co-organise the HKLF with HKADC. He could not see any reasons for HKADC to decline LCSD's proposal to invite a Chinese scholar with such an international standing in the field of literature as an officiating guest for the Festival. Mr CHAN also held the view that LCSD should consider inviting Mr GAO to attend other cultural activities as an officiating guest.

19. DDLCS(C) reiterated that LCSD and HKADC aimed to establish a long-term partnership. At present, the two parties were busy in planning the activities of the HKIFF and had yet to discuss matters concerning the HKLF such as the guest list.

20. Mr James TO remarked that he did not have any strong view that the Administration must invite certain individuals to attend cultural activities as officiating guests. However, he was of the view that the principle of "one country, two systems" would be undermined if the HKSAR Government would change its position and intention on such affairs to avoid affecting its relationship with the Central Government.

21. DDLCS(C) stressed that the Administration had not come under any political pressure when inviting guests to arts and cultural activities. She pointed out that the major responsibility of LCSD in the area of arts and culture was to provide a diversified range of arts and cultural activities and make available suitable venues for such activities. LCSD had put in place an administrative framework to provide a suitable environment for the promotion of a balanced development of performing arts, literary arts and visual arts in Hong

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Kong. Moreover, LCSD would also invite local and overseas artists and arts groups to take part in arts and cultural activities with a view to enhancing the status of Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan city in the international arts and cultural arena.

22. Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (3) (DS(HA)3) added that it was the responsibility of the Government to provide a suitable environment for promoting pluralistic development of arts and culture, so as to enable members of the public to access and enjoy different kinds of cultural and performing arts. One example was that Mr GAO Xingjian's literary works were available in public libraries for public access. He pointed out that in addition to government departments, non-governmental organisations were also eager to organise and take part in programmes dedicated to the development of arts and culture. As such, there was no need for a standardised model and criteria for drawing up guest lists in respect of cultural activities. The present arrangement for the department, organisation or non-governmental organisation to draw up a guest list having regard to the circumstances and nature of the event was considered appropriate as long as the decision was made through a fair and transparent mechanism.

23. Mr James TO asked whether the Administration would consider the political consequences and implications of inviting certain guests to large-scale cultural activities in drawing up guest lists for such activities.

24. In response, DS(HA)3 urged members not to make excessive speculations on whether Mr GAO Xingjian would be invited and mix up the matter with politics. He stressed that the responsibility of the Administration was to enable members of the public to take part in and enjoy different cultural activities. It would not set out standardised criteria as it might obstruct the free development and expression of arts and culture. The visit of Mr GAO Xingjian to Hong Kong jointly arranged by two universities and a media agency had demonstrated that the development of arts and culture in Hong Kong could take up a number of ways.

25. The Chairman pointed out that in inviting Prof LEUNG Ping-kwan to the third HKLF as a guest speaker, the then Urban Services Department had described Mr LEUNG as a renowned scholar, poet and writer who should be invited to take part in the activities of the event. He hoped that the Administration would adopt the same criteria for deciding the officiating guests to be invited for the next HKLF.

26. DDLCS(C) advised members that in organising the past three HKLFs, the relevant departments would establish a theme for each Festival before proceeding to its detailed arrangements. In fact, the past three HKLFs were presented under the themes of "Hong Kong Literature in the past 50 years", "Faces of Hong Kong

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Literature” and “Hong Kong Literature and You - Towards the 21st Century” respectively. LCSD would have to consider the choices of suitable guests having regard to the theme of the event and make decisions in consultation with its advisers. The officiating guests to be invited would of course be persons of high standing and with remarkable achievement in the relevant field of arts and culture.

27. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that if the Administration did not invite Mr GAO Xing-jian to attend any cultural activities as guests, members could hardly refrain from speculating the reasons for such a decision. He sought clarifications from the Administration as to whether Mr GAO would be invited to attend future large-scale cultural activities.

28. DS(HA)3 reiterated that the arrangement for inviting officiating guests to inauguration ceremonies of facilities was clearly set out in paragraph 2 of the Administration’s paper. He further explained the Administration's stance that it hoped the public would not be influenced by the negative reports of some public media, which assumed that the Administration had decided not to invite Mr GAO Xingjian to cultural activities and inauguration ceremonies of cultural facilities on political considerations.

29. Mr James TO said that the decision as to whether Mr GAO Xingjian should be invited to cultural activities and inauguration ceremonies of cultural facilities in Hong Kong should be made with care, as the decision would affect Taiwan’s perception of “one country, two systems”.

30. In concluding discussion, the Chairman said that the meeting was convened to convey members’ respect for Mr GAO Xingjian and to enhance members' understanding of the Administration’s criteria for inviting guests of cultural activities and officiating guests of inauguration ceremonies of cultural facilities. He did not mean to interfere with LCSD’s decisions on the arrangements for such events. As Mr GAO Xingjian had said, literature and politics should be separated. The Home Affairs Bureau, as the policy bureau for arts and cultural policies, should endeavour to promote free development of arts and culture, avoid undermining the confidence of the international community on “one country, two systems” and creating the impression of “one country” surpassing “two systems”. He urged the Administration to seriously consider members' views and concerns expressed at the meeting.

II. Any other business

31. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:45 am.