

**Government's Response to the paper
Submitted by People's Panel on West Kowloon to the
Legislative Council on 8th April 2005**

Our basic policy principle on arts and culture is to endeavour to create an environment which is conducive to the freedom of artistic expression and creation and encourages wide public participation in cultural activities. The Government sees its role as a catalyst in promoting the development of culture and the arts through the provision of financial support, education and publicity.

Our policy blueprint is mainly based on the Policy Recommendation Report of Culture and Heritage Commission (the Report). Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC) was appointed by the Chief Executive in 2000 to advise the Government on the long-term policies and funding priorities in the development of culture in Hong Kong. Since its inaugural meeting in May 2000, CHC has altogether held 23 plenary meetings, some 80 working group meetings, four retreats and four study visits. It also conducted two rounds of large-scale public consultations in early 2001 and late 2002.

The Report is comprehensive and covers a wide range of issues, looking into the cultural position of Hong Kong, education in culture and the arts, cultural facilities, review on resource deployment and institutional framework, and cultural vision of the future. It also puts forward over 100 recommendations on overall policies and strategies of implementation. The Government has accepted most of the recommendations, and is implementing and following up on them in phases (please refer to **Annex C** for details).

The vision and expectation behind the Report are to enhance the awareness of the community towards culture, and turn Hong Kong into an international cultural metropolis. As pointed out by the CHC, Hong Kong became an extraordinary channel of communication between China and the world due to its unique historical background and geographical position. Looking back on the past 150 years, the situation between China and the international society has kept on changing but the role of Hong Kong as a link between the two remains unchanged. Hong Kong must maintain and develop this role. The CHC also considered that, as a Special Administrative Region of China, Hong Kong should position itself as a metropolis in China which is most capable of bridging China and the world. As regards Hong Kong's cultural position, CHC recommended that Hong

Kong people's cultural identity should start from local culture, be grounded in Chinese cultural traditions and possess a global vision.

We totally accepted the views of the CHC. In order to realize our principles and vision, we opine that Hong Kong must be equipped with world-class facilities so as to promote cultural exchanges and enhance Hong Kong's status as a cultural metropolis of Asia. These facilities must be able to cope with the cultural needs of the local community, as well as the demands of the Mainland and overseas.

In addition, we particularly wish to point out that :

- (1) in late 2004, we set up three new committees to advise the Secretary for Home Affairs on the ways to take forward the recommendations by the Culture and Heritage Commission on performing arts, libraries and museums. The three committees have come into operation and launched thorough discussion on how to improve the current use of venues, resource deployment and enhancement of the roles and functions of the existing facilities, etc;
- (2) on top of the vision, we should also consider some genuine difficulties, such as insufficient venues and lack of resources, currently faced by the arts and cultural sector. On various consultation occasions, many arts and cultural groups and artists repeatedly cautioned the Government not to neglect of such appeals and called for grasping the unprecedented opportunity of the West Kowloon Cultural District for promoting arts and culture;
- (3) not all issues relating to arts and culture should be resolved through the development of West Kowloon Cultural District. We have clearly stated that the Government will not reduce resource in arts and culture. In other words, forward-looking and theoretical issues can be addressed through other platforms and means;
- (4) in assessing the Proposals received, we have attached great importance to the proponents' presentation on the vision, subject and content of their proposals for West Kowloon Cultural District Development. We have also assessed the Proposals to see if they can achieve the following purposes :

- (i) facilitate the overall development of arts and culture in Hong Kong, preserve and promote local cultural tradition;
- (ii) create an environment attracting the renowned performers and the general public;
- (iii) foster the development of culture and creative industries in Hong Kong;
- (iv) encourage collaboration with local institutions and tourism agencies, especially in promoting Hong Kong as a major arts and cultural centre; and
- (v) establish a mode of governance with community participation.

In general, we have in place a set of cultural policies based on the Report, and the West Kowloon Cultural District Development is now following the direction recommended by the CHC. The major considerations of the CHC have also been incorporated in the conceptual design competition and Invitation for Proposals document.

Home Affairs Bureau
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