

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)3174/05-06
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/HA

Panel on Home Affairs

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 17 July 2006 from 9:30 am to 12:45 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP (Chairman)
Hon TAM Heung-man (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Margaret NG
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon Daniel LAM Wai-keung, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS
- Member attending** : Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
- Members absent** : Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH, JP
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item II
Mr Patrick C P HO
Secretary for Home Affairs

Ms Esther LEUNG
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (3)

Mr CHUNG Ling-hoi
Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Culture)

Miss Agnes TANG
Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Performing Arts)

Ms Winnie SO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs
(Culture)¹

Mr Peter KWOK
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs
(Culture)²

Mr FONG Ngai
Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Culture)¹

Item III

Mr Wilson FUNG
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)

Mr Anthony LI
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (3)

Mr FAN Yung-kai
Senior Superintendent (Licensing), Food and
Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr Patrick TSUI
Chief Building Surveyor/Rail and Licensing (1),
Buildings Department

Mr SHUM Wing-cheong
Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Licensing and
Certification Command), Fire Services Department

Attendance by invitation : Item II

Zuni Icosahedron

Ms Doris KAN
General Manager

Mr Mathias WOO
Programme and Creative Director

Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

Professor Kevin THOMPSON
Director

Dr Herbert HUEY
Associate Director (Administration) and Registrar

Spring-Time Stage Productions Ltd

Mr KO Chi-sum
Chief Executive Officer and Producer

The Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Ltd

Mr Edward HO
General Committee Chairman

Mr Timothy CALNIN
Chief Executive

Hong Kong Ballet

Ms Helen NG
Chief Executive Officer

Hong Kong Society for Education in Art

Miss LEUNG Chi-fan
Secretary

Hong Kong Arts Development Council

Mr Jonathan YU
Chief Executive

Ms Josephine WAI
Director, Arts Support

Hong Kong Arts Festival Society Ltd

Ms Tisa HO
Executive Director

City Contemporary Dance Company

Mr Willy TSAO
Artistic Director and Chief Executive Director

Mr Kennic LUI
Chairman, Board of Directors

Government Cultural Services Grades' Alliance

Mr CHAN Ki-hung
Member

Mr IP Ga-ri
Member

Museum of Site

Mr Andrew LAM Hon-kin
Representative

Hong Kong Sinfonietta Ltd

Ms Margaret YANG
Chief Executive Officer

Ms LEE Ho-yee
General Manager

- Clerk in attendance** : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Council Secretary (2)2
- Staff in attendance** : Ms Joanne MAK
Senior Council Secretary (2)2
- Miss Sherman WOO
Legislative Assistant (2)2
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Action

I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

Members noted that no information papers had been issued since the last meeting.

II. Further discussion on Hong Kong's Cultural Policy

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1609/05-06(01) and CB(2)2718/05-06(01)]

Meeting with deputations

Zuni Icosahedron

2. Mr Mathias WOO said that there was a need to strengthen the provision of arts education in schools in order to cultivate a wider audience base for the arts. He expressed concern that the present mode of public funding allocation put greater emphasis on the performing arts whereas the development of the visual and literary arts was not attached equal importance. He pointed out that the institutional arrangements before the Reunification, i.e. with the Broadcasting, Culture and Sport Branch overseeing the policy area of the development of culture and the arts, were better than the current arrangements of putting this policy area under the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) which already had a wide range of policy responsibilities. He further said that after the Reunification, there was not a forum provided for exchange of views between the arts community and the Administration at the policy level. He suggested that the Legislative Council (LegCo) should set up a committee to follow up the development of the cultural policy.

3. Mr Mathias WOO also expressed concern about the lack of manpower planning of professional performing arts talents. He pointed out that the number of new entrants to the industry had been declining and the manpower shortage had become acute with the opening of the Disneyland which had recruited many performing arts professionals. He considered that the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (APA) should be put under the policy purview of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) instead of HAB, in order to enhance the overall manpower planning for the performing arts. He also considered that there was room for strengthening of the linkage and communication between APA and local arts groups and organisations.

Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

4. Professor Kevin THOMPSON said that it was important for Hong Kong to develop its distinctive cultural scene. He considered that the cultural policy in Hong Kong should uphold the principle of complete openness and aim at providing the best possible environment which was conducive to the flourishing of the arts. He agreed that education was the core in enhancing the

Action

development of culture and the arts. He also considered that the Administration needed to promote the unique cultural position of Hong Kong which should bear the characteristics of embracing “diversity with identity”, openness and pluralism, and possessing a global vision while founded in the deeply-rooted Chinese cultural tradition. He added that the challenge for Hong Kong was how the society could take on implicit cultural ideas with inventiveness, creativity and passion.

Spring-Time Stage Productions Ltd

5. Mr KO Chi-sum said that as long as the Administration did not interfere in matters of artistic creation and expression and continued to provide active support for the development of culture and the arts, such a policy would be conducive to the freedom of artistic creation and expression as well as to the diversified and balanced development of culture and the arts. He disagreed with the view that the Administration had not devised a cultural policy. He considered that the recommendations put forward by the Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC), which had been largely adopted by the Administration, were the broad direction for policy on cultural development. He further said that compared with the Mainland and Singapore, Hong Kong enjoyed much greater freedom of artistic creation and expression. He considered that there was no need to require the Administration to draw up a detailed cultural policy first before it could further pursue infrastructural development to enhance the development of culture and the arts. He said that what was most needed by the arts community at present was the provision of more performing arts venues and facilities, and the Administration should therefore expedite the implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) project.

The Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Ltd

6. Mr Edward HO said that he agreed to a large extent with Mr KO Chi-sum’s view. He took the view that culture should originate from the community and the Administration could act as a nurturer. The role played by the Administration was to encourage the diversified development of culture and the arts and to cultivate the development of local arts groups including the major as well as the medium and small arts groups. He said that if Hong Kong was to develop into a cosmopolitan city, it should allocate sufficient resources to support the development of local arts groups and professional performing companies in pursuit of excellence. He pointed out that due to the reduction in the allocation of resources to The Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Ltd (HKPS) since 2000, HKPS was unable to deliver large-scale performance due to insufficient number of musicians. He pointed out that the size of audience of HKPS had been on the increase, showing that there was a rising interest of the community in their performances. He considered that this justified the need for the Administration to increase allocation of resources to HKPS.

Action

7. Mr Edward HO further pointed out that the annual budget of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) for supporting cultural and arts development was very large as seen from the fact that it could sponsor the performance presented by the Berlin Philharmonic in Hong Kong. He considered that the Administration should strike for a balance in supporting the development of local arts groups and professional performing companies and in its funding allocation to LCSD.

Hong Kong Ballet

8. Ms Helen NG suggested that the Administration should publicise the achievements of the local flagship arts groups which had gained much international prestige for Hong Kong. She considered that it was regretful that Hong Kong people in general were not aware of such achievements and they only had the impression that the flagship arts groups had taken up a substantial share of public resource allocation. She considered that the Administration should step up publicity of the achievements of the local flagship arts groups in order to help them gain the recognition of the community, which would be conducive to the development of the arts. She also agreed to Mr Mathias WOO's suggestion that LegCo should provide a forum for discussions with a view to exploring measures which could promote arts development.

Hong Kong Society for Education In Art

9. Miss LEUNG Chi-fan considered that the Administration's cultural policy should include strengthening the provision of arts education in schools in collaboration with EMB. She was concerned that the Administration's failure to attach importance to arts education in the curriculum for the new academic structure for senior secondary education might undermine students' interest in majoring in Fine Arts at tertiary level. She considered that arts education in schools should emphasise promoting the appreciation of various arts forms and cultivating students' interest for arts performances and cultural activities.

10. Miss LEUNG Chi-fan further said that Hong Kong's cultural policy should also put more emphasis on organising international or regional exchange programmes on the subject of Art and through which the professional status of Art teachers could be enhanced.

Hong Kong Arts Development Council

11. Mr Jonathan YU said that the work priorities and strategy of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) had been set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)1609/05-06(01)] on this subject. He considered that Hong Kong was in need of the provision of more venues for display of the work of local artists and arts groups or for staging their performances, and for them to conduct rehearsals and making contacts with the

Action

audience, etc. He considered that this was very important in promoting the general public's interest in the arts and to the development of local arts groups and artists.

12. Mr Jonathan YU further said that the funding policy should strike a balance between the proportion of funding support for the flagship arts organisations and the small or budding arts groups and artists, and a balance between the needs of different sectors of the arts community, such as the performing arts, the visual arts, the literary arts and architecture, etc. The Administration should also promote interest in the private sector for sponsorship of the arts. He shared the view that there should be better collaboration between HAB and EMB in the nurturing of artistic talents in Hong Kong. The Administration should do better projections in manpower planning for the arts and should strengthen the provision of arts education in schools. He added that with the development of WKCD which would bring about an increased supply of cultural venues, the Administration should attach greater importance to the nurturing of artistic talents and arts administration personnel.

Hong Kong Arts Festival Society Ltd

13. Ms Tisa HO said that there was a serious shortage of performing arts venues in Hong Kong and the competition for their use was very keen. She urged the Administration to expedite the implementation of the WKCD project. She also agreed to the view that arts education in schools was very important to nurturing the development of the arts especially on the aspect of audience building. She suggested that students should be given the opportunities to appreciate quality arts performances in order to arouse their interest in arts performances. She considered that as there were many artistic talents with good potential in Hong Kong, the development of the arts only hinged on the allocation of sufficient resources and provision of adequate performing arts venues.

City Contemporary Dance Company

14. Mr Willy TSAO said that the fundamental principles that had to be emphasised were that the Administration should not interfere in matters of artistic creation and expression, and it should adopt an open attitude and encourage diversified and balanced development of the arts. He considered that the Administration had been able to observe these principles in implementing cultural policy. He, however, shared concern about the need for the Administration to strike an appropriate balance in meeting the needs of different sectors of the arts community and the needs of different local arts groups/organisations for public resources. He agreed that the Administration should strengthen the provision of arts education in schools and performing arts venues, in order to enhance the development of the arts.

Action

15. Mr Willy TSAO further said that Hong Kong should strive to pursue excellent level of its arts development so that Hong Kong was also renowned for its superb arts performances and cultural activities. With her unique cultural position, Hong Kong should strive to be the most open city of China and take the lead in the pursuit of the most dynamic and flourishing development of the arts. He further suggested that consideration should be given to requiring the television (TV) news reports to cover cultural and arts news as well in order to promote the development of the arts.

Government Cultural Services Grades' Alliance
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2718/05-06(02)]

16. Mr CHAN Ki-hung presented the views of Government Cultural Services Grades' Alliance (the Alliance) as set out in its submission. He said that HAB had a clear cultural policy, and the Alliance agreed to a large extent to that policy. He expressed concurrence with Mr KO Chi-sum that discussion on the cultural policy should be conducted on a long-term basis and it should not hinder the development of culture and the arts. He considered that the Administration should not influence the specific operation of artistic creation or contents of creativity, and the Administration's role was to provide an environment that keenly supported the development of culture and the arts.

17. Mr CHAN Ki-hung further said that the Administration had maintained a fair allocation of resources in meeting the needs of different arts groups/organisations. He commented that when discussing about the principle of "community-driven" in cultural development as advocated by CHC, the meaning of "community" should not be confined to the arts community or the private sector but the whole community. He considered that in order to comply with this principle, consideration should be given to setting up an elected cultural council responsible for the formulation of the cultural policy. He further said that in the formulation of the cultural policy, reference should be made to overseas experience. Moreover, the Administration should launch a research study by conducting surveys on the interest of local audience. He said that information and data thus generated would be useful to decision making in respect of matters concerning the provision of arts facilities and cultural programme presentation. He further said that the cultural policy should set out a clear cultural vision for Hong Kong and allocate resources for cultural development on the basis of community consensus. He added that the Administration should devise a consultation framework for the proposed elected cultural council to collect public views, such as by specifying a number of elected members in the council's composition.

Museum of Site
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2764/05-06(01) and CB(2)2781/05-06(01)]

18. Mr Andrew LAM presented the views of Museum of Site as set out in its submissions. He expressed concern that the museum development or

Action

provision of other cultural facilities was not planned on the basis of any policy research study conducted by the Administration. He considered that the development of cultural and creative industries also lacked a policy direction or any statistical data generated from any research study conducted by the Administration. He added that Hong Kong had lagged behind as compared with Singapore which had conducted a strategic study on developing Singapore into a global arts city in 2000. He urged the Administration to conduct policy research study and formulate policies for the development of culture and the arts.

Hong Kong Sinfonietta Ltd

19. Ms Margaret YANG pointed out that there was a serious shortage of arts administrators in the classical music sector, and local professional arts organisations in this sector very often had to recruit their administrators from overseas. She expressed worry that there might not be successors in the field of arts administrators. She considered that young people were not interested in pursuing a career in classical music or in the arts because the social status of culture and the arts was low in Hong Kong. She pointed out that while the Administration had devoted considerable resources to LCSD for supporting cultural and arts development as seen from the fact that even the famous Berlin Philharmonic had been invited to give performance in Hong Kong, the Administration should also attach importance to enhancing the development of local arts groups/organisations which, in her view, had not been given adequate attention and recognition by the community. She suggested that the Administration should strengthen community education for the arts and take measures to boost the community's recognition of the value of culture.

20. Ms Margaret YANG queried why the development of culture and the arts should be put under the policy purview of HAB, which already had a wide range of policy responsibilities such as sports development and others. She suggested that there should be a dedicated bureau for the development of culture and the arts. She also suggested that HAB should strengthen collaboration with EMB and the media in promoting the appreciation and raising the social status of culture and the arts. She pointed out that the Music Office established by the Government in 1977 had a high status as it directly reported to the then Hong Kong Governor, and it had succeeded in grooming a lot of talents in classical music by running comprehensive musical instrumental training schemes. She regretted that with the abolition of the Music Office, the Administration had given far less attention to the work of nurturing musical talents in Hong Kong.

Administration's initial response

21. In response to the comments made by the deputations, the Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA) made the following points –

Action

- (a) Hong Kong's cultural policy was descriptive which would interact with the society and evolve continuously. He personally considered that what characterised the cultural scene of Hong Kong were diversity and passion;
- (b) the Administration's cultural vision for Hong Kong included establishing Hong Kong as a metropolis in China which was most capable of bridging China and the world, and developing Hong Kong into a cultural district comprising local, traditional as well as international elements;
- (c) there was a need to strengthen communication with local arts groups/organisations and the collaboration between HAB and EMB in enhancing arts development and the provision of arts education in schools;
- (d) HAB was studying how to strengthen arts education in schools in collaboration with EMB and more emphasis would be put on the cultivation of students' creativity;
- (e) the Administration would have to devise strategies on funding allocation and venue support in consultation with the stakeholders and it could by no means devise such strategies on its own;
- (f) in its funding allocation policy, the Administration had to strike a balance between the needs of major arts organisations and those of medium and small ones, and among the different sectors of the arts community;
- (g) the Administration would consider stepping up publicity of the achievements of the flagship arts organisations with a view to raising their social recognition. While pledging to support these organisations' goal to pursue excellence, the Administration would seek to enhance the development of small or budding arts groups and artists as well;
- (h) it was the Administration's policy to provide a supporting environment for the development of performing arts. As proposed in the Committee on Performing Arts Recommendation Report (I), the Administration was considering introducing a Venue Partnership Scheme whereby a partnership arrangement would be established between the venue management and the arts groups so as to encourage community involvement in the development of the arts. The Scheme sought to rationalise the use of performing arts venues in order that existing venue resources could be put to better use;

Action

- (i) while the expression “community-driven” should refer to the whole community, the community itself involved different sectors, e.g. the arts community, the audience, and the arts administrators, etc. The Administration was already moving towards the direction of attaining a higher degree of partnership with the community;
- (j) the Administration would continue to conduct researches into how culture and the arts could be best developed. As regards creative industries, the “Baseline Study on Hong Kong’s Creative Industries” published by the Central Policy Unit in 2003 had covered various kinds of creative industries in Hong Kong. In addition, HAB had engaged the Center for Cultural Policy Research of the University of Hong Kong in a study on the Hong Kong Creativity Index with a view to devising a framework for measuring the development of creative industries in Hong Kong. The Central Policy Unit recently had also released a report on the Study on the Relationship between Hong Kong's Cultural & Creative Industries and the Pearl River Delta;
- (k) amongst the three cultural committees set up by the Administration in November 2004 to take forward the recommendations of CHC, the Committee on Museums was tasked to conduct a review of the policy on museums and museum services; and
- (l) it required the sustained efforts of the Administration and the community to boost the social status of culture and the arts, and this had formed one of SHA’s long-term work targets.

Issues raised by members

Cultivating cultural literacy in schools and at the community level

22. Ms Emily LAU expressed support for the suggestion that LegCo should follow up more closely the development of the cultural policy, either by setting up a dedicated committee on culture and the arts or convening further meetings through this Panel for discussion of the subject. She further suggested that representatives of EMB should also be invited to attend such meetings in the future.

23. Ms LAU said that she agreed to the views of Mr Jonathan YU and Miss LEUNG Chi-fan that a proper balance should be struck in allocating resources to meet the needs of different sectors of the arts community, and that the provision of arts education in schools should be strengthened as cultivation of interest in the arts should start in childhood. She agreed with Ms Tisa HO that

Action

students should be given the opportunities to appreciate quality arts performances. Therefore, allocation of resources should be increased to support more cultural and arts programmes (e.g. museum display and arts performances) which specially targeted at children and youngsters.

24. Mr Edward HO said that although constrained by limited resources, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Ltd had organised many musical educational programmes for students. He agreed that it was very important to strengthen arts education in schools in order to promote students' interest in the appreciation of the arts and to promote the development of culture and the arts. Mr Mathias WOO pointed out that the flourishing development of the creative industry in South Korea owed to a large extent to the high importance attached by its government to the provision of arts education in schools. He also considered that the Administration should strengthen the provision of arts education in schools as well as the professional training of arts teachers, as there was an inadequate supply of arts teachers. Miss LEUNG Chi-fan pointed out that fewer than 10 students had enrolled for courses of the Hong Kong Institute of Education on training of primary arts teachers in the previous year. She further suggested that arts teachers, like their counterparts in US, should be issued passes for free admission to any museum in order to enrich their knowledge in culture and the arts. Mr Mathias WOO added that apart from APA, the Administration should establish a visual arts academy in Hong Kong.

25. Mr Willy TSAO said that many arts organisations had been organising educational arts programmes for schools, and the Administration should provide publicity for these programmes. Ms Tisa HO said that Hong Kong Arts Festival Society Ltd had relied on sponsorship in organising special arts promotional programmes for youngsters. She said that should more resources have been provided by the Government, more youngsters would have been able to participate in these programmes which had been very well received. Mr IP Ga-ri considered that children and youngsters should be given the opportunities to participate in cultural and arts performances in order to cultivate their artistic talents. He said that HKADC, however, had only subsidised some 20 arts groups in organising such performances for one year and the number of arts groups receiving the subsidies should be increased.

26. Mr KO Chi-sum agreed with Mr Willy TSAO that TV news reports should cover more news about culture and the arts, given the expensive marketing cost in Hong Kong for publicising any cultural and arts programme and activity. He suggested that the Government should buy a TV channel solely for broadcasting cultural and arts programmes and news. He and Ms Helen NG were both of the view that performances presented by local artists and arts organisations had received far more attention and coverage from overseas and Mainland media than from the local media, which seldom featured such performances. Mr KO added that the development of the cultural policy involved policy issues which straddled the responsibilities of HAB, EMB as well as the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau. Mr Mathias

Action

WOO suggested that the Broadcasting Authority (BA) should conduct a review and require TV stations to change their broadcasting time of cultural programmes from 8:00 am on Sundays to other time slots with higher viewing rate. Mr IP Ga-ri pointed out that cultural and arts TV channels were common in many overseas cities, and he hoped that the current review of public service broadcasting would consider the issue.

27. The Deputy Chairman said that she had recently watched a high standard musical drama presented by the students of a secondary school. She considered that students should be encouraged to participate in more such activities. She asked whether sufficient opportunities had been provided to students in this regard. Professor Kevin THOMPSON said that APA was launching an experimental project of outreach activities with Hong Kong Jockey Club in a newly converted theatre with a group of about 60 school students participating. The Academy was also working very closely with EMB on the new senior secondary school curriculum to enhance the participation of students in arts performance programme.

28. Miss LEUNG Chi-fan said that if the admission requirements of universities were changed to give weight to candidates' achievement in arts subjects, parents would attach importance to their children's participation in arts activities and their learning in arts fields. She considered that arts subject should be made one of the core subjects in the primary and secondary school curricula. Mr Timothy FOK agreed that in order to boost the community's recognition of the value of culture and the arts, arts education and publicity of culture and the arts through the media had to be stepped up. He said that he would follow up these issues with EMB and BA. Mr Mathias WOO suggested that the Panel should follow up the policy on arts education. The Chairman informed the meeting that the subject of "Arts and cultural studies in school education" was on the list of outstanding items for discussion of the Panel on Education.

29. Miss CHOY So-yuk asked whether the Administration would consider the suggestion of making better use of the media to cover more news about culture and the arts and, if so, whether any overseas experience could be made reference to and whether the Administration could provide a timetable.

30. SHA said that the Administration was actively exploring the possibility of providing a TV channel on culture and arts and reference had been made to overseas experience. He further said that HAB was already in close liaison with EMB on the new academic structure for senior secondary school education with a view to putting greater emphasis on cultural and arts studies. He informed the meeting that two private independent schools which put greater emphasis on musical studies and on creative subjects would be provided in Wong Tai Sin soon and in Kowloon Tong in mid-2007. Mr Albert HO considered that such a TV channel, if provided, would be useful in promoting local outstanding artists/arts groups and their achievements to Hong

Action

Kong audience. He suggested that the Administration should also sponsor the productions of relevant TV programmes for broadcasting on the relevant channel.

31. Mr Albert HO expressed concern about the shrinking literary writing publication industry and the lack of opportunities of enhancing the development of young artists in the field. He said that the same industry in the Mainland and in Taiwan was much more flourishing than Hong Kong. He considered that the Administration should consider providing assistance to the publication of literary writing which had a high artistic standard but low market value in order to enhance the development of literary arts in Hong Kong.

32. SHA responded that HKADC was tasked to encourage and promote the development of literary arts and since its establishment in 1995, HKADC had been sponsoring publications in this field. SHA considered that in order to genuinely promote the development of literary arts, it relied more on promoting wider interest in reading rather than on government sponsorship of relevant publication. Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Culture) (DDLCS(C)) briefed members on the reading schemes launched by public libraries for the purpose of promoting reading, such as Reading Programmes for Children and Youth, Selection of Good Books for Secondary School Students, etc. Mr Jonathan YU further briefed members on a series of programmes organised by HKADC such as the organisation of open competitions on creative writing in Hong Kong. HKADC also organised "Write-up Competitions for Students" regularly and sponsored publications through "devolved grant", including four magazines on literary arts. Mr Mathias WOO considered that the lack of interest in literary arts had to do with school education, which attached much greater importance to practical writing rather than to literature. He suggested that this should be rectified in order to promote interest in literary arts. Noting that promotional programmes were being organised each year to introduce outstanding athletes and young entrepreneurs, Mr Albert HO suggested that the same promotional programme should also be organised to introduce outstanding young artists in literary arts and visual arts.

Community involvement and resources deployment

33. The Deputy Chairman sought the views of the deputations as to whether the Administration had been able to strike a proper balance in its funding policy in meeting the needs of the established arts organisations and those of the new or budding arts groups.

34. Mr Edward HO considered that the funding policy of the Administration should aim at pursuing excellence and diversity. He considered that the pursuit of excellence in artistic standards by local arts groups would be hindered if the Administration failed to provide them with sufficient resources to support their development. He said that the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Ltd had been

Action

reduced in funding subsidies from the Government, which had adversely affected the operations and development of the Philharmonic Society. Mr Jonathan YU said that HKADC was studying how to strengthen resources support for medium and small arts groups as well as the new ones. He pointed out that the direction of some of the proposals contained in the Committee on Performing Arts Recommendation Report (I) was also about how to strike a proper balance in meeting the funding needs of the established arts organisations and those of the new or budding arts groups, such as by separating the sources of funding for these two categories. Mr Mathias WOO pointed out that some small arts groups were receiving a very low level of subsidies from the Administration. He said that there seemed to be a lack of objective standards for determining resource allocation for the established and the budding arts groups.

35. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern that at present, LCSO was allocated the bulk of Government resources for supporting cultural and arts development, which amounted to some \$2 billion each year, whereas the annual budget of HKADC, which had a relatively high degree of community involvement, was about only \$100 million. He said that as raised by several deputations, there was a need for the establishment of a high-level and representative cultural and arts development council which had to be genuinely community-driven to oversee the long-term development of the cultural policy, involving issues such as professional training for arts teachers and artistic talents, provision of a TV channel for broadcasting cultural and arts programmes, and conducting studies to see what new measures (e.g. in taxation) should be taken to attract more donations from large private corporations to sponsor local arts organisations. He further said that the chief of the council might need to directly report to the Chief Executive and the council should adopt an inter-disciplinary approach for the development of the cultural policy.

36. Mr CHAN Ki-hung said that when talking about “community-driven”, the community actually involved different stakeholders including artists and the audience. He further said that the Government Cultural Services Grades’ Alliance was of the view that the composition of the proposed cultural and arts development council should be made up of two categories of membership: elected members who represented the community, and members who represented the sector of artists. The latter could either be appointed members or elected from amongst artists.

37. Mr Mathias WOO and Mr Andrew LAM expressed support for the suggestion of establishing an independent cultural and arts development council as they both considered that the present institutional arrangement, i.e. culture and the arts forming one of the many policy areas of HAB, was far from satisfactory. Mr WOO pointed out that the Administration had not even been worked out a blueprint for the long-term training and manpower projection for artistic talents.

Action

Performing arts venues

38. Miss CHOY So-yuk sought the views of the deputations as to how far the implementation of WKCD project could address the shortage of performing arts venues in Hong Kong.

39. Mr Edward HO responded that in order for WKCD to become a cultural hub, a concert hall had to be provided there, and the acoustics of any concert hall or opera house in WKCD had to be up to international standards or else it would only be a waste of money. While agreeing that the implementation of the WKCD project should be expedited as far as possible, Mr HO said that the delivery of the project only served to enhance the “hardware” required for the development of culture and the arts and not the “software”, which was about how to support the development of local arts groups and nurture artistic talents. Mr Mathias WOO said that the Administration should take immediate actions to address the shortage of performing arts venues without waiting for completion of the WKCD project. He pointed out that as many of the existing performing arts venues were used for multi-purposes, professional arts groups found that the shortage problem was quite serious as they had to compete for the use of these venues with other community organisations. Mr IP Ga-ri pointed out that there was also a shortage of district venues which provided local arts groups with facilities for rehearsals. He added that the Administration should also identify venues, e.g. the arcades of buildings/shopping malls, for artists to showcase their talents in performing arts or visual arts.

40. The Deputy Chairman asked whether there were sufficient platforms provided for local arts groups/artists to showcase their talents. Mr KO Chi-sum said that the shortage of major performing arts venues (with a seating capacity of at least 1 700) in Hong Kong had deterred overseas producers from presenting their large-scale performances in Hong Kong, as these major venues were so fully booked that they were not available for staging a sufficient number of shows for these overseas producers so that they could break even. Mr KO considered that the venue shortage problem had seriously hindered the development of the arts and the nurturing of young artists in Hong Kong. Ms Helen NG also gave an example of practical problems arising from the shortage of major performing arts venues encountered by Hong Kong Ballet in staging a large ballet performance in Hong Kong.

41. Mr Timothy FOK suggested that the Administration might need to study the shortage problem of performing arts venues by setting up an interdisciplinary committee. He urged the Administration to take measures to address the Cantonese opera sector’s concerns about an acute shortage of venues suited to the performance requirements of Cantonese opera.

Action

Research studies on development of culture and the arts

42. Miss CHOY So-yuk sought the views of representatives of Government Cultural Services Grades' Alliance as to what research studies relating to development of culture and the arts should be conducted.

43. Mr CHAN Ki-hung suggested that the Administration should conduct territory-wide opinion surveys on the interest of Hong Kong people in various types of cultural programmes and arts forms. He also suggested that the Administration should justify the need for any proposed cultural facility in WKCD with concrete data in order to avoid the criticism that the WKCD would turn out to be a white elephant. Ms Tisa HO said that the Administration could conduct research studies on the cultural index of Hong Kong people and set targets for raising the cultural index annually.

44. SHA informed members that apart from the research studies referred to in paragraph 21(j) above, the Administration had commissioned consultancy studies from 2001 to 2003 on the provision of regional/district cultural and performance facilities in Hong Kong, and on the future development of public libraries and public museums.

45. Miss CHOY further asked whether the Administration would conduct an opinion survey on the interest of local audience in various art forms. DDLCS(C) said that LCSD had been conducting such surveys to gauge audience's/visitors' views on the performing arts activities presented by LCSD and museum services as well as the views of those who had never participated in these activities, including reasons of their lack of interest. DDLCS(C) agreed to provide the findings of the surveys for members' reference.

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III. Provisional licences for cinemas

[LC Paper No. CB(2)2718/05-06(03)]

46. Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1) (DSHA(1)) briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's proposal to introduce provisional licences for cinemas/theatres. He said that subject to members' views, the Administration intended to table the Places of Public Entertainment (Amendment) Regulation (the Amendment Regulation) at the first Council meeting in the 2006-07 legislative session for negative vetting. The Amendment Regulation was planned to commence operation before the end of 2006.

47. The Chairman said that he was a member of the Subgroup on Business Facilitation (the Subgroup) of the former Economic and Employment Council (EEC). He considered that the current proposal resembled to a large extent the provisional licensing regime for food business which was widely supported by the food business sector. He said that in the light of the experience of the food

Action

business sector, he believed that the current proposal would benefit the cinema trade. He added that the Liberal Party also supported the proposal.

48. The Chairman asked whether it was possible for the Administration to publish the Amendment Regulation in the gazette earlier so as to expedite the commencement of the operation of the Amendment Regulation. DSHA(1) explained that the Amendment Regulation anyway had to be tabled at a Council meeting for negative vetting, and the next Council meeting would be the first one in the following legislative session scheduled for 11 October 2006. He added that the proposed legislative timetable could cater for the needs of the applicants who had submitted applications to the licensing authority and intended that their cinemas/theatres could commence business before the end of 2006.

49. Ms Emily LAU said that she was also a member of the Subgroup of EEC. She said that she was supportive of the current proposal and hoped that the Amendment Regulation could commence operation as early as possible. She requested the Administration to explain in detail the benefits that the Amendment Regulation would bring about to the business environment of the cinema trade.

50. DSHA(1) responded that according to the performance pledges of the respective departments, the procedures spelt out in paragraph 3(c) of the Administration's paper would be completed within 28 working days (i.e. about 1.5 calendar months). However, experience had shown that it usually took a much longer time to complete this stage, because the respective departments would not confirm full compliance even if there were only minor deviations from the final proposed layout plans (e.g. location/ size of a door), or because the applicant could not produce full set of certificates with regard to flammability standard of false ceilings, partitions, or wall furnishings etc. It might take a few months for an applicant to rectify the deviations and obtain the relevant certificates from the manufacturer; and for the departments concerned to arrange further site inspections to confirm full compliance. DSHA(1) pointed out that during these few months for the applicant to take rectification or for arrangement of further site inspections, the cinema/theatre concerned could not commence business under the existing licensing regime. As a result, the applicant concerned had to pay rent for the premises under application without any income. However, under the current proposal, the licensing authority would issue a provisional licence to the applicant as soon as the applicant submitted the required certifications from his/her Authorised Person (AP)/ Registered Structural Engineer (RSE) and registered contractors certifying compliance of the requirements for the issue of a provisional licence. Hence, the cinema/ theatre could commence business immediately after completion of renovation.

51. The Chairman recalled that since the implementation of the provisional licensing regime for the food business trade, food premises had been able to get

Action

provisional licenses within about 70 to 80 days after submitting applications, which was much faster than the licensing process for the issuance of a full licence which usually took about 180 days. He asked how much faster the Administration estimated it would be for an applicant to get a provisional licence under the current proposal compared with the time required for getting a full licence under the existing licensing regime.

52. DSHA(1) pointed out that after submission of application, an applicant would be issued Letters of Requirements within 20 working days from the date of submitting the application. Depending on how long the applicant would take to renovate the premises and submit certificates from AP/RSE and registered contractors certifying compliance of the respective requirements to the departments concerned, the licensing authority would issue a provisional licence to the applicant as soon as the applicant submitted the said certifications certifying compliance. DSHA(1) pointed out that compared with the existing licensing regime, the time saved for an applicant under the provisional licensing process was the period of time required for conducting the later stage of work, i.e. the stage of compliance inspections, as set out in paragraph 3(c) of the Administration's paper.

53. The Chairman suggested that to facilitate Members' consideration of the Amendment Regulation when it was introduced into LegCo, the Administration should use past real cases as examples to illustrate the difference in the length of time required for getting a full licence under the existing licensing system and that for getting a provisional licence under the proposed licensing regime. DSHA(1) agreed to consider the suggestion.

Admin

54. Mr WONG Ting-kwong said that the Democratic Alliance for Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong was also supportive of the current proposal. He asked about the precedents in which cinema operators had been penalised under the Places of Public Entertainment Ordinance (Cap. 172) due to licensing problems and the related penalties provided for under the Ordinance.

55. DSHA(1) said that if a cinema/theatre was found to be operating without a licence, a warning would be issued to the operator concerned and, if the operator ignored the warning and the cinema/theatre concerned continued in operation, the Administration could apply for a Prohibition Order from the Court. When the Prohibition Order came into force, unless the operator had taken all necessary steps to fully comply with the licensing requirements or unless the cinema/theatre concerned had ceased operation, the Administration could take prosecution against the operator who would be subject to a fine upon conviction. DSHA(1) further said that as provided under the Ordinance, a person operating a cinema/theatre for business without a licence would be liable on conviction to a fine at level 4 and imprisonment of six months. A person operating a cinema/theatre for business in breach of relevant licensing conditions would be liable on conviction to a fine at level 2. DSHA(1) said

Action

that there had been recent cases in which cinema/theatre operators were held on conviction liable to a fine under the relevant provisions. He added that there were also cases in which the operators had made the necessary rectifications to fully comply with the licensing requirements before the Prohibition Order issued to them coming into force.

56. The Deputy Chairman also expressed support for the current proposal. She requested the Administration to assess the risk posed to the public if a cinema/theatre was allowed to commence business with a provisional licence only.

57. DSHA(1) said that the Administration did not consider that there was any risk posed to the public as a result of the current proposal. He explained that a provisional licence would not be issued to an applicant unless he was able to fully comply with requirements in five major aspects, i.e. health, building, fire safety, ventilation, and electricity, and to provide certificates from AP/RSE and registered contractors certifying compliance of the respective requirements to the departments concerned. He stressed that the purpose of the current proposal was to allow cinemas/theatres to commence business as soon as possible without compromising public safety to which the Administration attached the utmost importance.

58. In response to Ms Emily LAU's enquiry, DSHA(1) said that among the existing 60 cinemas in Hong Kong, 52 were operated by the Hong Kong Theatres Association (the Association). Although the Administration had only consulted the Association on the current proposal, their views should be regarded as quite representative of the cinema trade.

59. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:45 pm.