

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

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22 June 2012

Ms. Connie Szeto
Clerk to Panel
Panel on Development,
Legislative Council,
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong.

Dear Ms. Szeto,

Conservation of Central Police Station Compound

We refer to Hon. Kam Nai-wai's letter of 5 June 2012 addressed to the Chairman of the Legislative Council Panel on Development regarding the conservation of Central Police Station Compound. We note that the questions raised in Hon. Kam's letter of 5 June 2012 have also been raised as written questions in the Legislative Council sitting on 20 June 2012. The Secretary for Development has already provided the written responses to these questions and we do not have any further information to supplement. A copy of the
----- Secretary for Development's written reply is enclosed for your reference.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W.K. Ng', with a flourish at the end.

(W.K NG)
for Secretary for Development

(Translation)

LEGCO QUESTION NO. 17

(Written Reply)

Asked by : Hon KAM Nai-wai

Date of meeting : 20 June 2012

Replied by: Secretary for Development

Question:

It was reported last month that the Hong Kong Jockey Club (“HKJC”) discarded as garbage archaeological discoveries excavated at the Central Police Station Compound, including the foundation of a half double cross building, which is of significant historical value, and the incident has aroused strong dissatisfaction from members of the Antiquities Advisory Board (“AAB”) and heritage conservationists. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the commencement date of the archaeological excavation at the Central Police Station Compound, the number of items excavated since then and the archaeological discoveries; whether antiquities of foundations belonging to Hong Kong’s first generation of prisons have been excavated;
- (b) whether it knows how HKJC deals with the archaeological discoveries excavated; whether HKJC has taken photographs of each item of antiquities excavated and how HKJC decides which antiquities are to be kept and which ones are to be discarded;

- (c) whether the authorities have made a record of each item of antiquities excavated;
- (d) whether it knows the qualifications of the experts who assist HKJC in conducting this archaeological excavation and preparing the report; whether they are qualified to carry out archaeological excavation in Hong Kong; and
- (e) whether the authorities have reported regularly to AAB the progress of this archaeological excavation; when the last report was made and when the next report will be made?

Reply:

President,

The aim of the revitalisation project for the Central Police Station Compound (“the Compound”) is to conserve the historical site and revitalise the buildings into a centre of heritage, arts and leisure facilities for the local community and overseas visitors. This project involves the preservation of 16 historic buildings in the Compound and the construction of two new buildings of modest scale with the associated facilities to house the gallery space, multi-purpose space and central plant. This will give new functions and uses for the Compound with minimal intervention to the existing historic buildings while complying with the current statutory requirements. To achieve the said objectives, the Hong Kong Jockey Club (“HKJC”) has been carrying out the conservation works in the Compound in a prudent and pragmatic manner.

The Compound comprises three groups of declared monuments, namely the former Central Police Station, the former Central Magistracy and the Victoria Prison. The HKJC had applied to the Antiquities Authority for permits under Section 6 of Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) to carry out the site investigation, excavation, building and other works in the Compound, and the relevant permits were obtained in December 2010, July 2011 and November 2011. The works have been carried out in accordance with the permit requirements. The Antiquities and Monuments Office (“AMO”) has been closely liaising with the HKJC and their consultants to monitor the progress of works.

The HKJC also submitted a preliminary archaeological investigation report on the revitalisation project to the AMO in September 2011 in accordance with the requirements under the environmental permit issued by the Environmental Protection Department under the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap. 499) in April 2011 and the planning permission granted by the Town Planning Board under Section 16 of the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131) in May 2011. The investigation covered the survey of archaeological remains that might be affected by the works on site and proposed the associated mitigation measures for appropriate protection of the remains.

The above-mentioned archaeological investigation report recommended categorising the heritage significance of the remains into high, medium or low based on their importance and intactness and proposed the associated mitigation measures. Remains with high heritage significance will be preserved in-situ while remains that have been damaged by previous construction works or having medium or low heritage significance will be recorded in detail. Selected collection of the bricks and foundation stones will be kept for interpretation purpose or for the repair of the historic buildings. Upon completion of the revitalisation works, the HKJC will provide heritage interpretation and organise

educational activities to help visitors appreciate the history of the buildings in the Compound, including the radial plan prison buildings.

My answers to the five parts of the question are set out below:

- (a) Based on the above-mentioned archaeological investigation findings, the HKJC commenced the archaeological survey-cum-excavation, in areas that would be affected by the works, in April 2012 to understand the distribution and conditions of the underground remains. As recommended in the archaeological investigation report, the radial plan prison buildings with high heritage significance (i.e. the existing D Hall) will be preserved in-situ. To date, one-third of the survey-cum-excavation works in the prison area have been completed. The survey confirmed the archaeological investigation findings that remains in the area had been damaged by previous construction works, and that no underground chamber was found.
- (b) The AMO has been closely liaising with the HKJC and their archaeological consultants to monitor the progress of archaeological work. The consultants would record the whole archaeological survey-cum-excavation process. The existing concrete pavement and the filling materials underneath will have to be removed to facilitate the survey-cum-excavation works. Selected collection of the bricks and foundation stones will be kept for interpretation purpose or for the repair of the historic buildings.
- (c) As recommended in the archaeological investigation report, the HKJC will preserve the archaeological remains of high heritage significance in-situ. For the other remains, the HKJC will keep detailed written, cartographic, photographic and video records in accordance with the international practice.

- (d) The work of archaeological investigation and survey-cum-excavation are coordinated by HKJC's consultants, ERM-Hong Kong Limited ("ERM"), led by Dr. JIN Zhiwei, Senior Lecturer of the Department of Anthropology of the Sun Yat-sen University. Apart from Dr. JIN, ERM has engaged several qualified archaeologists who have led or taken part in a number of archaeological survey and investigations in Hong Kong.

- (e) Based on the current progress, the archaeological survey-cum-excavation works within the former Victoria Prison are expected to be completed in two to three months while the works for the whole Central Police Station Compound are expected to be completed by the end of this year. The HKJC arranged a site visit for members of the Antiquities and Advisory Board ("AAB") on 6 June 2012. At the AAB meeting held on 14 June 2012, AMO also briefed the AAB on the progress of the works. Members acknowledged the arrangements of these archaeological works. The AMO will continue to closely monitor the progress of the works and will brief the AAB as appropriate.

~ End ~