

LCQ10: Arts and mega events

Following is a question by the Hon Dominic Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question: There are views that while Hong Kong has successfully hosted international mega events such as Art Basel Hong Kong in recent years, Singapore has introduced many large-scale events (e.g. concerts by world-renowned singers) through cross-departmental collaboration and dedicated mechanisms, also with notably significant results. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will, with reference to the experience of the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises, consider setting up a Committee for Attracting Major Events to coordinate work for attracting major international mega arts events and provide one-stop administrative support to organisers (e.g. assistance with approvals, coordination of venue hiring and cross-border logistics, and provision of ancillary support); if so, of the specific plans (e.g. the terms of reference of the committee and implementation timetable); if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the respective numbers of large-scale arts events and mega events held in Hong Kong in each of the past five years, and the total amount of resources allocated by the authorities to such events and mega events, together with a breakdown of the amount of subsidies provided by the authorities by name of event; and, among such events and mega events, the percentage of world-class international arts events and mega events (e.g. mega events on the scale of the Venice Biennale);

(3) as it has been learnt that Singapore attracts organizers to hold large-scale arts events and mega events by upgrading venues (e.g. Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay) and providing flexible subsidies, whether the authorities have assessed the competitiveness gap between Hong Kong's existing venues (e.g. the West Kowloon Cultural District) and those in Singapore; whether it will formulate long-term plans for hardware upgrades and rental concessions to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness in hosting mega events; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) in order to leverage the benefits of regional collaboration, whether the authorities have plans to collaborate with Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) in taking forward a collaborative initiative on mega arts events, attracting global event organisers to hold mega events in GBA through joint event planning and preparation, introduction of transportation packages and joint promotional efforts; if so, of the specific cooperation framework and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Dominic Lee is as follows:

(1) The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) has been striving to consolidate Hong Kong's position as the capital of international mega arts and cultural events by hosting and supporting more large-scale, diverse and innovative arts and cultural events, thereby providing a platform for East-meets-West international cultural exchange while promoting mega event economy. Furthermore, the Hong Kong Tourism Board has established the Mega Events Development and Advancement Division, which serves as the first point of contact for mega events, and collaborates with stakeholders, such as organisers of mega arts events, to render them various kinds of support, including helping organisers to search venues, arranging site recces, advising on event planning such as date and content and assisting with publicity.

(2) The CSTB set up the Mega Arts and Cultural Events (ACE) Fund in April 2023 to attract and support the staging of international or large-scale arts and cultural events in Hong Kong, with a view to fostering Hong Kong's development as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. The Mega ACE Fund has supported 21 mega arts and cultural events so far, in which 11 events have been successfully held in other countries or regions. Among others, the internationally renowned pop culture mega event ComplexCon and the art fair ART021 Hong Kong Contemporary Art Fair were brought to Hong Kong for the first time with the support of the Mega ACE Fund. Details are in the Annex.

(3) The CSTB, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD), endeavour to provide venues for various arts and cultural activities. First of all, with its official commissioning on March 1 this year, the Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP) provides Hong Kong with the largest and most state-of-the-art venues, including a 50 000-seat Kai Tak Stadium (equipped with a retractable roof and an innovative pitch system), a 10 000-seat Kai Tak Arena (with column-free design and various operational models and seating configurations) and a 5 000-seat Kai Tak Youth Sports Ground. In the past two months, multiple mega sports and entertainment events were successfully held at the KTSP, including large-scale concerts by renowned international and regional bands as well as local singers, which were well received by both citizens and tourists. There will be more entertainment events to be staged at different venues of the KTSP later this year, demonstrating the attractiveness and competitive advantages of its facilities.

Moreover, we have been allocating resources for building new performance venues and upgrading existing facilities. First, for venues under the LCSD, the newly constructed East Kowloon Cultural Centre as well as the upgraded Tai Po Civic Centre and Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre are expected to be in full operation in 2025. The New Territories East Cultural Centre is also currently under construction. In addition, the Xiqu Centre, the first major performing arts venue of the WKCD, was officially opened in 2019. The WestK Performing Arts Centre of WKCD, which will comprise a 1 450-seat Grand Theatre and a few theatres in smaller scale, is scheduled to be completed in 2026.

Apart from increasing the number of venues, we also provide facilitation to presenters through enhancing the venue booking arrangements. For example, performance venues under the LCSD currently provide special booking arrangements for large-scale events or programmes that require early planning with special reasons (such as performances involving renowned overseas artists). Presenters can submit booking applications to the LCSD one year in advance and will be given priority consideration to facilitate the organising of mega events. In order to make more precise use of venue resources and release more booking slots for use by different arts groups, we are currently reviewing the usage and hiring arrangements of the LCSD's performance venues to address to the needs of the arts and culture sector and provide venues for large-scale arts and cultural events. The result will be announced in due course.

(4) The Government has been maintaining close contact with arts and cultural institutions in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) to co-organise large-scale arts and cultural events. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT), the People's Government of Guangdong Province, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and the Government of the Macao SAR have been jointly presenting the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival (Festival) since 2019. The Festival aims to build a cultural brand of the GBA through presentation and promotion of diversified activities in different cities of the region. At the same time, it aims to encourage audiences from the Mainland and overseas to visit Hong Kong and other cities of the GBA to enjoy performances, exhibitions and other selected activities during the Festival. As the host city of the fourth edition in 2024, Hong Kong planned and coordinated more than 770 live performances, exhibitions and exchange activities as well as over 70 online programmes, attracting more than 2.16 million attendees and over 46 million online viewership. The Festival in 2025 is scheduled for the third quarter.

On the heritage and museum front, the LCSD will collaborate with various institutions and cultural venues in the GBA from 2024 to 2026 to organise the Ink Art Ensembles exhibition series. The series features five exhibitions in four key cities of the GBA—Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Foshan, and Dongguan. Moreover, the 2024 Hong Kong-Macao Visual Art Biennale, jointly presented by the MoCT, the CSTB, and the Secretariat for Social Affairs and Culture of the Macao SAR, includes a Hong Kong section curated by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. With the theme of Cultural Integration, the exhibition features a series of artworks across various media. The biennale completed its first two stops in Hangzhou and Nanjing in October 2024 and March 2025 respectively and will continue its tour to Beijing and GBA cities, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen, from June to September 2025.

Hong Kong will continue to participate in different mega events of the GBA, fostering cultural integration and talent exchanges of the three places, jointly pursuing the inheritance and development of the fine traditions of Chinese culture and opening up international markets, with a view to taking forward the idea of Jointly Developing a Cultured Bay Area as promulgated in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.