

## LCQ19: Support for private museums

Following is a question by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok and a reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (July 8):

Question:

Earlier on, the Legislative Council Secretariat has, at my request, conducted a study on the support policies for private museums in overseas places. The findings of the study show that private museums in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) are provided with various policy and financial support by their governments. In comparison, among over 35 existing private museums in Hong Kong, most of them have not been provided with any direct support by the Government. There have been comments that such a situation is not conducive to the preservation and diversified development of culture. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the measures currently in place to support private museums, including whether it has assisted such museums in their promotional work targeted at members of the public in Hong Kong and overseas tourists; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the details of the support provided by the Government for individual private museums in the past three years, including the names of such museums, and the specific details of the support; and

(3) whether it will consider, by drawing reference from the practices adopted by the US and UK authorities, (i) encouraging and supporting private museums in Hong Kong to establish their own accreditation regime and implement an accreditation scheme, and (ii) formulating policies and measures for supporting private museums, e.g. disbursing direct financial assistance, providing technical support, as well as regarding donations to private museums as a deduction allowable in tax assessment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The consolidated reply to various parts of the Hon Ma's question is as follows:

Currently, the major museums in Hong Kong are under the purview of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). LCSD is responsible for the provision and management of its museums in accordance with the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132). From the cultural policy perspective, in addition to the operations of public museums, the Government also welcomes the establishment of private museums, which are conducive to

the pluralism and diversity in the cultural ecology of Hong Kong.

There have been regular collaborations between LCSD museums and other local museums. The most significant example is the annual International Museum Day, in which LCSD has been inviting non-LCSD museums to participate since 2001. On the International Museum Day 2020, Hong Kong (IMD 2020, HK), 18 private museums joined hands with our public museums to launch online activities and upload resources such as pamphlets, audio guides and multimedia programmes. Besides IMD 2020, HK, reciprocal loan of museum collections is also very common between LCSD museums and private museums; recent examples include:

(a) F11 Foto Museum loaned its manual cameras produced in the early years to LCSD's Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence for display at its thematic exhibition from 2017 to 2018;

(b) LCSD's Hong Kong Museum of Art loaned its collections to the Hong Kong Maritime Museum (HKMM) for the exhibitions "The Silver Age: Origins and Trade of Chinese Export Silver" and "Pirates of the South China Sea: Chasing Cheung Po Tsai and the Port Cities" from 2017 to 2018; and to Liang Yi Museum for its exhibition "The Blue Road: Mastercrafts From Persia" in 2018;

(c) LCSD's Hong Kong Heritage Museum loaned its collections to the HKMM, the Fong Yim Fun Art Sustainability Project Gallery of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, "Dismantling the Scaffold" exhibition of the Tai Kwun (2018), "A Story of Light: Hon Chi-fun" exhibition of the Asia Society Hong Kong Center (2019) and "Art Deco. The France-China Connection" exhibition of the Indra and Harry Banga Gallery of the City University of Hong Kong (2019);

(d) LCSD's Hong Kong Museum of Art loaned the artworks of Hon Chi-fun and Irene Chou to the Asia Society Hong Kong Center in 2019 for display at the exhibitions "A Story of Light: Hon Chi-fun" and "A World Within: The Art and Inspiration of Irene Chou" respectively; and

(e) LCSD's Hong Kong Museum of History borrowed 14 collections from the MILL6 Foundation for its exhibition "Striving and Transforming – The History of Hong Kong Industry" (2020).

Apart from loaning of collections, LCSD museums and private museums also join hands with each other in organising various kinds of activities including exhibitions, lectures and seminars. Recent examples include:

(a) LCSD's Hong Kong Museum of Art jointly organised the exhibition "In Search of Zen – The Art of Lui Shou-kwan" with the Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the National Art Museum of China in 2018. Ink paintings by Lui Shou-kwan from the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong were exhibited at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing. Lectures were also organised;

(b) At end 2018, LCSD's Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum and Tianjin Museum jointly organised the exhibition "The Beiyang Warlords: War and Politics". The Tung

Wah Group of Hospitals and Tung Wah Museum rendered assistance by providing artifacts for display and organising visits to Tung Wah Hospital; and

(c) LCSD's Hong Kong Heritage Museum will jointly organise the exhibition "Fund-raising Culture of Hong Kong – Contributions of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals" with Tung Wah Museum in October 2020.

In 2010, the Government had studied whether there was a need to formulate a suitable framework and mechanism to support the development of museums in Hong Kong. After examining the mode of governance of overseas museums, the Government found that the situation among different regions varied, hence it would be difficult to formulate a single mode that would be applicable for all. From the point of view of accountability, while the use of public resource should be monitored, when considering supports to private museums and formulating the relevant policies, the Government has to be mindful not to affect the diversified development of non-LCSD museums. Having regard to the uniqueness of individual museums' cultural and historical importance, theme, scale, organisational structure or financial situation, the Government does not have a set of standard mechanisms to support the operation of private museums. Consideration of whether and how to support the operation of individual private museums would be made on a case-by-case basis in accordance with our policy objectives and established assessment criteria by examining carefully the museum's mission, planning, governance, community involvement, collections custodianship and the level of public recognition. Reference will also be drawn from operation information of museums of similar scale and theme in Hong Kong, the Mainland and overseas when reviewing the financial situation and operating mode.

Specifically, when handling the requests of support from private museums, we will positively consider museums meeting the following five main criteria:

(a) whether the development of the museum concerned will help maintain a diverse, pluralistic and vibrant cultural ecology in Hong Kong;

(b) whether the theme and contents of the museum concerned will help preserve and promote Hong Kong's art, culture and heritage with special reference to the key areas where Hong Kong's unique and outstanding development is showcased;

(c) whether the development of the museum concerned will help enhance Hong Kong's positioning as a creative economy and regional cultural hub;

(d) whether the activities and programmes of the museum concerned will help foster partnership between the Government and the community by complementing the public museums managed and operated by LCSD; and

(e) whether the museum would be managed by professional staff adopting internationally accepted code of practice.

In principle, we will only consider funding applications submitted by

private museums operated by non-profit-making organisations in a non-profit-making mode. Applications from cultural organisations operating on commercial principles, such as private galleries, will not be considered.

Currently, the HKMM is the only private museum in Hong Kong that is subvented by the Government. The Government has leased the premises at Central Pier 8 to HKMM at nominal rental with a 10-year land lease since 2011. Afterwards, the Government has provided subvention to support the operation of HKMM, including an annual operating grant at \$6 million per annum and a maintenance fund up to \$0.6 million between April 1, 2018 and July 31, 2021. The Government has also subsidised individual exhibitions and projects of HKMM, such as the Marine Science Education Programme (2020), exhibitions "The World on Paper: From Square to Sphericity" (2019) and "The Silver Age: Origins and Trade of Chinese Export Silver" (2017), etc.

In addition to subvention, the Government welcomes organisations interested in operating museums to apply for subsidy for cultural, art projects or activities, such as the Springboard Grants and the Project Grants under the Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme managed by the Home Affairs Bureau, the Project Grant and Matching Fund Scheme from Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust, etc, to support the museum's operations or to organise events. Non-government organisations and social enterprises, if interested in operating a private museum on vacant government land, can submit an application for "Use of Vacant Government Land for Community, Institutional or Non-Profit Making Purposes on Short Term Basis". The Government will consider whether to grant the short term tenancy at nominal rent in accordance with policy objectives and established assessment criteria.

According to section 2 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap 112), approved charitable donation means a donation of money to any charitable institution or trust of a public character, which is exempt from tax under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance, or to the Government, for charitable purposes. If the private museum is a charity that is exempted from tax under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance, taxpayers can claim a deduction for a donation of money. The aggregate deduction of approved charitable donations cannot be less than \$100, and shall not exceed 35 per cent of income after allowable expenses and depreciation allowances or assessable profits.

In terms of promotion, the Hong Kong Tourism Board has been promoting public and private museums with unique characteristics and their activities on its website ([discoverhongkong.com](https://discoverhongkong.com)), social platforms and tourist information centres, to highlight the diversity of touristic experience in Hong Kong.

With regards to other forms of support, private museums may also consider support provided by the global network of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in exchange with museum professionals and reference from the professional and ethical standards established by ICOM to enhance the quality of museums. ICOM, established in 1946, is an international

organisation of museums and museum professionals committed to the conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage. The major museums under LCSD are members of the ICOM. HKMM is also a member.

The Government will continue to keep closely in view the development and trends of museums around the world, and to review the development of museums in Hong Kong.