

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**S-HAB13**

**(Question Serial No. S0060)**

Head: (95) Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational Expenses

Programme: (3) Heritage and Museums

Controlling Officer: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Ms Michelle LI)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Home Affairs

Question:

Regarding Reply Serial No. HAB207, the actual attendance of the 2 major exhibitions jointly organised by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (HKHM) and Palace Museum, namely “The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: Chairs for Viewing the World through Time” and “Ceremony and Celebration – The Grand Weddings of the Qing Emperors”, fell short of the estimated figures by 51 825 and 41 336 respectively. The difference was much larger compared to other major exhibitions. Although the difference was even larger for “Dunhuang – Untold Tales, Untold Riches”, its total ticket proceeds were higher than those of the 2 exhibitions.

Among the major exhibitions held at the HKHM, “Ceremony and Celebration – The Grand Weddings of the Qing Emperors” incurred the highest expenditure with the lowest ticket proceeds.

As for the exhibition “Western Scientific Instruments of the Qing Court” organised by the Hong Kong Science Museum, the estimated attendance was 250 000 but the actual attendance was only 139 004, marginally more than half of the estimated figure. Its reception was even worse compared to the 2 exhibitions organised by the HKHM.

In this connection, please inform the Committee of the following:

1. Has the Government examined the reasons for the difference between the estimated and actual attendance of the above 3 exhibitions? In view of the 2 upcoming exhibitions to be co-organised with the Palace Museum this year, will the Government adjust downward their expenditures and estimated attendance in the light of past experience?
2. Since the ticket proceeds of the 2 exhibitions held at the HKHM were low compared to other exhibitions, will the Government cut down the number of similar exhibitions from the perspective of cost-effectiveness?

3. According to the Government, exhibitions themed on the Palace Museum were popular among local residents and foreign visitors. However, their actual attendance and ticket proceeds are not supportive of the statement. In this connection, will the Government review its collaboration with the Palace Museum, including holding abeyance to the signing of any agreement with the Palace Museum in June? If not, what are the reasons?
4. The Palace Museum of Taiwan houses some of the gems of the royal collections from imperial establishments including the Forbidden City, Mukden Palace, Mountain Resort, Summer Palace, Jingyi Palace and Guozijian, as well as artefacts returned by Japan after the Second World War. Spanning over a period of 8 000 years from the Neolithic to the present, these collections outweigh their counterparts in Beijing in terms of amount and variety. If it is the Government's intention to deepen public understanding on Chinese history and civilisation, will it explore the opportunity for co-organising major exhibitions with the Palace Museum of Taiwan? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon LAU Siu-lai

Reply:

1. We take into account various factors such as the number of exhibitions planned to be held in the year, the theme, attractiveness, scale and duration of each exhibition in estimating attendance figures. Deviation between the estimated and actual attendance of individual exhibitions is possible due to seasonal fluctuation of visitation, the level of admission charges, the availability of other attractions during the exhibition period, etc. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will enrich both the content and the presentation as well as strengthen the promotional activities of the coming 2 exhibitions to be co-organised with the Palace Museum this year.
2. One of the missions of the public museums is to enhance public understanding of and appreciation for the richness of both local and world culture through organising exhibitions on different topics. The LCSD will continue to organise exhibitions on a wide array of themes to meet the varied and manifold needs of the visitors. Following the new initiative on free admission to the permanent exhibitions of designated museums with effect from August 2016, the LCSD will ensure that the admission fees for special exhibitions will be set at reasonable levels to boost museum visitation.
3. In 2012, the LCSD signed a collaborative agreement with the Palace Museum under which annual exhibitions are co-organised to display the rich diversity of the Palace Museum's collection. Since then, 4 exhibitions have been organised with different themes. These exhibitions attracted a total of some 430 000 visitors. The long-term collaboration between the LCSD and the Palace Museum not only provides valuable opportunities for our community and visitors to appreciate the precious heritage relics of China, but also enhances the professionalism of our museums particularly in the field of conservation and museology. The LCSD will continue to conduct regular reviews on the collaboration with its partners on the mode of co-operation and presentation of exhibitions to encourage more visitors to the museums.

4. From time to time, the LCSD explores opportunities to strengthen cultural exchanges and co-operation with museum institutions around the world with a view to bringing in quality exhibitions to Hong Kong. The LCSD will continue to identify suitable partnering organisations, taking into account various factors such as the positioning, mission and willingness of respective museums; as well as the appropriateness, distinctiveness and appeal of the exhibitions, etc.

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