

LCQ1: Hosting international pop concerts

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (January 24):

Question:

It has been reported that after the epidemic, many cities have hosted world tour concerts by world-class singers, attracting fans from all over the world to attend the concerts. In addition to the proceeds from tickets and merchandise, these concerts also boost industries such as tourism, retail and catering, thereby promoting economic development. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of the Government's existing measures to assist organisers in identifying suitable venues, arranging entry visas, etc, to attract world-renowned singers to hold concerts in Hong Kong;

(2) whether it will consider adopting a form of dedicated funding, such as relaxing the eligibility criteria of the Mega Arts and Cultural Events Fund to cover concerts, so as to secure international pop concerts to be held in Hong Kong; if so, of the details and implementation timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that some concert organisers have no plan to come to Hong Kong because they consider that Hong Kong lacks major venues, and given that the Main Stadium of the Kai Tak Sports Park will be commissioned this year, whether the Government will proactively liaise with the industry and relevant stakeholders to jointly formulate plans on promoting the use of the Kai Tak Sports Park as a major performance venue; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong is the Events Capital of Asia. There are many cultural, sports, entertainment, financial and other mega events organised in Hong Kong every year. While quite a number of them are organised or funded by the Government, many more are organised by private enterprises, such as most of the entertainment events including concerts, which are mainly operated on commercial principles without the Government's involvement. The Government is glad to see more large-scale concerts starred by internationally renowned singers and groups (hereinafter referred to as internationally renowned singers) to be held in Hong Kong. This will not only help Hong Kong develop into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, but will

also attract tourists and boost the economy. In consultation with the Security Bureau and the Development Bureau, my reply to the question raised by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip is as follows:

(1) and (2) As far as we understand, in considering the location and venue for conducting a large-scale pop concert for internationally renowned singers, most organisers will first take into account the singer's schedule and then various business factors such as concert scale, financial feasibility, target audience group, audience size and venue facilities, etc.

Hong Kong has the distinctive advantages of enjoying strong support of the Motherland and being closely connected to the world. It also enjoys a geographical location connecting to the Greater Bay Area and has a broad audience base, as well as aviation and transportation networks connecting to the Mainland. Apart from having the characteristics of the integration of Chinese and foreign cultures, Hong Kong is also equipped with performance venues of different scales and supporting facilities which can meet the needs of various forms of performance. All these have attracted many internationally renowned singers to hold large-scale pop music concerts in Hong Kong.

In fact, the number of large-scale pop music concerts held in Hong Kong has gradually returned to the pre-pandemic level, many of which were performances by internationally renowned singers. According to our statistics, on average, there were about two internationally renowned singers holding large-scale concerts with an audience of more than 10 000 each month in 2023, and most of them were holding more than one concert. So far, a number of internationally renowned singers have also confirmed that they would come to Hong Kong to hold large-scale concerts in 2024. In terms of figures concerning venues, extremely popular concert venue like the Hong Kong Coliseum (HKC) has enjoyed close to 100 per cent occupancy over the past five years. As to AsiaWorld-Expo and the Central Harbourfront Event Space, among the large-scale events organised therein last year, there were also some pop music concerts with the number of audience ranging from 10 000 to 20 000. It can be seen that holding large-scale pop concerts by internationally renowned singers in Hong Kong is not without attraction.

Although the decision of the organisers of holding these concerts in Hong Kong or not has been a commercial decision led by the private market, and the Government rarely provided financial assistance, relevant Government departments have been providing corresponding assistance and facilitation measures to attract and encourage more large-scale pop concerts by internationally renowned singers to be held in Hong Kong. Currently, we are also in touch with some concert organisers from time to time to understand their intentions and needs for holding concerts in Hong Kong. In terms of venues, we understand that given internationally renowned singers usually perform very frequently, it is necessary to confirm the performance time and location in advance to plan their itinerary. In this regard, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has offered Special Bookings arrangements for organisers of such performances, allowing them to submit booking applications, which will be considered with priority, to the LCSD more than

one year in advance. In addition, there was also increase in waterfront venues for holding large-scale events. Apart from the Central Harbourfront Event Space, the waterfront event space in Wan Chai covering an area of about 1.4 hectares is now available for rental by interested parties through short-term tenancies. If any organiser intends to hold a concert in Hong Kong, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) and the Hong Kong Tourism Board will refer it to the venue operator so that the two parties can further discuss and conduct business negotiations, and will continue to provide appropriate support in the process. In fact, venue operators have commercial incentives to proactively reach out to concert organisers and arrange for more large-scale concerts to be held at their venues.

In addition, the CSTB and the Tourism Commission will also provide targeted one-stop support to mega events with significant visitor appeal and tourism promotional effect. Such support includes co-ordinating exchange and co-operation between the organisers and various bureaux/departments, assisting the organisers in obtaining necessary licenses and approvals, resolving various issues encountered throughout event organisation and collaborating with the tourism trade to jointly develop tourism products, etc.

As regards support for entry arrangements, under the prevailing arrangements, non-local persons may apply for employment (including short-term employment for holding a concert) under the General Employment Policy or the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals. The Immigration Department will consider each application on its own merits and provide facilitation as far as practicable.

(3) The Government has all along actively increasing different facilities in the past years to meet the demand of venues for large-scale events including concerts. Occupying an area of about 28 hectares, the Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP) will soon be completed by phases by the end of 2024, providing the public with a world-class venue suitable for diversified activities. There are three main facilities in the Sports Park. Among which, the Main Stadium is equipped with a retractable roof with sound insulation function and a flexible turf system that can accommodate up to 50 000 seats for large-scale performance events. As for the Indoor Sports Centre, it is also equipped with retractable seating system capable of hosting entertainment events such as concerts for up to 10 000 spectators.

Kai Tak Sports Park Limited (KTSPL), being the Contractor of the KTSP, is required to organise sports events on a certain number of days every year according to the Conditions of Contract and Operating Requirements. As for the remaining calendar of the year, the venues can be used to host different large-scale events such as concerts to cater for the needs of different sectors. In addition, the KTSPL has to actively promote the Sports Park to the sports sector and entertainment industry both locally and internationally, with a view to introducing more diversified events into the Sports Park and promoting the venue as an international sports and entertainment destination of choice, thereby promoting Sports Park as a new landmark for sports, leisure and entertainment events and strengthening Hong

Kong's positioning as an Events Capital.

â€‹Thank you, President.