

LCQ15: Promoting Yu Lan culture

Following is a question by the Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (January 15):

Question:

It has been reported that "Yu Lan Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community" ("Yu Lan Festival"), which has a history of over a century, is an important cultural event for the Chiu Chow natives in Hong Kong and has even been inscribed onto the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). However, some groups organising "Yu Lan Festival" have relayed that the scale of "Yu Lan Festival" has been reduced after the epidemic, and the transmission of Yu Lan culture is facing severe challenges. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on "Yu Lan Festival" held in venues borrowed from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) or the Hong Kong Housing Authority in various districts in the past five years: the content of the event (including whether any Shengong opera was performed), the number of participants, the number of participating groups, the scale of the event, and the venues borrowed;

(2) whether it has considered, by following the example of the country in establishing a regime for representative inheritors of national ICH, recognising and supporting a group of inheritors who have profound attainments and influence in the Yu Lan cultural sphere, so that they can pass on relevant skills and experience through the apprenticeship system, workshops, etc.;

(3) whether it has considered incorporating Yu Lan culture into school curricula or extra-curricular activities, and organising seminars, exhibitions and workshops on Yu Lan culture, so as to popularise the public's understanding of the origins, customs and underlying cultural significance of "Yu Lan Festival", thereby enhancing the community's sense of cultural identity;

(4) whether it has plans to step up its support for ICH items such as "Yu Lan Festival", including setting up a dedicated fund for organising relevant activities, nurturing cultural inheritors, and collating and protecting relevant information, and to devise a reward mechanism to encourage the organisation of Yu Lan cultural activities which combine innovation with tradition, thereby increasing the community's attention to and participation in Yu Lan culture; and

(5) of the measures in place to encourage cross-sectoral collaboration between "Yu Lan Festival" and other cultural, tourism and commercial projects, such as by working with tourism organisations to launch Yu Lan

culture-themed tourism itineraries or working with designers to develop relevant cultural derivatives, and relaxing the relevant regulations on hawking to allow more snack stalls to hawk during "Yu Lan Festival", so as to attract more people?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the question raised by the Member is as follows:

"Yu Lan Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community" was inscribed onto the third national list of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in 2011, and the first Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong (Representative List) in 2017. Later on, "Yu Lan Festival" was inscribed onto the updated Representative List, which was promulgated in December 2024. Besides "Chiu Chow Tradition", "Yu Lan Festival" also includes "Punti Tradition", "Hoi Luk Fung/Hoklo Tradition" and "Boat Dwellers' Tradition". In consultation with the Housing Bureau, the Education Bureau and the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the reply to the question raised by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu is as follows:

(1) Event organisers may apply for leisure venues (e.g. hard-surface pitches) managed by the LCSD for non-designated uses, including the holding of "Yu Lan Festival". Moreover, organisers may apply for holding such activities in venues in the Housing Authority's public housing estates (such as pitches or open area). The leisure venues and venues in public housing estates for holding "Yu Lan Festival" and Shengong operas in the past five years (from 2020 to 2024) are set out in Annex 1 and Annex 2 respectively, and the relevant statistics are tabulated as follows:

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of applicant organisations					
• LCSD	9	7	9	36	39
• Housing Department (HD)	1	1	2	7	7
Number of participants					
• LCSD	6 000	3 000	5 700	32 780	49 200
• HD	1 000	1 000	1 100	3 180	3 280

Notes:

(i) The approval of applications, activities and number of participants/scale relating to "Yu Lan Festival" during 2020 to 2022 were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and/or the individual circumstances of the applicant organisations (such as the organisations withdrawing their applications).
(ii) The figures for number of participants are the anticipated number of participants provided by the organisations in their applications. The LCSD and HD do not maintain the statistics on the final number of participants.

(2) and (3) The existing school curriculum has covered the learning elements related to Chinese culture. For example, the Primary Humanities curriculum has included the learning of the origins, customs and the splendid Chinese culture of traditional Chinese festivals, as well as heritage conservation and activities of historical inheritance. Students can understand the importance of protecting and inheriting Chinese culture, at the same time recognise that Hong Kong is a society with cultural integration and learn to respect different cultures and lifestyles. As one of the ICH items (traditional customs and festivals) in Hong Kong, the "Yu Lan Festival of the Chiu Chow Community" is also included in the junior secondary History curriculum. Students can deepen their understanding of the relationships and traditions among the Chiu Chow people living in Hong Kong through the Festival.

In addition, as proposed by the Chief Executive in the 2024 Policy Address to promote the safeguarding and passing on of ICH, the Government will develop a mechanism and criteria in 2025 for recognising the bearers of the items on the Representative List of ICH of Hong Kong in a bid to acknowledge and nurture high-calibre ICH bearers. Training and cultural exchanges will also be strengthened to engage the young generation in the passing on of ICH and raise the viability of Hong Kong's ICH.

(4) and (5) Apart from organising public and educational activities on "Yu Lan Festival", the ICH Office of the LCSD also encourages the community to take part in organising activities related to Yu Lan culture by providing funding support to individuals and organisations of the community through the Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme (ICH Funding Scheme), so as to enhance support to "Yu Lan Festival". Since its launch in 2019, ICH Funding Scheme has funded various organisations and individuals to conduct a number of projects related to "Yu Lan Festival", including Yu Lan Cultural Festival, "Yu Lan Festival", as well as forum, research and publication, exhibition, workshop, guided tour and virtual museum related to Yu Lan culture. The ICH Office will actively collaborate with the Tourism Commission and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) to strengthen the publicity for Hong Kong's ICH, including Yu Lan culture, through different local and overseas channels, so as to enhance the integration of culture and tourism.

In terms of tourism, the Characteristic Local Tourism Incentive Scheme established and funded by the Government has successfully encouraged the travel trade to develop tourism itineraries and products with distinctive themes, including those on history and culture, such as in-depth tours with the theme of "Yu Lan Festival".

Besides, HKTB has introduced the Pilot Scheme for Characteristic Local Tourism Events (Pilot Scheme) since January 2018 to provide funding support for non-profit-making organisations registered in Hong Kong to stage events that showcase local characteristics and have the potential to become attractive events with tourism appeal in Hong Kong. Since the launch of the Pilot Scheme, HKTB has funded a number of events with local characteristics, including the Yu Lan Cultural Festival organised by the Federation of Hong

Kong Chiu Chow Community Organizations Charity Funds Limited.

The 2024 edition of the Yu Lan Cultural Festival leveraged modern technology and innovative storytelling to promote traditional culture, including Festival Treats Competition, 3D photo-taking spots, virtual reality experiences, etc. Apart from introducing some new elements in the culinary, tea tasting as well as cultural booths and exhibitions, the Festival hosted flash mob photo-taking activities across various venues commemorating "Yu Lan Festival" in town. It also published a book on Yu Lan culture in partnership with a local illustrator and organised the "Live Action Role Playing", a trendy and engaging form of entertainment, to attract participation of both visitors and locals.

We will continue to promote traditional festivities and authentic local culture to visitors worldwide through various channels. In particular, HKTB introduces different traditional festivals, including "Yu Lan festival", on its one-stop travel information portal website Discover Hong Kong.

As regards relaxing requirements to facilitate the setting up of food stalls at "Yu Lan Festival" venues, individuals wishing to cook/reheat pre-prepared food at temporary stalls at the venues only need to obtain a temporary food factory licence from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). Hawker licence is not required for this purpose. The FEHD is committed to providing flexibility to applicants as far as possible, with the vetting process of temporary food factory licence application generally completed within 12 working days.