

LCQ3: Promoting the development of the film industry

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, in the Legislative Council today (June 12):

Question:

It has been reported that following the splash made recently by the film "Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In" at the Cannes Film Festival, the morale of the film industry has been greatly boosted. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views pointing out that "Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In" has enjoyed the opportunity to triumph beyond Hong Kong only because it is invested by private enterprises with a production budget as high as \$300 million, whereas most Hong Kong films, especially those subsidized by the Film Development Fund (FDF), are low-budget productions with varied box-office numbers, whether the authorities will consider enhancing the funding schemes under the FDF, such as raising the amount of financing that each film can receive under the Film Production Financing Scheme (FPFS), enhancing the training subsidies for prospective film directors and scriptwriters, or introducing other enhancement measures; if so, of the details, and whether they will consult the film industry;

(2) of the amounts of public funds used for the various schemes under the FDF (including the FPFS, the First Feature Film Initiative, and the Scriptwriting Incubation Programme) and set out, by title of subsidized film, the amounts of subsidies under FDF, the amounts of investment from private enterprises, and the box-office takings; whether it has assessed the effectiveness of various schemes; and

(3) apart from participating in the international film festivals as well as launching the Film Financing Scheme for Mainland Market and the Hong Kong-Europe-Asian Film Collaboration Funding Scheme recently, of the other deployments put in place by the authorities to enable Hong Kong films to tap into the markets in other places and generate economic benefits, including whether they will support the release of Hong Kong films in other places?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the Hon Vincent Cheng's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Government has been supporting the development of the Hong Kong film industry through the Film Development Fund (FDF) along four

strategic directions, namely, nurturing talent, enhancing local production, expanding markets and building audience. The Government reviews the operation of the FDF and the scope of funding from time to time in response to the development needs of the film industry.

In order to encourage the film industry to enhance Hong Kong film production, the Government introduced the Film Production Financing Scheme (FPFS) in 2007 to provide Government finance to small and medium-budgeted film productions. The recommended financing ratio is determined based on the score obtained by the film project, which ranges from 20 to 40 per cent of the production budget, with a cap of \$9 million. The Government further launched the Film Production Financing Scheme – Relaxation Plan (Relaxation Plan) in 2020, taking into account the challenges faced by the industry due to the epidemic at that time, the mechanism was enhanced and the actual financing amount was increased. Each approved film project would receive a maximum financing ratio, which is 40 per cent of the production budget or \$9 million, whichever is less. This measure was well received by the film industry. Having regard to the positive feedback from the sector, the deadline for application under the Relaxation Plan has been further extended for one year to January 14, 2025. The Government will consolidate the experiences from implementation of the relaxation measures so as to enhance the scheme. Taking into account the significance of sustainable projects in promoting the development of Hong Kong films, we will continue to reach out to the film sector to gauge their views on the financing/funding ceiling for considering further enhancements to the current mechanism.

The FDF has also been committed to nurturing talents. The First Feature Film Initiative (FFFI) was launched in 2013 with the aim to providing funding to support new directors and their film production teams to make their first feature films on a commercial basis, with an aim of nurturing talents for the film industry. The FFFI identifies new talents through competitions. The winning new directors and their film production teams will receive funding from FDF to make their first feature films. The FDF also launched the Directors' Succession Scheme in July 2020. It invites veteran directors to partner with young directors to co-produce local films in the spirit of mentorship, with a view to encouraging directors to groom young talents and enhancing the quantity of quality local film productions. In addition, Scriptwriting Incubation Programme under the FDF aims at identifying and nurturing local screenwriting talent to help incubate quality screenplays, thereby enhancing the quality of Hong Kong film productions. The FDF also supports other film-related talent nurture programmes, such as the Screenwriting Apprenticeship Programme, which aims to provide talents for different positions in film production, thereby improving the quality of films.

In response to the rise of online social platforms and streaming platforms, the Content Development Scheme for Streaming Platforms was launched under the FDF in 2023. Teams are recruited through a competition under this Scheme to develop content for streaming platform series, thereby nurturing cross-sectoral production teams for streaming platforms and facilitating the film industry to enter new distribution markets by creating

quality streaming content.

To date, over 100 emerging directors and producers were engaged in some 100 films funded under the FDF, which have won more than 160 local and international awards. Many of the Government financed films in recent years, for example, "A Guilty Conscience", "Mama's Affair", "Chilli Laugh Story", "Time Still Turns the Pages", "Hong Kong Family", "A Light Never Goes Out" and "Lost Love", etc have achieved good box office. More than 3 500 job opportunities were also created by the projects funded under the Film Production Financing Scheme. The Government will evaluate the effectiveness of the schemes from various aspects, including the numbers of talents nurtured, job opportunities created, box office receipts, as well as local and international awards attained. The Government reviews the schemes according to the development needs of the film industry from time to time.

The projects funded under the schemes of the FDF are shown at Annex. The amount of investment by private companies is a kind of commercial information, thus it is not appropriate for the Government to disclose such information.

(3) In order to further subsidise Hong Kong films to explore overseas markets, the Government has actively launched a number of new schemes under the FDF in the past two years. Following the launch of the Hong Kong-Asian Film Collaboration Funding Scheme in 2023, the Film Financing Scheme for Mainland Market was launched in May this year to support Hong Kong film companies and the Mainland cultural enterprises to invest in and promote the productions of Hong Kong directors. This will also help boost the chance of Hong Kong films for release in the Mainland market. The Government will also expand the original Hong Kong-Asian Film Collaboration Funding Scheme to the Hong Kong-Europe-Asian Film Collaboration Funding Scheme, which will subsidise film projects co-produced by filmmakers from European and Asian countries to produce films featuring Hong Kong, European and Asian cultures. This would help promising Hong Kong filmmakers broaden their regional cultural horizons, draw inspiration from film productions of other countries and have better understanding of the market demands of other countries. These schemes have just been launched, and some are just entering the assessment stage. We will take the work forward as soon as possible so that the projects can be released and the effectiveness of the schemes can be evaluated.

The Government has been actively organising and subsidising screenings of Hong Kong films in Mainland and overseas international film festivals and cities in recent years so that audiences from around the world can watch Hong Kong films and know about the unique charms about Hong Kong from these films. Through the support of the FDF, the Government and film-related groups have organised Hong Kong film screenings at many overseas film festivals and cities. Among them, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices in the overseas have sponsored screenings of Hong Kong films at different international film festivals since 2023. Create Hong Kong also organised Hong Kong film screening in more than 30 cities from 2022 to 2024 to promote the works of the new Hong Kong directors/actors. The above activities aim to increase the exposure and popularity of Hong Kong films and build audience. Some of the films of the new directors have been given local distribution opportunities

after being screened, and the results are encouraging. In addition, the FDF also subsidises promotional activities for individual films at major international film festivals to increase publicity effects and distribution opportunities. Create Hong Kong will collaborate with the Hong Kong Film Development Council to study and consider providing further support for the overseas distribution of Hong Kong films.