

LCQ7: Assessment criteria of Mega Events Fund

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to a question by the Hon Tanya Chan, in the Legislative Council today (October 26):

Question:

The Hong Kong International Jazz Festival 2011 (the Festival) funded by the Mega Events Fund (MEF) was earlier held at the West Kowloon Cultural District. It has been reported that the obvious difference between the performance arrangements for local and overseas performers made by the event organiser has attracted criticisms from the community. Regarding the assessment of funding applications and monitoring of the implementation of the events funded by MEF, will the Government inform this Council whether it knows:

(a) the amounts of MEF funding applied and approved for the Festival, as well as the estimated total revenue and expenditure of the Festival;

(b) the justifications based on which MEF approved the Festival's funding application; whether MEF will review the criteria for assessing funding applications for arts and cultural events in the future in the light of the above incident; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(c) if MEF has given any specific cost-benefit indicator and requirement to the organiser of the Festival in the process of assessing its funding application; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; if MEF will follow up the criticisms from the community on the Festival; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(d) if MEF will pro-actively gauge the views of various stakeholders (including the audience, performers and staff concerned, etc.) when assessing the cost-benefit of the event; if it will, of the details and outcome of such view-gauging exercises; if not, the criteria based on which MEF assesses the cost-benefit of the event; and

(e) if MEF will consider reviewing its assessment criteria with a view to encouraging more events to be held in Hong Kong in a sustainable and regular manner to promote local arts, culture and traditions to overseas visitors; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The "Hong Kong International Jazz Festival 2011" is one of the events supported by the Mega Events Fund (MEF). It was held between September 25 and October 2, 2011 at various locations in Hong Kong and Kowloon. In addition to the West Kowloon Cultural District Concerts, the event also included concerts held at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza and the City Hall, together with a series of educational and interactive activities, such as workshops for public participation, jazz music appreciation seminars and exhibitions, etc.

Our reply to the questions raised by the Hon Tanya Chan is as follows:

(a) The amount of MEF funding applied by the organiser of the "Hong Kong International Jazz Festival 2011" (the "Hong Kong Jazz Association"), the upper limit of funding approved and its budget expenditure are \$4.33 million, \$3 million and \$9.56 million respectively.

(b) The MEF has a stringent and open assessment mechanism. Successful applications must fulfil a number of basic criteria. For instance, the proposed event must be an arts, cultural or sports event; the organiser(s) must be local non-profit-making organisation(s); the number of participants in the proposed event must reach 10 000 or more; and the events must be open for the participation of the Hong Kong people. Other assessment criteria include economic benefits (such as the number of overseas participants and visitors attracted to the event, and the number of jobs created), additional benefits (such as whether the event can raise Hong Kong's international profile and attract media coverage), the scale of the event, its technical and financial feasibility, as well as the applicants' technical and event management capabilities, etc. Moreover, applicants are required to provide funding from their own pockets or from other sources (such as ticket income and/or sponsorships from third parties) to meet at least half of the event cost. The MEF Assessment Committee (the Committee) has been considering all applications fairly in accordance with the above published assessment criteria, details of which are available on the MEF dedicated webpage (www.tourism.gov.hk/english/mef/mef.html).

In considering the application "Hong Kong International Jazz Festival 2011", the

Committee has taken into account the information provided in the application form submitted by the Hong Kong Jazz Association, comments from the relevant government departments, and the representation made by the applicant to the Committee; and the application was assessed by the Committee in accordance with the aforementioned criteria. The Committee noted that the "Hong Kong International Jazz Festival 2011" proposed to invite world-class jazz performers to perform in Hong Kong, and would attempt to expand the event's scale and step up publicity to attract more local participants and visitors to the event. The Committee considered that the application met all MEF requirements, and obtained passing marks in all assessment criteria. On this basis, the Committee agreed that funding should be provided for the event.

We consider that the assessment criteria of MEF are effective. For individual MEF supported event which fails to comply with the funding conditions, the Committee will act in accordance with the established rules.

(c) For each successful application, the Committee will impose performance targets and indicators, additional funding conditions and appropriate control provisions, having regard to the specific circumstances of the event, for compliance by the organiser. In the case of the "Hong Kong International Jazz Festival 2011", the Committee required the organiser to use the MEF funding for inviting world-renowned jazz performers to perform in Hong Kong, strengthening the publicity of the event, and such publicity should cover Mainland China and overseas markets. The Committee also reminded the organiser that it should develop contingency plans as some outdoor programmes of the event were susceptible to adverse weather conditions. The specific targets and indicators applicable to this event (such as the details of performers that the organiser undertook to invite, expected number of participants, number of visitors to be attracted to the event etc.) were listed in the funding agreement. The agreement also stipulated that, in accordance with the usual practice, 50% of the approved funding would be provided to the organiser after signing of the agreement, and that the balance would be released only upon satisfactory completion of the event, and post-event evaluation report, publicity report and audited accounts are submitted by the organiser to the satisfaction of the Committee. If the event's results and the performance of the organiser were found to be unsatisfactory, or the organiser failed to meet the pledge targets, the Committee may recommend to the Government not to consider any future MEF applications submitted by the organiser, reduce or not to pay the full amount of MEF funding, or even recover the funding already provided. The Committee will evaluate

and review the result of the "Hong Kong International Jazz Festival 2011" according to the contractual provisions and established mechanism, taking also into account the views by participants and the public towards the event.

(d) In reviewing the effectiveness of the event, the Committee will consider feedback from different sources, including on-site inspection reports provided by Committee members and government representatives; the evaluation report, publicity report and audited accounts to be submitted by the organiser; media reports and coverage by local and international media over the event; views from the public; and the survey report to be submitted by the organiser (covering feedback from relevant stakeholders such as participants, audiences, visitors, the Hong Kong Tourism Board and views from critics etc.). According to the contractual requirement, the organiser has to submit the evaluation report, publicity report and audit accounts of the event for consideration by the Committee within three months after the completion of the event. The Committee will then examine whether the completed event has attained all pledged targets before making a recommendation to the Government as to whether the balance of MEF funding should be released to the organiser.

(e) The MEF was established in May 2009 following funding approval by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council. It aims to assist local non-profit-making organisations to host more arts, cultural and sports events in Hong Kong, so as to enrich travel experience of visitors, and to maintain Hong Kong's tourism appeal. In the past five rounds of application, MEF funding have been approved to support a number of events related to local culture and traditions and are intended to be organised in a sustainable manner, such as the "Record Breaking Dragon and Lion Dance Extravaganza", "Hong Kong Well-wishing Festival", "Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival", and "Mui Wo Sky and Water Lanterns Festival" etc. On the other hand, the promotion of local arts, culture and heritage is at present mainly carried out by the Home Affairs Bureau.

We are reviewing the MEF with a view to further improving its modus operandi. We shall take into account views and comments from all sectors, and consider amending the requirements so as to better achieve the Fund's objectives.

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