

LCQ2: Establishment of Bruce Lee memorial hall

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Following is a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-hing in the Legislative Council today (July 17):

Question:

The 20th of July, which is three days later, is the 40th anniversary of Mr Bruce Lee's death. Some members of the public have relayed to me that Mr Bruce Lee, who was an internationally renowned martial arts master, director and actor, has all along been revered by the public. The public also have high aspirations for the establishment of a Bruce Lee memorial hall. While the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will also hold a large-scale exhibition in commemoration of Mr Lee this year, the public have every wish for the early conversion of Mr Lee's former residence in Kowloon Tong (the former residence of Bruce Lee) into a permanent memorial hall. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it has assessed the social values and effects to be brought about by converting the former residence of Bruce Lee into a permanent memorial hall, as well as the public aspirations for realisation of such a proposal; if it has, of the conclusion; if not, the reasons for that;

(b) despite that the authorities had announced two years ago the temporary shelving of the negotiation with the owner of the former residence of Bruce Lee on the conversion of the premises into a Bruce Lee memorial hall, as the press has reported that the owner is still eager to donate that property and hopes for the early establishment of a Bruce Lee memorial hall, whether the authorities will proactively reconsider various possible ways and means to implement the proposal of converting the former residence of Bruce Lee into a Bruce Lee memorial hall; and

(c) as quite a number of members of the public consider that Mr Bruce Lee is a symbol of Hong Kong, of the form, contents and vehicle to be adopted by the Government to convey and pass on the Hong Kong spirit displayed by Mr Lee following the activities organised in commemoration of him this year; if concrete proposals are not available, whether it will actively study the issue and put forth proposals in this regard?

Reply:

President,

Mr Bruce Lee, the late film star of international renown, had made tremendous contribution to the development of martial arts culture and cinematic arts. Many people, both locally and outside Hong Kong, are deeply interested in his life story. During the period between 2008 and 2010, the Government held various discussion sessions with the owner of Bruce Lee's former residence in Kowloon Tong on the restoration and conversion of the property into a memorial hall. Unfortunately, despite numerous rounds of discussion, no consensus could be reached with the property owner regarding the scale of restoration works to be carried out. The Government and the property owner eventually considered that staging a themed exhibition on Bruce Lee at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (HKHM) would be a good way to commemorate and show respect to Mr Bruce Lee. The exhibition will open on July 20 this year for visit by local residents and visitors, and will run for five years.

Our reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(a) and (b) In July 2008, the owner of Bruce Lee's former residence in Kowloon Tong indicated to the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) his wish to donate the property for restoration and conversion into a Bruce Lee memorial hall. Having conducted preliminary study and assessment on the restoration proposal, the Hong Kong Tourism Board and relevant government departments considered that the proposal, if materialised, could add a new attraction to Hong Kong. Accordingly, the Government agreed to discuss with the property owner on the restoration proposal. The proposal framework put forward by the property owner included, among other things, changing the land use of the lot where the former residence is located, and constructing three storeys of basement, with one designated for a memorial hall for the property owner's charity foundation, so that the floor area of the property can be expanded significantly from originally around 5,000 square feet to 30,000 square feet. Having generally examined the proposal, the relevant government departments considered that it might have long-term impact on the land use and planning restrictions, etc. in the Kowloon Tong area.

During the period between 2008 and 2010, the CEDB had conducted numerous rounds of discussion with the property owner on the scale of restoration works to be carried out for the former residence. Despite the Government's strenuous efforts in those two years, no consensus could be reached with the property owner, the crux being

that the Government could not agree to the property owner's proposal of constructing three storeys of basement and expanding the floor area greatly at the site. Eventually, in late 2010, both parties considered that it would not be meaningful to drag on the issue, and that staging a themed exhibition at the HKHM would be another desirable way to commemorate and show respect to Mr Bruce Lee. Since there is a big difference in views between the Government and the property owner regarding the scale of the restoration works for the former residence, we have no plan for further discussion with the property owner on the matter. Neither has the property owner formally approached us regarding the restoration issue since then.

(c) To mark the 40th anniversary of Bruce Lee's death on July 20, the Government will organise large scale commemorative programmes with the "Bruce Lee: Kung Fu • Art • Life" exhibition held at the HKHM as the highlight. Presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the exhibition will showcase over 600 precious items of Bruce Lee's relics and memorabilia to review the legendary life of Mr Lee in respect of his personal profile, movies, martial arts and cultural phenomenon, etc. The LCSD has specially scheduled to open the exhibition on this special date of July 20. The exhibition will run for five years.

Furthermore, to tie in with the exhibition and to enable the public to get a thorough understanding of this legendary figure, the Federation of Hong Kong Filmmakers has produced a 75-minute documentary entitled "The Brilliant Life of Bruce Lee", which will be screened at the HKHM during the exhibition period. Rich in content, this documentary will introduce Bruce Lee's life story, featuring many precious film clips from Bruce Lee's movies produced during his childhood and adulthood in Hong Kong and the US, home videos, and interviews with people closely associated with him, such as his family members, filming partners, friends and martial arts practitioners, etc.

To complement the five-year "Bruce Lee: Kung Fu • Art • Life" exhibition, the LCSD will organise a series of education and extension programmes with different themes in phases including lectures, sharing sessions and interactive demonstrations, to explore the life, career and achievements of Bruce Lee from different perspectives.

The Hong Kong Film Archive of the LCSD will also organise related film programmes to tie in with the five-year exhibition. This year, the Film Archive will organise film programmes featuring teenage Bruce Lee and screen a new print of *The Way of the Dragon* in September and October.

Thank you, President.

Ends/Wednesday, July 17, 2013

Issued at HKT 15:03