

LCQ7: Utilisation of exhibition facilities

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Following is a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to a question by the Hon Ip Kwok-him at the Legislative Council meeting today (December 2):

Question:

It has been reported that there is a significant difference in the occupancy rates between the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) and the AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) and at the meeting of this Council on November 4 this year, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development indicated that the Government had always encouraged and facilitated AWE and HKCEC to adopt the "one show, two locations" approach, i.e., staging an exhibition at the two venues at the same time. Yet, the mega jewellery fair held in September this year, which adopted the "one show, two locations" approach for the first time, was promoted by the trades themselves. Moreover, the trades have also proposed that the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (TDC) collaborates with them in jointly promoting the "one show, two locations" approach. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the actual work progress made in encouraging and facilitating AWE and HKCEC to stage major exhibitions using the "one show, two locations" approach, and whether it has drawn up a work schedule;

(b) what specific measures the authorities have put in place to support the proposed collaboration between the trades and TDC in jointly promoting the "one show, two locations" approach and facilitate the collaboration between the trades and TDC; if they have no specific measures, of the reasons for that; and

(c) whether it has assessed if the Phase 3 development plan of HKCEC will aggravate the vacancy problem of AWE, resulting in more public funds being wasted?

Reply:

President,

(a) and (b) To enhance utilisation of the exhibition facilities in Hong Kong, the Government has been encouraging Hong Kong Trade Development Council (TDC),

Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) and the AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) to collaborate on exhibition projects. Nevertheless, successful implementation of the "one show, two locations" approach requires close co-ordination between exhibition venues and organisers. Hence, an exhibition using this approach will stand a better chance of success if only one organiser is involved. The Hong Kong Jewellery and Gem Fair 2009 held concurrently at HKCEC and AWE last September was a good example.

The staging of an exhibition by an organiser and the approach to be adopted is a commercial decision made on the basis of market needs and it would be inappropriate for the Government to interfere with these decisions. However, we could provide assistance, for example, we could provide support as far as possible in traffic and transportation arrangements to facilitate and encourage exhibition organisers to adopt the "one show, two locations" approach. We have conveyed our views to TDC and have requested it to assist in promoting the organisation of exhibitions using the "one show, two locations" approach. In addition, the Hong Kong Tourism Board will also strengthen publicity for these exhibitions.

(c) The Government has not made any decision on whether the proposed HKCEC Phase 3 expansion project should proceed. The preparatory work is still under way. We will conduct a public consultation at an appropriate time when there is a concrete proposal. When deciding on the matter, we will consider various factors, including public opinions, the overall development of the convention and exhibition industry, market demand (taking into account the additional 100,000 square metres of exhibition space to be provided by AWE Phase 1 and Phase 2 and the timing of their availability) and whether the expansion project will benefit Hong Kong's economy, etc.

As the HKCEC Phase 3 development involves complicated issues which will take time to address, there will be no immediate impacts on AWE. AWE has been in operation for four years only; it has good prospects and possesses plenty of room for further development. The Government, as a shareholder of AWE, will actively encourage and facilitate its utilisation through, for example, exploring how to leverage on its advantages of proximity to the airport and the Mainland market. We will also advise AWE to co-operate with exhibition organisers and TDC to organise exhibitions using the "one show, two locations" approach.

Ends/Wednesday, December 2, 2009