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STORY: A PROPOSAL to set up advisory committees in place of the two municipal councils has failed to win support from a part of the arts sector.

The proposal to create the 12 committees to advise the government on art, culture and sports was made in a study by consultant Albert Lam Chi-Chiu, a former director of Urban Services.

The 12 advisory committees of more than 100 public representatives would come into being after the Provisional Urban and Regional councils were disbanded at the end of this year.

The two councils have 100 public representatives.

The study suggests that the Home Affairs Bureau would enact policies for art, culture and sports, with a new department implementing such policies in place of the existing municipal services departments.

One of the most vocal critics of the Lam proposal was Simon Wong Tim-keung, a member of the board of directors of the Hong Kong Cultural Sector Joint Conference, which advocates setting up a high-level art and culture council composed of members of the public.

Mr Wong condemned the new framework, saying it could not help in the development of arts and culture.

Mr Wong criticised the current framework for its lack of macro policies on formulation, and for neglecting the grassroots needs of the people.

He explained that macro policies should answer questions concerning such subjects as "the social role of museums".

"What is the relationship between the museums and other government departments? How do the museums help the promotion of history and science education?"

If the macro policy direction is art education, then the resources allocated to the museums should focus on such an aim, he said.

The art and culture council should be powerful enough to co-ordinate with other departments, in designing and implementing policies.

He criticised the proposal suggesting that the Home Affairs Bureau should take charge of policy making, noting that the bureau could not take over the role being played by the council.

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He gave three reasons:

The bureau officer looking after the issue was only a deputy secretary who was not senior enough to co-ordinate with other government bureaus regarding art and culture policies.

The deputy secretary now was only an administrative official, but not a professional in the field and therefore lacked expertise.

He was not a public representative and he would only be responsible to his boss but not to the people.

For the numerous advisory committees, Mr Wong believed they could only deal with detailed plans for the daily arts activities, such as what kind of painting should a museum buy.

"The level of an advisory committee could not deal with issues such as cooperation between public libraries and Education Department," he explained.

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