

LCQ20: Handling unforeseen tourism incidents

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs Rita Lau, to a question by the Hon Paul Tse in the Legislative Council today (April 21):

Question:

There have been comments that in the recent incident of the flights of Viva Macau being delayed or cancelled due to its financial crisis, the Tourism Crisis Management Office under the Macao Special Administrative Region Government had played an important emergency management role, whereas Hong Kong lacks a proper mechanism for handling unforeseen tourism incidents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council, given that various government departments and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong are responsible for tourism matters at present, and they have often been criticised by people for lacking co-ordination, whether it has studied the deployment of staff and resources from these departments to immediately set up a unit similar to the Tourism Crisis Management Office for handling unforeseen tourism incidents in Hong Kong or overseas; if it has, of the outcome; if not, whether it will conduct such a study expeditiously?

Reply:

President,

In handling unforeseen tourism incidents, the Government's priority is to provide appropriate assistance to those affected as soon as possible. At present, government departments and related organisations already have an established mechanism to handle contingencies, which has similar purpose and functions as that of Macao's Tourism Crisis Management Office. We will review the mechanism from time to time to ensure its effectiveness.

The Philippine tour group incident, in which the tour group arrived at Hong Kong last month without a receiving party, indeed revealed some communication gaps among departments. The Tourism Commission has immediately reviewed with the concerned government departments and organisations the arrangements to handle contingencies and to notify each other. Improvement measures have been implemented. We have also decided to conduct regular drills on the notification

mechanism to test the co-ordination of parties concerned and to ensure that the mechanism will fulfil its objectives.

The Tourism Commission will continue to work closely with relevant government departments and organisations to ensure that unforeseen tourism incidents will be handled properly.

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