

LCQ2: Progress of tourism development projects and conservation of rural areas with tourism value

Following is a 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 (October 20):

Question:

Regarding the progress of tourism development projects and conservation of rural areas with tourism value, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) given the Government's decision to incorporate some areas of the Clear Water Bay Country Park into the proposed extension of South East New Territories Landfill and the press reports about the damage caused by property developers in rural areas such as Sai Wan and Pak Lap in Sai Kung have aroused grave public concern, whether the Government has considered formulating mandatory measures to conserve rural areas with tourism value; of the Government's specific plans for tourism development sites at present in addition to the tourism attractions and facilities already planned for construction or under construction;

(b) given that the Panel on Economic Development of this Council passed a motion at its meeting on April 27, 2009 requesting the Government to review afresh the decision to abandon the "Fisherman's Wharf" project and reconsider whether this project should continue to be implemented, of the Government's present stance, as well as the specific development plans; and

(c) of the latest progress of the development of the Bruce Lee memorial hall project; when the hall is expected to be open to the public; whether the authorities will start afresh the selection of a building cluster with cultural traditions which awaits revitalisation to be the site for the "Jao Tsung-i Academy/Hong Kong Cultural Heritage" project, with a view to developing the Academy into a tourism attraction which suits both refined and popular tastes?

Reply:

President,

Tourism development and conservation of the natural environment do not run counter to each other and are not mutually exclusive. My reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(a) At present, almost 40% of the land area in Hong Kong is designated as country parks, special areas, marine parks and marine reserve, and thereby protected by law. Many of these areas possess tourism value and are especially attractive for nature-lovers. Over the years, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department has been working with the Tourism Commission and the Hong Kong Tourism Board in promoting nature-based tourism in country parks, marine parks and the Geopark, with a view to strengthening public awareness in nature conservation.

The recent Tai Long Sai Wan incident has highlighted the need to expedite action to regulate land use in the vicinity of country parks for better protection of these sites. The Government has prepared draft Development Permission Area plans for Sai Wan, Hoi Ha, Pak Lap and So Lo Pun. For the remaining 50 sites adjacent to country parks but not yet covered by statutory plans, the Chief Executive has indicated in the Policy Address that we would either include them into country parks, or determine their proper uses through statutory planning, to enhance the protection of these sites against incompatible developments.

In respect of land use planning, other than planned and committed tourist spots and facilities, the planning work and studies in relation to tourism development currently conducted or to be conducted by the Planning Department include:

1. amendment to the Ping Shan Outline Zoning Plan: Two areas of about 0.5 hectare in Yuen Long Ping Shan adjacent to the Tsui Sing Lau Pagoda and Tat Tak Communal Hall will be rezoned to "Other Specified Uses" annotated "Heritage and Cultural Tourism Related" zone to facilitate tourism development;
2. "The Study on the Enhancement of the Sha Tau Kok Rural Township and Surrounding Areas" and "The Study on the Enhancement of the Lau Fau Shan Rural Township and Surrounding Areas": Both studies aim to formulate an Integrated Area Improvement Plan to enhance the local environment. The former will also assess the tourism potential of Sha Tau Kok Town as a Frontier Closed Area, and examine the possibility of enhancing the connection of Sha Tau Kok Town with other tourist attractions in the North East New Territories. The latter will assess the tourism and

recreational potential of Lau Fau Shan and its surrounding areas; and

3. According to the "Revised Concept Plan for Lantau" published in 2007, part of the area in Tung Chung East would be assessed and reserved for a theme park or major recreational uses in the long-term. The Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) and the Planning Department are working to commission early the feasibility study for the overall planning and engineering of the remaining development in Tung Chung.

(b) The Administration has never given up the plan of developing Aberdeen into a popular tourist attraction. To showcase the ambience of Aberdeen as a fishing village and enhance its tourism appeal, we have discussed with the Southern District Council (SDC) the construction of a promenade on both sides of the Aberdeen Harbour and beautifying Ap Lei Chau Main Street and adjacent streets with the theme of a fishermen's village. These improvement works will be carried out by the CEDD.

The design of the beautification works is expected to be completed by the end of this month. We plan to consult the SDC on the design and the works schedule in November. Upon finalisation of the design, we anticipate to seek funding approval from the Legislative Council (LegCo) Finance Committee within the current legislative session, so as to commence the improvement works quickly for estimated completion in phases from 2012-13 onwards.

(c) In respect of restoring Mr Bruce Lee's former residence, as I said in response to a Member's question during the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Economic Development last week, over the past year we maintained close contact and held a number of meetings with Mr Yu Pang-lin, the property owner of the residence, with a view to working out the restoration arrangements as soon as possible. However, until now we are still unable to reach a consensus with Mr Yu over the scope of the restoration.

At the same time, the Tourism Commission has gathered over 100 artifacts related to Mr Bruce Lee and produced a TV documentary on his life. To avoid disappointing the public, we plan to co-operate with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department in organising a themed exhibition at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum in Sha Tin to showcase Mr Lee's life and his contributions to the development of film and Kung Fu culture. The Museum is now conducting detailed preparatory work.

Jao Tsung-i Academy is located at the former Lai Chi Kok Hospital, a Grade 3

historic building selected for adaptive re-use under Batch I of the "Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme" (the Revitalisation Scheme) of the Development Bureau.

Under the Revitalisation Scheme, the Government invites eligible non-profit-making organisations to submit proposals to revitalise selected government-owned historic buildings in the form of social enterprise. The Government received ten proposals of different nature for revitalising the former Lai Chi Kok Hospital. Following detailed assessment by the Advisory Committee on Revitalisation of Historic Buildings, the Government finally selected the Hong Kong Institute for Promotion of Chinese Culture to revitalise the site as the Hong Kong Cultural Heritage Centre, for promotion of Chinese arts and culture.

This revitalisation project aims to provide an environment that blends natural landscape with an urban setting for visitors to learn about Chinese culture and history through participation in courses, workshops, cultural exchange activities, etc. as well as tours of the centre. Members of the public and tourists may also learn more about the history of the cluster of historic buildings through open days, guided tours and visits to the heritage interpretation centre.

In recognition of the outstanding achievements of the renowned Chinese scholar Professor Jao Tsung-i, the Government announced the naming of the Hong Kong Cultural Heritage Centre as the Jao Tsung-i Academy in December 2009. The naming of the centre after Professor Jao highlights Hong Kong people's admiration for his education work in the cultural and art fields over the years and our commitment to preserving and revitalising historic buildings.

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