

LCQ14: Tourism development of Lantau

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 (March 2):

Question:

I have learnt that in recent years, an international group operating large-scale outlet malls has been holding discussions with the Hong Kong SAR Government (SAR Government) to request the Government to allocate land in the vicinity of the Hong Kong International Airport at Chek Lap Kok for the development of a large-scale international outlet mall in order to attract visitors to Hong Kong and encourage spending by transit passengers through selling commodities of renowned brand names from various countries. Since 2008, the international group has discussed with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Development Bureau and the Airport Authority on different occasions, yet there is no policy bureau in the SAR Government to centrally deal with the development of tourism infrastructure and attractions, and the international group has continued to knock the door but to no avail. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it has assessed the economic benefits (including the number of visitors and transit passengers to be attracted to spend money in Hong Kong) to be brought about by the aforesaid proposed development plan;

(b) which government department(s) is/are responsible for processing applications relating to the aforesaid development plan at present; of the progress and the reasons why no progress has been made after so many years;

(c) given that the AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) has all along been criticised for being too far away from the town centre, which has led to its low utilisation, whether the authorities have assessed if the development of the aforesaid outlet mall in the vicinity of the airport will actually help enhance the utilisation of AWE and even the airport; and

(d) given that I have learnt that the management echelons of the various tourist attractions on Lantau Island are discussing the strengthening of co-operation among

different attractions in the hope of producing a synergy effect, whether the Government will examine if the construction of a large-scale outlet mall in the vicinity of the Airport can boost the aforesaid synergy effect, and whether such an outlet mall will play a catalytic role in formulating specific plans for the development of tourism on Lantau Island; if it will so examine, of the time required; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the question from the Hon Paul Tse is as follows.

(a) and (b) The Tourism Commission is responsible for co-ordinating the development of tourism infrastructure in Hong Kong and making tourism policy. It maintains close communications with other policy bureaux and departments with a view to ensuring the smooth implementation of various tourism-related projects.

In the first half of 2009, an international group put forward a proposal of developing a large-scale outlet mall on the Airport Island to the HKSAR Government. We have proactively explored this proposal and convened cross-policy bureau meetings to study carefully the location and feasible options of developing a large-scale outlet mall at or near the airport.

The group originally proposed to develop the mall on a car park site adjacent to the AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE). Since part of the proposed site has been earmarked for accommodating essential airport operational facilities, the site is not available for use as a large-scale outlet mall. Given that Terminal 2 of the airport has sufficient supporting facilities, the Government has suggested the group to develop the mall there with a view to implementing the afore-mentioned proposal as soon as possible. However, the group insisted that they were only interested in developing a large-scale outlet mall on the car park site adjacent to the AWE.

As no suitable site could be found on the Airport Island, the Government replied to the group in August 2009, explaining why the proposed site was not available. The reply mentioned that the Government would continue to search for a suitable site for the development of a large-scale outlet mall and the site would be granted through an open and competitive process once it was identified.

Regarding the economic benefits of the proposal from the international group, we are not in a position to make a detailed assessment in the absence of concrete details, such as the exact location and scale of the proposed mall as well as the types of products to be sold there.

(c) The AWE is a large-scale convention and exhibition facility in Hong Kong. It is suitable for hosting different types of events such as large-scale trade fairs, conferences and concerts. Its target clientele mainly includes exhibitors and buyers from around the world, conference participants as well as concert spectators etc. In November 2010, over 900,000 people visited the AWE when the animated version of the "Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival" was on display there.

The AWE's location makes it very convenient for exhibitors and visitors to set off directly from the airport. There are also bus services connecting the AWE with the Mainland. During most of the AWE's event days, bus services between the AWE and Tung Chung as well as urban areas will be enhanced, while the MTR Corporation Limited will also provide concessionary fares for passengers travelling to the AWE by the Airport Express. The HKSAR Government and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) have been proactively assisting the AWE in attracting more organisations to stage exhibitions there. The Hong Kong Trade Development Council is also actively exploring the feasibility of holding more new shows at the AWE. In fact, the AWE's single-storey, column-free and high-ceiling design makes it very suitable for the relevant trades to organise exhibitions with large-scale equipment. A successful example is the Asian Aerospace International Expo and Congress to be held again at the AWE in March this year.

On the other hand, a large-scale outlet mall is used for selling brand products from various parts of the world and mainly serves consumers and shoppers. Hence, its purpose and target clientele hugely differ from those of the AWE.

Though the development of a large-scale outlet mall near the airport could provide an additional leisure facility for the AWE users, this would not directly help enhance the utilisation of the AWE because different organisations have different considerations while taking up rental space at the AWE. Whether the proposed mall could increase the utilisation of the airport would depend on whether it could attract additional visitors to travel to Hong Kong by air specifically for visiting this mall.

(d) The Government, the HKTB and management of various tourist attractions on Lantau have been maintaining close liaison. The management of these attractions have also been co-operating with each other with a view to attracting more visitors to Lantau. In November 2010, the Hong Kong Disneyland, Ngong Ping 360, Noah's Ark, the AWE and the Hong Kong International Airport jointly offered discounts on the occasion of the display of the animated version of the "Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival" at the AWE. Visitors with tickets to this exhibition could enjoy admission, dining and shopping discounts offered by these organisations. In addition, the Hong Kong Disneyland and Ngong Ping 360 have been frequently working with the tourism trade in developing tour packages.

The Tourism Commission is currently exploring with the management of various attractions on Lantau and the Islands District Council on how to further enhance the tourism appeal of Lantau. The main focus is on how to enhance co-operation in respect of promotion and improving transport connection, and does not involve developing any new infrastructural facilities such as a large-scale outlet mall near the airport. On the other hand, the HKTB will leverage on the characteristics of Lantau and other outlying islands in developing new tourism products and itineraries featuring various attractions so as to attract more family, vacation and business visitors. We welcome any proposals that could help promote tourism development of Lantau and stand ready to explore feasible options with relevant organisations or people.

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