

LCQ4: Tourist attractions in Hong Kong

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Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, at the Legislative Council meeting today (October 26):

Question:

Recently, the web site of the Cable News Network of the United States has selected 12 tourist attractions around the world as "tourist traps" that are misrepresentations and cause disappointment to tourists, and the "Avenue of Stars" of Hong Kong ranks second among them. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the policy currently in place to improve the aforesaid tourist attraction;
- (b) given the aforesaid criticism on the "Avenue of Stars", whether the Government will review its policy on the development and operation of tourist attractions, so as to avoid causing similar disappointment to tourists as the places turn out to be misrepresentations; and
- (c) whether it will reconsider the development of the Fisherman's Wharf under the Aberdeen Tourism Project, especially reducing the commercial elements, and preserving as far as possible the original features of the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter area, so that the place will not become another tourist attraction which turns out to be a misrepresentation; if it will, of the plan; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Avenue of Stars (AoS) was developed in 2004 in response to visitors' keen interest in Hong Kong movies, and also to recognise the contributions of the film industry to the tourism and economic development of Hong Kong. Features installed at the AoS include milestones of the local movie history, floor plaques with handprints and autographs of Hong Kong's movie stars and workers, a sculpture of the late world-famous Kung Fu legend Bruce Lee, and the recently installed statue of McDull, a brand of local original animation and cartoon. As the AoS is located along

the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront, visitors can enjoy the facility as well as the scenic view of the Victoria Harbour while strolling along the waterfront promenade. The AoS Management Company Limited, which is responsible for the management of the venue, arranges a variety of activities and programmes from time to time for the participation and viewing by visitors and locals alike. Since its opening, the AoS has been very popular among visitors and local residents.

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(a) We note that in a report by CNN's website CNNgo released in August this year, CNNgo indicated that AoS focused only on the provision of souvenir booths, whereas comfortable resting areas were lacking. Together with the city of Tokyo, New York's Times Square and Nanjing Dong Lu in Shanghai, the AoS was listed as one of the World's 12 Worst Tourist Traps. However, according to the findings of the Hong Kong Tourism Board's (HKTb) regular surveys on visitors, the AoS has been one of the top 10 must-see tourist attractions of Hong Kong, with the number of visitations accumulating to over 44 million up to the present. Based on information from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the AoS is currently provided with about 230 seating spaces, some of which are also equipped with shades for use by visitors. In addition, outside seating accommodation for use of alfresco dining is available in the area between the AoS and the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade.

After we learnt about CNNgo's report, the Tourism Commission together with the LCSD immediately contacted HKTb and the AoS Management Company Limited to explore suitable improvement measures. We have already identified a number of possible options. For instance, the LCSD will consider providing additional resting facilities in the vicinity of the AoS, such as along the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade. In addition, the LCSD will explore with the AoS Management Company Limited and relevant film association the possibility of installing more floor plaques for handprints of distinguished local movie stars and information boards at the venue. They will also strengthen the management of the AoS and its adjacent open plaza, and tighten the control of illegal hawkers and mobile stalls to avoid disturbances to visitors, so as to maintain a more pleasant environment for visitors. In parallel, the HKTb has been actively exploring with the AoS Management Company Limited for decorating the AoS during major festivals and large scale events, which would help enhance the festive ambience and enrich visitor experience.

(b) In planning for the development of new attractions, we typically draw up detailed

plans and proposals. We will take into account the views of the tourism sector, notably the HKTB and the Hong Kong Travel Industry Council, as well as feedback on the preferences and needs of visitors of different origin as reflected by the travel trade. We will also take into account the special features and unique characteristics of individual attractions, such as the natural landscape, local culture, the presence of any landmarks and buildings with preservation value, and the related historic background of the site, etc., and will explore how to make the best use of these natural and existing features in the conceptual design. In implementing the development of attractions, we will consult relevant departments, local community and organisations, as well as other stakeholders, to obtain their support for the project. In addition, we will recommend a suitable mode of operation and management for individual attractions, with a view to offering quality tourist facilities and services for our visitors.

We will review our strategy for the development and operation of tourist attractions from time to time, and will closely liaise with the operating and management agents of the attractions as well as the tourism sector for their views. We will also undertake suitable adjustments and improvements where necessary, to ensure that the facilities and services offered by these attractions would meet the needs and aspirations of our visitors.

(c) We have been using the theme of a traditional fishing village in taking forward the Aberdeen Tourism Project. In the early stage of the study, we have considered introducing commercial elements in the facilities in order to enlarge the scale of the project. However, a detailed assessment by the financial consultants revealed that a conceptual design incorporating such commercial elements would not be attractive to private developers, and also not financially viable. Moreover, the conversion of a large piece of open space for commercial uses would destroy the ambience of a traditional fishing village. We accepted the view and decided to fund the beautification works along the promenade of both sides of the Aberdeen Harbour as well as Ap Lei Chau Main Street and adjacent streets with a view to preserving the characteristics of a traditional fishing village. We will endeavour to preserve the characteristics of the district, and provide tourist facilities, harbour cruise landing shelters, and additional display board, with traditional fishing village ambience, so as to go in line with the character of the area and further enhance Aberdeen as a traditional fishing village. The above proposal has been endorsed and supported by the District Council and relevant stakeholders, and funding has also been approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

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