

LCQ20: Tourism development on Lantau

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to a question by the Hon Paul Tse in the Legislative Council today (November 9):

Question:

Earlier on, some members of the tourism industry complained that there were long stretches of roads which were closed to the public on Lantau Island, making it difficult for the tourist attractions in different parts of Lantau Island to produce a synergy effect. Not long ago, the Panel on Economic Development of this Council, together with the tourism working group formed by the management echelons of various tourist attractions on Lantau Island, as well as the Islands District Council, conducted a site visit to Lantau Island to assess the impact of closed roads on the development of tourism on Lantau Island. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the policies and measures to be adopted by the Government for reducing the coverage of closed sections of these roads after listening to the views of the aforesaid delegation, so as to improve the aforesaid situation;

(b) what specific plans the Government has for developing tourism on Lantau Island; whether it will make reference to Singapore's experience in developing Sentosa into a major tourist attraction when it formulates its strategy for developing tourism on Lantau Island; and

(c) whether it has consulted the management echelons of Hong Kong Disneyland, Ngong Ping 360 and the tourist attractions in Cheung Sha, Mui Wo and Tai O etc., so as to seek ways to enhance the synergy effect produced by these tourist attractions, in order to improve tourism development on Lantau Island?

Reply:

President,

Our replies to the questions raised by the Hon Paul Tse are as follows:

(a) South Lantau is a conservation area. The Transport Department (TD) has implemented traffic management measures in South Lantau to protect this area from being damaged and ensure its long-term sustainable development. Such measures include introducing closed roads and restricting the number of vehicles accessing South Lantau.

Upon the completion of improvement works on Tung Chung Road and opening of the road to traffic in February 2009, TD has suitably relaxed the restrictions on vehicle access to the area by allowing a daily maximum of 30 coaches to access South Lantau via Tung Chung Road. Figures reveal that this measure is sufficient to meet the general demand for group tours to South Lantau. To cater for major tourism events (such as the Mui Wo Lantern Festival held in March 2010), TD has exercised flexibility to allow more coaches to gain access to South Lantau on the event date. These measures aim to strike a balance between promoting South Lantau's tourism development and protecting its natural environment.

TD will review, from time to time, the prevailing condition of the traffic and public transport facilities on Lantau and make appropriate adjustments in the light of the different development needs of Lantau.

(b) Lantau Island has always been one of Hong Kong's tourist hotspots. The Government has developed a number of infrastructure projects and attractions on Lantau, including the Hong Kong Disneyland, AsiaWorld-Expo, Terminal 2 of the Hong Kong International Airport, Ngong Ping Cable Car, Ngong Ping Piazza and Wisdom Path, etc.

A number of new tourism facilities will come into operation on Lantau in the next few years. The expansion of the Hong Kong Disneyland is proceeding smoothly. Three new themed areas are expected to be completed by 2013, with the first one (Toy Story Land) to be opened in mid-November this year. A heritage boutique hotel converted from the Old Tai O Police Station will be opened by the end of 2011. Preserving the colonial architectural features and highlighting the history of Tai O (including the Old Tai O Police Station), the hotel will be an ideal attraction to local and overseas visitors alike. The Civil Engineering and Development Department is carrying out improvement works in Tai O in phases, and is embarking on the detailed design for a project to beautify Mui Wo. A new hotel with convention facilities in the Discovery Bay is expected to commence operation in mid-2012.

In addition to leisure travel, Lantau enjoys competitive advantages in the development of meetings, incentive travels, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) tourism. The presence of large-scale convention and exhibition venues and numerous hotels is one of its key advantages. Coupled with the distinctive MICE products constantly launched by industry partners, Lantau has the potential to develop into a new MICE hub to meet the needs of the various event organisers and visitors.

We have been introducing the unique features of Lantau to visitors through various channels. We will continue to keep in view tourism development in the neighbouring regions, and explore the feasibility of developing new attractions on Lantau. We will also continue to foster co-operation among the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), the Islands District Council and various attractions to promote Lantau as a distinctive tourist destination.

(c) The Government, HKTB and major attractions on Lantau have always been committed to enhancing the tourism appeal of the island. Our strategy is to develop itineraries featuring different attractions on Lantau to achieve greater synergy. For instance, itineraries including the Ngong Ping Cable Car and sites of historical and cultural interest such as the Tai O fishing village and the Po Lin Monastery have been developed to attract tourists interested in natural landscape and cultural heritage. The HKTB also actively promotes Mui Wo as the starting point for exploring Lantau. Tourists are advised to go to Mui Wo by ferry and then take a bus to such attractions as the Po Lin Monastery, Giant Buddha, Ngong Ping Piazza and Ngong Ping Village.

There is frequent collaboration among the operators of tourist attractions on Lantau. For example, when the "River of Wisdom – Animated Version of Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival" Exhibition was held in the AsiaWorld-Expo in November last year, exhibition ticket holders could enjoy a discount for riding the Ngong Ping Cable Car. In April and May this year, the Ngong Ping Cable Car paired up with Hong Kong Disneyland to offer admission discounts to visitors.

In August this year, the Tourism Commission (TC), HKTB, Islands District Council and New World First Ferry Services Limited jointly launched a publicity campaign to further promote Lantau's tourism appeal. The campaign includes the publication of a guidebook for outlying islands (featuring tourism highlights of the different outlying islands), the launch of an Island Hopping Pass (to enable tourists to travel to outlying islands on ferry trips at concessionary fares), and arrangements with

shops and restaurants on outlying islands to offer dining and shopping discounts to visitors.

TC and the HKTB are currently teaming up with the MICE and other relevant trade partners on Lantau to promote Lantau as a new MICE hub. Our initiatives include strengthening promotion at international and major MICE trade activities, encouraging event organisers to include Lantau in their itineraries, and, by means of public relations efforts and the Internet, promoting MICE offerings on Lantau to attract more event organisers and visitors.

We attach great importance to the development of tourism on Lantau. With a view to enhancing Hong Kong's status as a premier tourist destination in Asia, we will continue to work with the relevant parties to develop diversified tourist attractions on Lantau and step up promotion to enhance the Island's tourism appeal.

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