

LCQ20: Complaints relating to travel club membership

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 (December 7):

Question:

Regarding complaints about travel club membership in recent years, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows the respective numbers of complaints about travel club membership received by the Hong Kong Police Force, the Consumer Council, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong and other tourism-related government departments in the past two years; among them, of the number of complaints substantiated as cases of deception after investigation;

(b) whether it knows the percentage of complaints about travel club membership being formally investigated in all relevant complaints; and the main reasons for other complaints not being taken up for investigation; and

(c) of the policy in place to prevent fraudulent cases involving travel club membership from happening?

Reply:

President,

(a) and (b) The number of complaints received by the Police relating to travel club membership in the past two years is set out in Table 1 of the Annex (only the number of companies involved was recorded).

The Police has investigated all complaint cases to determine whether deception or other crimes are involved. After investigation, no criminal elements are found in these cases.

The number of complaints received by the Consumer Council (the CC) relating to travel club membership in the past two years, the nature of complaint and the number

of cases in which mediation was successful are set out in Table 2 of the Annex.

When the Travel Industry Council (the TIC) receives complaints relating to travel club membership sold by an entity which is not a licensed travel agent regulated by the TIC, it will suggest the complainant to seek assistance from or lodge a complaint to the CC. The TIC does not keep any record on such complaints received. In the past two years, the Tourism Commission has not received any complaints relating to travel club membership.

(c) As can be seen from the complaints received by the CC, the vast majority of them relate to sales practices. To tackle unfair trade practices and protect consumers' interests, we now plan to amend the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Chapter 362) to expand its scope of application to cover services and to criminalise some commonly seen unfair trade practices in consumer transactions, including false trade descriptions of services, misleading omissions, and the practice of accepting payment without the intention or ability to supply the products contracted for. We are now pressing ahead with the preparation of the legislative amendments.

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