

LCQ1: Promoting hospitality and international perspective in Hong Kong

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Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, in the Legislative Council today (January 18):

Question:

A famous brand store was suspected to discriminate against Hong Kong people as it only allowed mainland customers but not Hong Kong people to take photos outside the store, causing a stir among Hong Kong people who were unhappy with the unfair treatment they received at their home town, and the incident developed into one involving a thousand people surrounding the store to protest and take photos, yet some people were so agitated that they bitterly insulted the mainland tourists who passed by, and some tourists reflected that such overly radical behaviour of the like will damage the reputation of Hong Kong's tourism industry. Furthermore, a survey organisation in France earlier conducted a survey on the ranking of prestigious commercial shopping avenues in 30 cities in the world, and due to reasons that Hong Kong people are not friendly enough towards tourists, etc., Hong Kong ranks the second last in the survey. Earlier on even the "Avenue of Stars" was ranked by the web site of the Cable News Network of the United States as the second most disappointing tourist attraction around the world. Some members of the tourism industry have pointed out that the aforesaid incidents have reflected the large gap between the standard of the tourism ancillaries and tourist attractions in Hong Kong and that expected by tourists from overseas countries, and that the authorities taking charge of tourism are unable to feel the pulse of the international tourism market. Regarding the aforesaid incidents relating to the tourism industry in Hong Kong, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it has assessed the causes of the series of incidents above, and what negative impact they have on the development of the tourism industry in Hong Kong; if it has, of the results; if not, whether it can seriously conduct the assessment;

(b) with respect to civic education, of the existing policies in place to foster the civic awareness and hospitality of members of the public as citizens in a cosmopolitan city, upgrade their ability in commanding international languages, minimise as far as possible the conflicts arising from members of the public alienating mainland tourists in particular, and enhance Hong Kong's appeal as a premier tourist city; and

(c) of the policies put in place by the Government to maintain the balanced development of Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan city, and prevent the tourism market and related initiatives from overemphasising the preferences of mainland tourists and ignoring the long-term benefits and the direction of development of the tourism industry?

Reply:

President,

Visitors from around the world have all along recognised Hong Kong as a premium international tourist destination. The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) conducts a Departing Visitors Survey every year, including an assessment of the overall satisfaction level of visitors towards Hong Kong. According to the survey findings, the overall satisfaction rating given by respondents ranged from 8.2 to 8.3 on a 10-point scale in the past five years. The findings also indicated that on average over 80% of the respondents found shopping in Hong Kong satisfactory or highly satisfactory.

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

(a) We are aware of recent media reports of an incident in which an international fashion brand store was alleged to have prohibited Hong Kong people from taking photographs in front of the store. We understand that the store has issued a statement afterwards, saying that it has no intention to offend Hong Kong people. We consider this an isolated incident. We encourage employees of various trades to, and believe that they will, keep enhancing their level of service to the local public and tourists in terms of efficiency, quality and professionalism. This is conducive to maintaining the status of Hong Kong as an international tourist destination.

We also noted Member's opinions on the survey report as stated in the question. We respect the surveys carried out by any organisations and will make reference to survey findings published by various organisations on the performance of our tourism industry for conducting appropriate analyses, reviews and follow-up actions. Judging from such indicators as visitor satisfaction level, number of visitors, their duration of stay in Hong Kong and consumption level, we have found no impact of such surveys on visitors' impression towards Hong Kong. Indeed, Hong Kong's

world-class shopping experience has repeatedly received recognitions in recent years. For instance, in May 2011, the TripAdvisor, the world's most popular travel commentary website, announced the "Top Ten Destination Worldwide" and Hong Kong was ranked as one of the ten best tourist destinations, which was the only Asian city on the list. In May and September 2009, Hong Kong was ranked as the world's best city for shopping and the "Best City for Shopping in Asia" in the online poll run by the CNN International and the online travel magazine Smart Travel Asia respectively. Nevertheless, we will continue to strengthen the training for frontline staff of the tourism industry through the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong and various trade organisations so as to enhance the service level of the industry and the retail sector. Moreover, we will continue to maintain close contact with various government departments concerned to improve the environment and supporting facilities at our shopping avenues and tourist attractions.

(b) All along, the school curriculum of Hong Kong has accorded importance to enhancing students' quality as citizens. Learning elements related to students' values and attitudes, such as "respect for others", "sincerity" and "courtesy" are incorporated in Key Learning Areas and subjects. In addition, a number of relevant subjects (e.g. General Studies at primary level, Life and Society Curriculum at junior secondary level, Tourism and Hospitality Studies and Liberal Studies at senior secondary level) cover the topics of Hong Kong as an international cosmopolitan city with a view to widening students' horizons, enhancing hospitality culture, thereby strengthening Hong Kong's attractiveness as a tourist centre.

On raising language proficiency, the Government aims to enable our people to be biliterate and trilingual. Upon the advice of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, the Government provides and supports language education for students, as well as continues its on-going efforts in improving the language skills of the community in general through various projects which would be either funded or sponsored by the Language Fund.

On fostering the hospitality culture, the Tourism Commission, together with the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, launched the Hong Kong Young Ambassador Scheme in 2001 to instil in young people a sense of courtesy and helpfulness to visitors. Since then, over 2,200 young ambassadors have completed the training courses and been deployed to various tourist spots to introduce attractions to visitors. They have also participated in large scale activities and tourism promotion events. To date, the Scheme has provided over 180,000 hours of service and received

positive feedback from schools, youngsters and their families.

(c) To sustain Hong Kong's image as a cosmopolitan city and the world's premier tourism destination, the Government and the HKTB attach great importance to maintaining a diverse portfolio of visitors. When designing tourist attractions and organising mega events, we would consider the tastes and interests of different visitors, with a view to highlighting the unique status of Hong Kong as a meeting point of Chinese and Western cultures. On promotional strategies, the HKTB reviews from time to time its priorities in resource allocation. In 2012-13, the HKTB plans to invest its marketing resources in 20 target source markets around the world. Seventy percent of the resources will go to the international market while the remaining 30% to the Mainland market. Such an arrangement aims to ensure the long-term and steady development of the tourism industry of Hong Kong and maintain a high degree of flexibility so as to reduce the impact of any fluctuation in individual markets on our industry.

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