

LCQ4: Development of new tourism resources

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Following is a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to a question by the Hon Yiu Si-wing in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

Some members of the tourism industry have pointed out that, with the implementation of the Individual Visit Scheme, there have been changes in the travel patterns of inbound tourists in recent years. It is no longer viable for Hong Kong to rely solely on traditional attractions and shopping to attract tourists to come again. There is thus a need to integrate the existing tourism resources to promote thematic tourism with characteristics. They have also pointed out that as tourists now move around mainly in tourist areas, other districts cannot share the economic benefits of tourism and the tourism resources in such districts are also left idle. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether there are plans to make use of the distinctive tourism resources in various districts, including natural scenery, cuisine, historic buildings, temples, churches, and so on, to draw up tour routes of different themes and formulate relevant policies for development and promotion; if there are, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(b) as I have learnt that in order to promote district-wise economic development and employment, various District Councils (DCs) have proposed to develop tourism projects of different themes, including eco-tourism for Sai Kung District, the Aberdeen Tourism Project of the Southern District, the Sun Yat-Sen Historical Trail and the "Religious Trail" of the Central and Western District, and so on, whether the authorities have drawn up any long-term development plan in relation to the tourism projects put forward by various DCs, so as to support and guide various DCs in developing such projects, and co-ordinate various DCs to conduct joint promotional activities; if they have, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(c) given that some members in the community have expressed the view that the Yu Lan Ghost Festival, which has been put on the third national list of intangible cultural heritage, has attracted quite a number of visitors to come here for its reputation, but the organising teams of the Festival are ageing, giving rise to a succession problem, and there is also a lack of venues for organising such activities, whether the authorities have

assessed the tourism values of traditional festive activities and related traditional handicrafts, and formulated specific preservation and support measures pinpointing the difficulties encountered; if they have, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; whether the authorities have plans to promote traditional festivals integrated with elements of tourism to tourists; if they have, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Tourism is a major pillar of Hong Kong's economy. The Government attaches great importance to the development of tourism. All along, the Government has been partnering with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) to promote Hong Kong globally as a leading international city in Asia and a world-class tourist destination. Our rich tourism resources are the main factor that drives our tourism development. Not only do we have theme parks, fine wine and culinary delights as well as mega events, but also eastern and western festivities, local living culture, historic buildings and breath-taking natural scenery. The Government has been working with the tourism sector, the HKTB, the operators of tourist attractions, other related parties including the District Councils, etc. on how to utilise these resources to promote Hong Kong more effectively.

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

(a) Apart from the major tourist attractions, the HKTB is also actively encouraging our tourists to visit and spend in different districts so as to generate greater economic benefits to Hong Kong. In recent years, the HKTB has used different channels, including the Internet, social media, smartphone applications with augmented reality technology, pamphlets, etc. to promote a number of themed routes bundling various attractions in the districts. Examples include "Travel Through Time" of Central and Sheung Wan, "Evolvement of a Fishing Village" of Shau Kei Wan, "A Popular Temple and a City Transformed" of Wong Tai Sin and Kowloon City, Yuen Long Ping Shan Heritage Trail, Fanling Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail, etc. To further integrate the tourism resources of each district for its promotion, the HKTB plans to introduce a dedicated webpage to promote the various tourism offerings in the 18 districts in stages next year. The webpage will feature unique attractions and buildings, local living culture, dining delights, themed shopping streets and specialty markets, etc. of various districts.

In addition, the HKTB launched the New Tour Product Development Scheme (NTPDS) in November 2012 to encourage the travel trade to develop new themed tours with the marketing costs partly subsidised by the HKTB. As at the end of 2013, the scheme has subsidised 12 themed tours, including the "Sham Shui Po Foodie Tour" which takes visitors on a local culinary journey, and the "Six Senses Heritage Experience" which features a cycling tour in Yuen Long and a "big bowl feast" in the walled village. The NTPDS has received positive feedback from the travel trade and the HKTB will continue to run the scheme and encourage the travel trade to unleash their creativity to utilise the tourism resources of different districts.

(b) The Government has been keeping track of different district tourism projects proposed by the District Councils. Having regard to the nature of these projects and the interests of our tourists, we will, through the HKTB, promote them to tourists and encourage the travel trade to develop new tour products. From time to time, the Tourism Commission (TC) and the HKTB attended upon invitations the meetings of the District Councils as well as their committees and working groups to provide advice and assistance on the planning, implementation and promotion of district tourism projects. For example, the TC and the HKTB participated in the planning of the Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail in the Central and Western District and have been promoting the trail through various channels since its completion. At present, the TC is carrying out improvement works with the theme of a traditional fishermen's village for the promenades on both sides of the Aberdeen Harbour as well as for Ap Lei Chau Main Street and adjacent streets. Leveraging on the improvement works, the HKTB and the Southern District Council will continue to promote the local characteristics of Aberdeen to visitors. As regards Sai Kung District, the TC, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the HKTB, through the HKTB's "Great Outdoors Hong Kong" marketing platform, have been working together to promote nature-based green tourism offerings in the district.

(c) The Government completed the first territory-wide survey of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Hong Kong in May 2013. The survey findings were discussed thoroughly by the ICH Advisory Committee and a draft ICH inventory of 477 items was drawn up. Out of these items, 291 of them are under the domain of "social practices, rituals and festive events" and 126 items under the domain of "traditional craftsmanship". Taking into account the views of the community on the draft ICH inventory, the Government would publish the first ICH inventory list for Hong Kong in early 2014. After that, the Government will devise and implement a host of

conservation measures.

On tourism promotion of ICH, the HKTB actively promotes to tourists traditional festivals under the third national list of intangible cultural heritage including the Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, the Tai O dragon boat water parade, the Tai Hang fire dragon dance and the Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow community. The HKTB promotes the first three festivals through its promotion platform and mega events. As regards the Yu Lan Ghost Festival, the HKTB worked with the Federation of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community Organisations this year to publicise the festival at the Argyle Street Playground in Kowloon City as well as the Chinese opera performances in various districts and arranged overseas media to do the filming. The HKTB also introduced the activities of the festival to visitors staying in town through the in-room TV channel and the HKTB visitor centres.

On promotion of traditional handicrafts, the NTPDS of the HKTB supports the development of relevant new tourism products by the travel trade. For example, in the tour "Hand Made in Hong Kong", visitors can have a glimpse of some of the city's age-old handicrafts, such as face threading, tailoring, shoemaking and metal tooling, with the master craftspeople sharing the history of their trades. The HKTB will continue to encourage the trade to develop tourism products in this area.

Thank you, President.

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