

LCQ11: Photography service stalls at major tourist spots

Following is a written 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 (May 7):

Question:

It is learnt that there are quite a number of stalls providing photography services to tourists at the famous tourist spots in Hong Kong, such as the Avenue of Stars, Golden Bauhinia Square and the Peak. Yet, the service standards of these stalls vary a lot. Some of the stalls are unlicensed and some stall operators' touting activities have caused nuisance to tourists. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the authorities have demarcated at various major tourist spots fixed locations for photography service stalls; if so, of the details, including the number of designated photography service stalls at each tourist spot; if not, the reasons for that; whether they have assessed the respective numbers of unlicensed photography service stalls at various major tourist spots; if so, of such numbers; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) how the authorities currently regulate designated photography service stalls; whether they will consider stepping up the regulation in this regard, such as requiring operators to display clearly at conspicuous places their fee scales and complaint hotlines as well as requiring them to wear uniform, so as to further enhance the image of Hong Kong's tourism services and protect the rights of tourists; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the authorities have put in place measures to step up their efforts in combating unlicensed photography services at major tourist spots; if so, of the details, including the number of prosecutions instituted last year; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

With the increasing popularity of digital equipment such as digital cameras and mobile phones, more and more visitors prefer to take photographs by their own means during their journeys. Nevertheless, there are still visitors who prefer to use

photography services. Provision of photography services by legal photography service operators can bring visitors convenience so long as it is carried out within the existing legal framework and does not cause inconvenience to visitors and the public.

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

In accordance with the relevant legislation, no person shall erect booth and carry out any form of trading activities without permission in the venues of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). At present, there are 17 authorised photography service stalls operating at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza (adjacent to the waterfront near the Hong Kong Museum of Art) managed by the LCSD. The LCSD openly invites applications for operating these stalls each year. Applicants are required to go through photography skills test and selection by a vetting panel. Successful applicants have to sign an agreement with the LCSD before they can operate the stalls. The agreement specifies the mode of operation and related arrangements, including the requirements for the operators to display "Registration Passes" issued by the LCSD and their fees, etc. The Avenue of Stars Management Limited (AoSML) is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Avenue of Stars (AoS) under the purview of the LCSD. According to the management agreement signed between the LCSD and AoSML, the AoSML may provide art-related services in the AoS. At present, the AoSML provides one photography service stall in the AoS.

The LCSD deploys staff to conduct frequent inspection at their venues. In case any illegal hawking or trading activities including commercial photography activities are spotted, the LCSD's staff will take appropriate action to advise the person involved to stop such activities, or take prosecution action against the alleged offender. In the past year, the LCSD has not taken any prosecution action against illegal commercial photography activities in their venues.

As regards other tourist attractions such as the Golden Bauhinia Square (GBS) and the Peak, the relevant venue managements will arrange staff to conduct inspection at their venues. If public complaints are received, or any activities causing nuisance to visitors including commercial photography activities are spotted, they may seek assistance from the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) or other relevant government departments. After receiving a complaint, the HKPF will deploy officers to the scene to conduct investigation. If the complaint constitutes a contravention of law, they will advise or warn the person involved or initiate prosecution as appropriate in accordance with the relevant legislation. In the past year, the HKPF received three complaints

against photography stall activities at the GBS. The complaints have been classified as "dispute" subsequently.

The Tourism Commission will continue to communicate, discuss and review with the tourism sector, the LCSD, HKPF and other relevant departments, as well as the venue managements of relevant attractions from time to time over the tourist facilities provided at the attractions and related matters. Where necessary, we will co-ordinate with other government departments for taking suitable improvement measures and follow-up actions, in order that the facilities and services provided at tourist attractions would best meet the needs and expectations of our visitors.

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