

LCQ2: Promoting tourism with aid of television dramas and films

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kwok-him and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, in the Legislative Council today (May 11):

Question:

Tourism is one of Hong Kong's four economic pillars, accounting for 5 per cent of gross domestic product and providing about 270 000 jobs. However, under the influence of global economy downturn and other external factors, Hong Kong recorded a total of nearly 59.31 million visitor arrivals last year, representing a year-on-year decrease of 2.5 per cent. Although the number of visitor arrivals from the Mainland on the first two days of this year's "Labour Day Golden Week" has posted a year-on-year increase of 10 per cent, it has been reported that the number of Mainland tour groups was only half of that in the same period of last year. On the other hand, it has been reported that a South Korean-produced television drama series "Descendants of the Sun" has gained wide popularity in various places across Asia and generated over HK\$50 million in royalty income alone. The South Korean Government has even transformed the filming locations of the drama into tourist attractions to enhance understanding of South Korea by people of other countries and attract overseas tourists. Regarding the promotion of Hong Kong tourism with the aid of television dramas and films, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will encourage local producers to produce quality television dramas or films and conduct filming at local spots with beautiful scenery (such as Sai Kung, Tai Long Sai Wan, etc.), so as to promote those tourist attractions through the broadcast of such works outside Hong Kong; if it will, of the details and implementation timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(2) whether it will study ways to achieve synergy between the television and film industries and the tourism industry of Hong Kong for the development of new economic industries; if it will, of the details and implementation timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government all along attaches great importance to the work of tourism promotion and has been promoting through the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) the diverse tourism appeals and travel experiences offered by Hong Kong through different channels, including television and digital marketing, social media and public relations initiatives. In recent years, the HKTB has been actively inviting international and regional television channels and production houses to film their popular shows in Hong Kong, which showcase Hong Kong's tourist attractions and natural wonders to overseas consumers. The HKTB also leverages on movies and television shows from source markets to promote Hong Kong. For example, the HKTB has invited popular television shows from India and Malaysia to shoot in Hong Kong, and co-operated with a movie company, local tourist attractions and travel agents to design itineraries that cover scenes featured in the Mainland movie "Lost in Hong Kong" last year.

A consolidated reply to the two parts of the question is as follows:

The Government promotes the development of the film industry in accordance with a four-pronged strategy, i.e. encouraging more local film production, nurturing film production talent, promoting film appreciation among students and young people to build up audiences, and showcasing and promoting the brand of "Hong Kong Films". The Film Development Fund provides film production financing of up to \$6 million to medium-to-small budget movies with a production budget of not more than \$25 million. The Government has also launched a new Film Production Grant Scheme since November 2015 to provide a cash grant of up to \$2 million to productions with a budget of not more than \$10 million. The Government will also continue to implement the First Feature Film Initiative to identify outstanding new film directors through a competition and fully subsidise their production of first feature films on a commercial basis.

The objective of the Government's broadcasting policy is to provide more programme choices for our audience, and encourage investments in our broadcasting industry with a view to enhancing fair and effective competition so as to strengthen Hong Kong's position as the broadcasting hub in the region. The Government respects the editorial freedom of television programmes and film productions, and does not interfere with the locations chosen for the productions concerned. Nevertheless, Create Hong Kong (CreateHK) of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau supports Hong Kong as an ideal location for filming. It provides one-stop services to production crews of television programmes and film productions to facilitate location filming. Such services include providing suggestions and relevant information to

production crews on possible filming locations; making arrangements for location scouting; securing the necessary approvals or permits for location filming; and co-ordinating with the Government departments concerned on issues such as lane/road closure, parking of filming vehicles on public roads, etc. In 2015, CreateHK successfully processed 513 applications for location filming. Out of the 406 applications raised by local productions, 318 were for television and film productions. Out of the 107 applications raised by overseas productions, 75 were for television and film productions. CreateHK also collaborates with the relevant authorities of Guangdong Province and Macau to develop and promote location filming and film production services in the Pearl River Delta Region (including Hong Kong), with a view to attracting overseas production crews to shoot films in the region, thereby encouraging film production, post-production and other related business activities in Hong Kong. Helping and attracting overseas production crews to use Hong Kong as a place for location filming can leave a strong impression on Hong Kong among overseas audiences. We believe that this has a positive impact on the tourism and film industries of Hong Kong.

Besides, the HKTB has been leveraging on local films and television programmes to promote the diverse tourism appeals of Hong Kong. For example, under the New Tour Product Development Scheme, the HKTB joins hands with local travel trade to promote some brand new movie-inspired travel products. Guided tours will be helmed by a team of veteran film critics and local movie buffs, who would take visitors to visit scenes featured in various Cantonese movies. The Government will continue to support the HKTB in carrying out promotion work in this aspect.

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