

LCQ1: Promoting development of tourism industry

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Chiang Lai-wan and a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, in the Legislative Council today (June 15):

Question:

It is learnt that one of the reasons why many Hong Kong people like travelling abroad during holidays is that there are quite a number of tourist attractions overseas. On the other hand, some members of the tourism industry have relayed to me that Hong Kong's tourism industry has entered a harsh winter and is now facing acute competition from such places as Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, etc. As such, Hong Kong should develop more tourist attractions to, on the one hand, provide Hong Kong people with more leisure places to spend their holidays, thereby encouraging them to stay and spend in Hong Kong and, on the other, to attract more tourists to visit Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the "LED Rose Garden Display" at Dongdaemun Design Plaza in Seoul, Korea has been very well-received and the "Light Rose Garden - Hong Kong" held locally in February this year also attracted tens of thousands of people viewing the exhibition, whether the authorities will consider collaborating with local artists or arts organisations to produce LED lighting or art installations in other media forms and display them permanently at locations such as the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, the West Kowloon Cultural District, etc., which will not only provide more room for the development of local creative arts but also attract tourists to visit Hong Kong; if they will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as quite a number of overseas cities have used murals to beautify their cityscapes in recent years (e.g. the artistic murals in Penang, Malaysia, the Ihwa-dong Mural Village in Seoul, Korea and the Rainbow Military Dependents' Village in Taiwan), which are well-received by tourists, whether the authorities will consider transforming local street murals and mural villages currently found in districts such as Stanley, Sheung Wan, Sham Shui Po, Kwun Tong, Ping Che, etc. into new attractions, with a view to developing mural art, adding charm to old districts and promoting local culture; if they will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as "flower viewing" and "flower photo-taking" have become popular in Hong Kong

in recent years, with quite a number of members of the public visiting various places in the territory to appreciate and take pictures of flowers (e.g. the Bougainvillea Alley at Un Chau Estate, Cheung Sha Wan as well as the tabebuia chrysantha in Sha Tin Park and Nam Cheong Park) during the blooming season, whether the authorities have plans to plant various types of special flowers, complemented by designs of flower or tree galleries, in various parks and on roadsides for appreciation by the general public and tourists; if they do, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply :

President,

Tourism is a pillar industry of Hong Kong. The Government attaches great importance to the tourism industry in Hong Kong and has devoted substantial resources to support its development. Starting from last year, the tourism industry in Hong Kong has been facing fierce competition due to the slowdown of global economy as well as depreciated currencies and relaxed visa requirements for Mainland visitors in neighbouring countries.

In view of the competition and challenges faced by the tourism industry, the Government allocated in the last year an additional funding of \$80 million to the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) for stepping up overseas promotion efforts. Subsequently, another \$10 million was allocated for setting up a one-off matching fund to encourage local tourist attractions for launching distinctive tourism products in collaboration with hotels, travel agencies, retail merchants, etc. The Financial Secretary further rolled out a series of initiatives in the 2016-17 Budget including an additional funding of \$240 million for the HKTB and the trade to promote the development of the tourism industry and to support the travel trade. Through the efforts of the Government and the trade, the number of non-Mainland visitors visiting Hong Kong has bounced back in recent months and recorded a year-on-year increase of 4.9 per cent for the first four months of this year.

My reply to the three parts of the question, after consulting the Home Affairs Bureau, is as follows:

(1) We subscribe to the idea that the hosting of different types of large-scale activities and mega events in Hong Kong can help boost our international image and appeal as a tourist destination. The events will not only attract more visitors but also entice them to

extend their stay here. The Government has all along been supporting the organisation of these events in Hong Kong in various ways, including through the Mega Events Fund. Any organisation that is interested in holding events at venues managed by the Government (including those of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) or the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal) and the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority may apply to the departments/authorities concerned. The departments/authorities would consider providing appropriate facilitation having regard to the management and arrangement of individual venues. In fact, the display of "Light Rose Garden-Hong Kong", an art installation, at Tamar Park in February this year was organised with the approval of the LCSD. The Government will be pleased to consider any specific proposal from any organisation regarding the display of art installations at venues such as the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal and the West Kowloon Cultural District.

On the other hand, the Art Promotion Office of the LCSD is committed to promoting the development of public arts in Hong Kong. Over the years, it has rolled out public arts projects of different scales and commissioned local artists to create artworks in different media to beautify public spaces. The projects have helped enhance the public's appreciation of and interests in arts, enriched the artistic ambience of our public spaces as well as helped attract more visitors to Hong Kong.

(2) We note that an art group has, since 2014, been organising annual street art festivals named "HKwalls" in Hong Kong which included displaying murals. This art group has organised such events at Sheung Wan, Stanley and Sham Shui Po in the past. The HKTB has promoted the "HKwalls" festival as one of the highlight activities of Hong Kong at the time. Separately, the LCSD has strived to bring public arts to all sectors of the community under a variety of programmes. For instance, the "New Look for Public Places: Shanghai Street Public Art Project" and "Urban Art Project at the Back Alley in Kwun Tong" in old neighbourhoods such as those in Kwun Tong and Yau Ma Tei, have transformed the appearance of public buildings and alleys with murals and enhanced the artistic ambience of the community. The HKTB will also consider highlighting murals in promoting the attractions of individual districts.

(3) The Government is committed to promoting greening, landscape and tree management. In view of the growing interests of the public and visitors in flower appreciation in recent years, the Government has endeavoured to identify more appropriate locations for suitable planting wherever possible.

The LCSD has adopted thematic planting designs for new parks and roadside

planting areas. For existing parks with landscape plants due for replacement, special flowering plants would be introduced. For instance, the introduction of camel's foot trees in Hong Kong Velodrome Park, Yellow Pui in Nam Cheung Park and water lilies in Shing Mun Valley Park, has drawn flocks of the public to these parks during their flowering seasons every year. Moreover, the Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department also introduces appropriate ornamental trees into country parks, such as sweet gum trees for Tai Tong at Tai Lam Country Park and cherry trees for the Rotary Park at Tai Mo Shan Country Park for appreciation by visitors.

Following the completion of greening works under the Greening Master Plans (the Plans) for the urban areas in 2011, the Civil Engineering and Development Department is currently implementing the greening works under the Plans at Sha Tin, Sai Kung, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, involving mainly the existing pavements or roadsides to enhance the cityscape.

The Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section of the Development Bureau has developed a mobile application, "Tree and Landscape Map", to facilitate the public's appreciation of flowering plants. The mobile application features search functions for "thematic planting", the particular plant species in flower in different months (depending on the weather) and the locations of the relevant parks. By providing information on the plants that flower in different seasons in different districts of Hong Kong, it guides the general public and visitors to visit these attractions for flower appreciation.

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