

LCQ7: Measures to cope with increasing number of inbound tourists

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Ting-kwong and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Dr Bernard Chan, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

With the recent commissioning of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, as well as the imminent opening of the Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, the cross-boundary infrastructure facilities between Hong Kong and the Mainland are becoming more comprehensive. The Government anticipates that there will be an incessant rise in the number of inbound Mainland tourists. On the other hand, the patterns of inbound Mainland tourists' activities in Hong Kong have become increasingly diversified and their engagement in some activities (e.g. hiking and camping in the countryside and using public cultural and recreational facilities) has impacted on the daily lives of Hong Kong people. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has studied the impacts of the improvements in recent years in cross-boundary infrastructure facilities on the various aspects (including the number of tourists) of the tourism industry, and whether it has reviewed the effectiveness of the various measures which aim to enhance Hong Kong's tourist receiving capacity and if such measures need to be strengthened; if it has, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) of the person-time, in each of the past three years, of inbound tourists using public cultural and recreational facilities, with a breakdown of such numbers by (i) type of facilities and (ii) place of origin of such tourists and their percentages in the total numbers;

(3) whether it will step up the management of those locations where tourists usually gather, such as (i) allocating additional resources and manpower for maintaining order and keeping such locations clean and (ii) planning for the provision of more tourism facilities; and

(4) whether it has conducted any investigation into the cases in which tourists occupied designated camp sites in country parks and caused damage to the ecological environment; if so, of the outcome, and the measures put in place to raise tourists' awareness of caring for the nature?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the sustainable and healthy development of the tourism industry. Whilst ensuring the industry's stable and orderly growth, we also seek to minimise as far as possible the impact of tourist activities on the local community. With the relevant bureaux and departments consulted, our reply to the question raised by the Hon Wong Ting-kwong is as follows.

(1) and (3) As the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) were put into service only recently, their impact on Hong Kong's travel industry is still to be ascertained. In 2016, 2017 and the first nine months of 2018, the overall visitor arrivals to Hong Kong were 56.65 million, 58.47 million and 46.68 million respectively, of which 42.78 million, 44.45 million and 36.63 million were from the Mainland, accounting for approximately 76 per cent to 78 per cent of the overall visitor arrivals.

In view of the steady growth in overall visitor arrivals to Hong Kong in recent years and the commissioning of various cross-boundary infrastructure in succession, the Government has strived to increase or improve Hong Kong's tourism facilities, as well as to enhance the city's tourist-receiving capacity.

In October 2017, the Government published the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry. One of the four major industry development strategies therein is to nurture and develop tourism products and initiatives with local and international characteristics to cater for the needs and preferences of different visitor segments, thereby diverting tourists to sightsee and shop in different districts of Hong Kong strategically, and increasing the overall economic benefits brought by the tourism industry to all citizens in Hong Kong.

The Government is collaborating with various stakeholders with plans to

develop new tourist attractions and implement various cultural and creative tourism projects in places like Sham Shui Po, Wan Chai and Yim Tin Tsai, Sai Kung, as well as to promote green tourism development in New Territories and outlying islands along the principles of nature conservation and sustainable development. The Government completed the revitalisation of Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail in April 2018. The revitalised trail, together with PMQ, Tai Kwun and the promotion campaign "Old Town Central" launched by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), have transformed the Central and Western District into a new hub of heritage, cultural and creative tourism. The construction of a number of facilities in the West Kowloon Cultural District, namely the Xiqu Centre and the M+ Pavilion, will also be completed in phases in the next few years, contributing to the formation of a new tourist spot and thus the diversion of travellers. In addition, the HKTB has been actively promoting to visitors various activities in relation to traditional festivals with local distinctive characteristics, including the Yu Lan Ghost Festival, Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, the Tai O dragon boat water parade, Tai Hang fire dragon dance, etc., with a view to enticing tourists to patronise different districts of Hong Kong.

In respect of theme parks, the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort is taking forward its expansion and development plan, and various attractions will be completed progressively from this year onwards till 2023, including the attraction "Moana: A Homecoming Celebration" stage show launched in May 2018. As regards Hong Kong Ocean Park, it is taking forward projects concerning an all-weather waterpark and two new hotels. Whilst one of the hotels has been soft-launched this year, the water park and the other hotel will be completed progressively from next year onwards until 2021.

Apart from developing various tourism attractions and projects, the Government will also promote the development of ancillary facilities in Hong Kong, such as putting forth in different districts sites designated for "hotel only" or commercial sites that allow for hotel development, with a view to encouraging the development of various types of hotels and further increasing the supply of hotel rooms in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the Government is pragmatic in tackling problems brought about by tourist flows in different districts. In response to the inconvenience caused by inbound tour groups to the community, the Government has, in collaboration with the trade, adopted various targeted measures to minimise the impact to the community. Such measures include encouraging tour coaches to use legal parking spaces, as well

as appealing to the trade to maintain order when receiving tour groups and make good use of information technology to strengthen visitor and vehicular flow control, etc.

In respect of environmental hygiene, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) enhances the cleansing of streets and public toilets at popular gathering spots for visitors to keep the cityscape clean. For places where public cleanliness offences (e.g. littering, spitting, etc.) are frequent, the FEHD also increases the frequency of inspection and strengthens law enforcement. Moreover, the FEHD is implementing renovation or repair works for its 23 public toilets situated at tourist attractions, and has added five public toilets at the Hong Kong Port of the HZMB newly commissioned, so as to facilitate use by tourists. The FEHD also calls upon members of the public and visitors to maintain environmental hygiene through various channels, including its website, social platforms, television, radio, poster advertisement and publicity leaflets, etc.

As regards crowd management, in case of crowding up of tourists in certain areas, the Police will, on a need basis, deploy more manpower to maintain public order and public safety, as well as smooth traffic flow thereat.

(2) We do not maintain figures in respect of inbound tourists using public cultural and recreational facilities.

(4) There are currently 41 designated campsites within country parks of Hong Kong, which are open for camping by the public including tourists. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) displays camping codes at the designated campsites to remind members of the public and visitors of proper camping manners. It also disseminates relevant information on its website to encourage members of the public and visitors to plan ahead and be well-prepared before camping in country parks, as well as to make sure their camping activities are environmentally-friendly.

In view of the increasing popularity of green tourism in recent years, the Tourism Commission (TC) has written to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, reporting to it relevant trends and inviting it to, through appropriate channels in the Mainland, remind the travel trade and tourists to pay attention to certain codes of conduct when participating in green tourism activities in Hong Kong. Such codes of conduct include using public facilities near campsites in a proper manner, refraining from camping at non-designated camping areas and refraining from any acts that are

harmful to the biological environment, etc. The TC has also frequently collaborated with the Guangdong Province Culture and Tourism Unit, the Guangzhou Tourism Administration and the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Culture, Sports and Tourism to, through Mainland online media and newspapers, release public notices targeting at Mainland residents who intend to visit Hong Kong, so as to raise their awareness of travelling manners.

The TC will keep a close eye on the travel trends of Mainland tourists, and report destinations that the latter tend to visit to District Offices and other relevant departments in various districts for advance planning. The FEHD, the AFCD and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will also from time to time review their site management and staffing mechanism, including deploying staff to step up inspection at popular destinations during peak arrival seasons of Mainland tourists, to advise and educate individuals involved in inappropriate behaviours and take enforcement actions against violations as appropriate, and at the same time to step up site cleansing and crowd management so as to minimise the impact of relevant activities on the districts concerned.

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