

LCQ11: Development of local tourism industry

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Following is a question by the Hon Claudia Mo and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (January 9):

Question:

The Financial Secretary said last month that visitor arrivals in 2018 would exceed 60 million, breaking the record of 2014. Regarding the local tourism industry, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in respect of (i) overnight visitors to Hong Kong, (ii) same-day visitors to Hong Kong and (iii) all visitors to Hong Kong respectively, of their overall numbers and annual growth rates and, among them, the relevant figures respectively for those who came from the Mainland and other places, in each of the years from 2013 to 2018 (set out in tables of the same format as the table below);

(i) Overnight visitors to Hong Kong

Year	Overall		From the Mainland		From other places	
	Number of arrivals	Annual growth rate	Number of arrivals	Annual growth rate	Number of arrivals	Annual growth rate
2013						
2014						
2015						
2016						
2017						
2018						

(2) whether there was an increase in the number of visitors to Hong Kong in the past three months as compared with the preceding three months; if so, of the markets with the major growth; whether it has studied the reasons for the growth in the number of visitors, and whether those reasons include the recent commissioning of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) and the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link;

(3) of the visitor throughput of the various boundary control points in each month of last year;

(4) as the Financial Secretary pointed out last month that to continuously strengthen the tourism industry is an integral part of the Government to "stabilise the economy", of the new measures put in place by the Government to balance the economic contributions made by the tourism industry and its impact on the daily lives of members of the public;

(5) whether it will roll out new measures in the coming three months to alleviate the problem of an excessive number of visitors in Tung Chung caused by the commissioning of HZMB;

(6) whether it will consider setting up a steering committee led by the Chief Secretary for Administration to take charge of the co-ordination among the various policy bureaux and government departments on handling and following up the impacts of visitors on people's livelihood, as well as formulating mitigation measures; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(7) whether it will discuss with the Central Authorities the tightening of the Individual Visit Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(8) as the Financial Secretary indicated last month that the Government would consider relaxing the visa arrangements for residents of the Belt and Road countries and regions to visit Hong Kong, of the Belt and Road countries and regions with which the Government is holding or plans to hold discussions on the relevant arrangements, as well as the details of the discussions?

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 Claudia Mo is set out below.

(1) The figures and the annual growth rate of overnight, same-day, and overall visitor arrivals to Hong Kong provided by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), as well as the breakdown of number of visitors from the Mainland and non-Mainland source markets, are at Annex I.

(2) and (3) The number of visitor arrivals to Hong Kong during September to November 2018 increased by about 500 000 as compared to that during June to August, and increased by about 11.5 per cent as compared to the same period in 2017. Among them, the number of arrivals in October and November 2018 grew by 11.5 per cent and 20.6 per cent over a year earlier respectively, while those from the Mainland surged by 15.4 per cent and 25.8 per cent respectively. These show that the rise of Mainland visitor arrivals is the main driver of overall visitor arrival growth after the commencement of services of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) which commenced operation on September 23 and October 24, 2018 respectively. Although the number of visitors using other control points has seemingly declined during the same period, it is likely that some visitors (same-day visitors in particular) came visiting Hong Kong for experiencing the newly opened XRL and HZMB. Whether XRL and HZMB will become the main control points used by new visitors remains to be seen, and the Government will continue to monitor the situation closely.

The monthly figures of visitor throughput of various boundary control points in 2018 are provided at Annex II.

(4) In view of the steady growth in overall visitor arrivals to Hong Kong in recent years and the successive commissioning of various cross-boundary infrastructures, the Government has strived to increase and improve Hong Kong's tourism facilities, as well as to enhance the city's tourist-receiving capacity. In the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry published in October 2017, one of the four 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 as planned, and increasing the overall economic benefits brought by the tourism industry to all citizens in Hong Kong.

The Government is developing new tourist attractions and implementing

various cultural and creative tourism projects in different districts, as well as promoting green tourism development in New Territories and outlying islands along the principles of nature conservation and sustainable development. Apart from the the revitalisation of Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail completed earlier on and the promotion campaign "Old Town Central" launched by the HKTB, the Government will enhance the appeal of Sham Shui Po and Wan Chai as tourism spots, through collaboration with the Hong Kong Design Centre and the Hong Kong Comics and Animation Federation, by launching the "Design District Hong Kong" project, which comprises public art place-making works, creative tourism events, local comic characters with Hong Kong's originality, multimedia and creative technology, etc. The HKTB also rolled out the "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods – Sham Shui Po" campaign in September 2018, which encourages visitors to explore the district and experience the local culture and characteristics. Besides, a number of facilities in the West Kowloon Cultural District will also be completed in phases in the next few years. This, coupled with HKTB's efforts in promoting various activities in relation to traditional festivals with local distinctive characteristics, can also entice more 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. Following the launch of new stage show "Moana: A Homecoming Celebration" last year, the new ride "Ant-Man and The Wasp: Nano Battle!" will be opened this year. Other attractions will also be completed progressively in the coming years. As regards the Ocean Park, it is taking forward its all-weather water park and two new hotels. Whilst one of the hotels was soft-launched in October 2018, the water park and the other hotel will be completed progressively by 2021.

Furthermore, the Government has been pragmatic in tackling problems brought about by tourist flows in different districts. In view of 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, 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. As regards crowd management, in case of tourists crowding up in certain areas, the Police will deploy more manpower on a need basis to maintain public order and public safety, as well as smooth traffic flow thereat.

(5) Since the commissioning of the HZMB, the Government has been monitoring the vehicular and passenger flows crossing the border through the HZMB and the operation of the Hong Kong Port (HKP). The Government has convened several inter-departmental meetings and rolled out various measures within a short period of time to alleviate the pressure on the HKP and areas nearby. The measures include: simplifying the application arrangements for domestic coaches to enter the HKP's designated pick-up areas; launching a pre-booking system for group visitors taking shuttle buses; co-ordinating the local trade in easing the visitor flow near the HKP and encouraging them (including operators of the tourist attractions) to launch travel itineraries and products to help divert tourists; and improving the queuing and boarding/alighting arrangements of Route B6 in Tung Chung, such as arranging passengers to buy return tickets in advance, arranging passengers to get aboard two buses at a time during peak hours, and deploying more staff and mounting railings to facilitate passengers boarding in a swift and orderly manner, in order to minimise the impact on local residents. Moreover, the Police has, depending on the developing crowd situation, suitably deployed additional manpower to maintain public order and public safety on site.

After the implementation of the aforementioned measures, the situation in Tung Chung has improved since late November 2018. Meanwhile, the passenger flow of HZMB in the last weekend of December was almost 30 per cent less than that of the peak in mid-November. To further alleviate the impact of tourist activities on Tung Chung residents, the government departments concerned are actively processing the occupation application of the new public transport interchange (PTI) at Citygate with a view to securing the early completion of the acceptance inspection to provide additional pick-up/ drop-off spaces for use by franchised buses. By the time the PTI is commissioned, the Transport Department (TD) will relocate the bus stop of Route B6 now located in Tung Chung Town Centre to reduce the impact of tourist activities on residents nearby. Furthermore, in view of Islands District Council Members' concerns and suggestions, the TD has looked into and evaluated the proposals of temporary relocation of Route B6 prior to the commissioning of the new PTI. Consultation with the Islands District Council on the evaluation findings is under way.

The Government will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the various measures and make adjustments as necessary.

(6) High-level tourism co-ordinating meetings are chaired by the Financial Secretary. Two meetings were already convened in 2017 and 2018. At the meetings, the

Financial Secretary directed bureaux and departments to drive the implementation of various tourism-related measures in the areas of tourist support and management, planning of tourism facilities and transport support, and tourism diversification through closer co-operation and co-ordination.

The Tourism Commission (TC) will continue to play its role in tourism policy planning and, in accordance with the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry, collaborate with relevant bureaux and departments, as well as different stakeholders including the HKTB and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, to ensure the industry's stable and orderly growth and seek to minimise as far as possible the impact of tourist activities on the local community at the same time.

(7) The Government attaches great importance to the policy for Mainland tourists to visit Hong Kong as it is crucial to the Government's overall administration and planning. TC will continue to closely monitor the travel patterns of Mainland tourists and maintain close liaison with the Mainland authorities on relevant arrangements.

(8) Hong Kong has all along adopted an open immigration policy to facilitate entry of bona-fide visitors. At present, nationals of about 170 foreign countries and territories, including some Belt and Road countries, may visit Hong Kong visa-free.

The Government reviews its visa policy from time to time. Factors to be considered include immigration control and security, bilateral economic, social and cultural ties between Hong Kong and the countries concerned, track records of its nationals visiting Hong Kong and the circumstances of the individual country. In negotiating mutual visa exemption arrangements with the Belt and Road countries, the Government will make holistic consideration with a view to providing more travel convenience to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region passport holders and genuine visitors to Hong Kong on the one hand, and maintaining effective immigration control on the other.

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