

LCQ1: Hong Kong's tourist receiving capability

Following is a question by the Hon Gary Fan and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (April 17):

Question:

It has been reported that in recent years, quite a number of countries and cities (e.g. Japan, Venice in Italy, Edinburgh in Scotland and Queenstown in New Zealand) have introduced or planned to introduce various kinds of tourism taxes (e.g. departure tax and entry tax on same-day visitors) to cope with the problem of too many visitors and use the revenue generated therefrom to enhance the local environment. The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture of Macao has indicated recently that the Macao Government is open-minded about introducing a tourism tax and will proceed to study this subject. Some members of the public have pointed out that the continuous rise in the number of visitor arrivals to Hong Kong (with the number of arrivals last year exceeding 65 million) has caused nuisances to their daily lives and overloaded the various tourism and infrastructure facilities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of reports received by the Government in each of the past five years on the wear and tear of the various tourism and infrastructure facilities caused by the reception of too many visitors, and the public expenditure incurred on the repair and maintenance of such facilities;

(2) as it has been over five years since the completion in 2013 of the Assessment Report on Hong Kong's Capacity to Receive Tourists, whether the Government will conduct afresh an assessment of Hong Kong's capacity to receive visitors (including conducting public consultation and studying the imposition of a ceiling on the number of visitors to Hong Kong); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it will resume the imposition of the Hotel Accommodation Tax under the Hotel Accommodation Tax Ordinance (Cap 348) to curb the excessive growth in the number of visitors to Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) as same-day and overnight visitors alike use local resources provided for receiving

visitors but the per capita spending of the former is far lower than that of the latter, whether the Government will study the imposition of an entry tax on same-day visitors and use the revenue generated therefrom to meet the expenditure on cleaning, repair and enhancement of local tourism and infrastructure facilities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In response to the question raised by the Hon Gary Fan, with relevant bureaux and departments consulted, my consolidated reply is as follows.

The Government attaches great importance to the sustainable and healthy development of the tourism industry. Whilst ensuring that the industry brings about benefits to society, the Government also continuously seeks to minimise as far as possible the impact of tourist activities on the local community.

The tourist receiving capability of a tourism destination depends on many different factors, including the travel modes of visitors from various source markets, the attractions and facilities of the travel destination, the types of tourism products available in the market, etc. Furthermore, there is no universally accepted way to set a cap on tourist receiving capability. The Government will continue to be proactive in enhancing Hong Kong's various ancillary tourism facilities, so as to increase the city's tourist receiving capability and balance the impact of the tourism industry on the economy and people's livelihood.

Tourism facilities, infrastructures and public facilities in Hong Kong are open for the use by the general public and tourists. The Government does not maintain the number of reports on the wear and tear of such facilities as a result of use by tourists, and can hardly quantify the expenditure on repair and maintenance of such facilities arising from use by tourists. The Government has no plan to adjust the hotel accommodation tax rate or levy new tax on tourists.

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