

Press Release

Joint Operation Against Illegal Tourist Guides

(Embargo until evening, 23 August 2005)

“The joint operation shows the Government’s determination to curb unlicensed travel agents activities and unaccredited tourist guides, particularly illegal tourist guides,” said the spokesman of the Tourism Commission, in response to the joint operation conducted together with Hong Kong Police, Immigration Department and the Travel Industry of Hong Kong (TIC) against suspected unlicensed travel agents and unaccredited tourist guides today (23 August).

2. The joint operation was conducted in the area around Man Lok Street and Man Yue Street in Hunghom yesterday morning, and continued at the Golden Bauhinia Square in Wan Chai in the afternoon. “These locations were selected because they are popular spots visited by inbound tour groups,” the spokesman of the Tourism Commission said.

3. The operation concluded in the late afternoon of the day. During the whole operation, 56 inbound tour groups were covered. No unlicensed travel agent or illegal tourist guide was found. There were three travel agents suspected to have employed three Hong Kong residents without valid “Tourist Guide Pass” to undertake the duties of

tourist guides. The TIC is following up on these travel agents who have breached the relevant directives of the TIC. According to the record of the TIC, the three Hong Kong residents concerned have already completed the tourist guide training as required by the TIC but have yet to complete the accreditation procedures.

4. The spokesman of the Tourism Commission said, “The joint operation which lasted for 3.5 hours in total, has been smoothly conducted. We have also adopted all necessary measures to minimize inconvenience caused to the visitors and travel agents. To ensure the quality of the inbound tour groups, we will conduct similar joint operations from time to time to eradicate activities of unlicensed travel agents, unaccredited tourist guides and illegal tourist guides.”

5. During the operation, the staff of the TIC verified the identity of tourist guides to ascertain if they are holders of valid “Tourist Guide Pass” issued by the TIC. If the tourist guide was found to be a non-Hong Kong resident working as a Tourist Guide, they were referred to the Immigration Officers at the spot for further investigation. For suspected unlicensed travel agents, they were referred to the Police for investigation once they were verified by the Travel agents Registry to be unlicensed ones.

Tourism Commission

23 August 2005