

Government welcomes TIC task force proposal

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs Rita Lau, today (October 11) welcomed the report submitted by the Travel Industry Council (TIC) of Hong Kong's Task Force on the Review of the Operation and Regulation of Mainland Inbound Group Tours. The report contains the task force's recommendations on measures to tackle "zero/negative reception fees" and to enhance the regulation of tour guides for these group tours.

In the wake of a number of coerced shopping incidents involving Mainland inbound tour groups this year, the task force began a study in late July with the aim of recommending measures to tackle two main issues, i.e. combating "zero/negative reception fees" and strengthening the regulation of tour guides. The ultimate goal is to ensure that Hong Kong's tourism industry can continue to thrive in a healthy environment.

"Over the past two months, the task force focused on studying key aspects of the issues, with support from the Tourism Commission. It also widely consulted major stakeholders in the tourism sector, including travel agents operating Mainland inbound group tours, tour guide unions and registered shops. I would like to thank the task force for its effort in conducting in-depth studies on the two important issues and making recommendations to improve the situation within such a short period of time," Mrs Lau said.

"The recommendations made by the task force are comprehensive and pragmatic. They have also taken into account the unique characteristics of the Mainland inbound group tour market and pinpointed the problems arising from its special mode of operation. I believe the trade would agree that it is imperative to eliminate market malpractices as soon as possible in order to sustain the long-term and healthy development of the tourism industry. The task force will continue to discuss with various stakeholders the implementation details of individual recommendations."

Mrs Lau said the Government in principle supported the task force's recommendations. She hoped that it would work out details of the measures and their implementation timetable in consultation with the trade as soon as possible.

"The Government will actively co-operate with the TIC in carrying out the recommendations, including liaising with the relevant tourism authorities and

counterparts in the Mainland, and stepping up enforcement action to further crack down on illegal tour guides and unlicensed travel agents," she said.

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