

Transcript of remarks by Acting Commissioner for Tourism at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Acting Commissioner for Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, at a media session at the lobby of West Wing, Central Government Offices, Tamar, today (February 15):

Reporter: Commissioner, can I just ask how can you actually avoid such incidents from happening again? What exactly is the (Tourism) Commission going to do to avoid this?

Acting Commissioner for Tourism: Yes, perhaps I will say a few words in English. The 3A Holidays Company Limited, the travel agent involved in these incidents, we consider their performance unacceptable because they failed to ensure that accommodation was arranged for tour groups that they received. And we have already asked the Travel Industry Council (of Hong Kong) (TIC) to handle this case very seriously and in an accelerated manner. In fact, one thing that they will be doing is they have already summoned the responsible person of the 3A Holidays to meet them this afternoon. The meeting has two purposes. First of all, it is of course for the responsible person to explain to the TIC what exactly has happened in the past few days. But another thing that is equally important is to ensure that in the next few days, the remainder of the Golden Week, the remainder of the Chinese New Year holidays, similar incidents would not repeat themselves.

In the longer run, we have already asked the TIC to take in the experience and to consider how to strengthen the implementation of the 10 measures on better regulation of Mainland inbound tours. One very important point is to ensure that accommodation is properly arranged before any tour groups are received by our local travel agents and how to ensure that such information reported is properly validated. These are the measures that we have already asked the TIC to do.

The other thing is we have also been liaising with the China National Tourism Administration to co-operate on our investigation on the involved Mainland travel agent.

Reporter: But, as she said, the Government can actually only urge the TIC to levy the punishments. What if the Council does not levy the so-called suitable punishments? Is there nothing the Government can do? Is the Government sort of like a toothless tiger in this case?

Acting Commissioner for Tourism: No, I think so far we have not seen an occasion where the TIC ignores the community and the Government's advice or suggestion that the tourism industry should be properly regulated. I think in the past, the TIC had responded quite positively to the aspiration of the community and the aspiration of the Government. A good example was the 10 measures aimed at better regulation of Mainland inbound tours. At this point we have made some suggestions. We will make those suggestions very formally to the TIC and then I am confident that the TIC will follow up in a very responsible manner. It is premature to suggest that the TIC actually will not be taking up any of the advice. I think that is premature.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

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