

Transcript of remarks by SCED at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, at a media session after attending a radio programme today (August 22):

Reporter: (the recent tourist figures)

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: Thank you for your question. There has been a recent decline in the number of tourists coming to Hong Kong, but as a whole the first six months of this year we're still experiencing an increase of 2.8 per cent. In the month of July, the decline is 8.4 per cent, which is quite noticeable and I think is quite significant. It is with some measures of relief that I note for the first 15 days of the month of August, August 1 to 15, the decline is reduced to 2.1 per cent. It is too early to tell what the trend will be in future, but we will be watching with very keen interest. And in the meantime we will be working with the industry to develop more products to attract the tourists from various markets, including the Mainland market, the short to medium-term tourist markets in the region as well as long-range visits.

I also note that in terms of non-Mainland tourists, in the month of July there is a decline of 3 per cent, but in the month of August, the decline increased to 4.8 per cent. I think that is attributable to the general economic climate outside of Mainland. So we will again work with the industry to see how we could reverse that trend. But I just want to add one more point, in the meanwhile we're also, not only in the software but also in the hardware, increasing the capacity of our theme parks, our two theme parks, to receive tourists.

Reporter: Is there a need to, for example, introduce more theme parks because the LegCo (Legislative Council) Secretariat report recently said that we don't have new attractions to attract tourists?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I would invite them to look again, that we have been working very hard, and we actually have introduced to (and make) presentation to LegCo in terms of the new attractions that will be coming on street in Disney as well as in Ocean Park. We don't solely rely on two theme parks in Hong Kong. I think our hardware extends all over Hong Kong, and I think Hong Kong has a lot of cultural attractions to draw tourists. Just look at some examples, it is really a multiple of cultural attractions that I think tourists will be most interested in. So we

work with the industry to develop more products, so that different aspects of Hong Kong will be emphasised.

Reporter: (Forever Top's application to free television licence)

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I think all applications must be processed in accordance with existing law and procedure. And according to the law right now, there is mainly a two-step process. First, the Communications Authority will have to process this application and come up with a recommendation to be presented to the Chief Executive in Council. We are still in the first process, and the Communications Authority is an independent statutory body. I would not wish to comment on the application right now because they are handling it. When the recommendation is presented to the CE in Council, I believe the CE in Council will then consider the recommendation in accordance with the law.

Reporter: (the number of players in the market)

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I would not like to commend on this because as I said, this is being processed by the Communications Authority at the moment. I am sure they will look at all these materials including how the application will impact the economy as a whole and the broadcasting industry. They will also look into the technical requirement, the financial capability of the applicant, the programme rollout and all these various factors, and come up with a recommendation.

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

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