

SCED speaks on measures to regulate inbound Mainland group tours

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to the media on the measures to regulate inbound Mainland group tours before attending the Legislative Council Finance Committee meeting today (November 6):

Reporter: Mr So, you are saying that the Government is launching a multi-prong approach including cracking down on shadow shoppers, and also conducting spot checks, and also more cross-border collaboration to increase transparency. Can you explain?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: We also believe in empowering the tourists to judge for themselves whether these tour packages are really below the service cost that is required to launch these products. So they could say, for example, they see that the cost is of certain amount, it would not be reasonable for them to be charged at the price which is a lot less than this amount. So it is really to allow the tourists to make an informed decision of exactly the nature of the tour package that they would be joining.

Reporter: (On the measure which requires local travel agencies receiving inbound Mainland group tours to submit name lists to the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong for random checking.)

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: It is not pre-approving the name list. Actually, of course, whoever wants to join a tour to come to Hong Kong, we don't have to approve that name list. The intention of having the name list to be disclosed to the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong is to ensure that the Council would be able to see whether any particular tourist joining these tours is repeating himself or herself in a lot of these tours and this would raise a reasonable doubt as to whether they are actually tourists or they are sort of underground, sort of working with and somehow connected to the shop in terms of forcing the tourist to shop. So, it is not pre-approving but this allows us the mechanism to find out who these shadow tourists are. These are really targeted at the prevailing practice, some of these forced shopping practices. We would not preclude that there will be future measure that would be introduced to target new practices that would come up in the future.

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

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