

LCQ11: Developing diverse tourism

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yung and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (November 20):

Question:

There are views that tourism has always been an important driving force for the development of Hong Kong. To tie in with the concept of "tourism is everywhere" in Hong Kong, the Government should further promote the development of diverse tourism along the coloured themes of blue, green, black, white, red, gold and heritage. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) how the authorities plan to expedite the promotion of blue, green, black, white, red, gold and heritage tourism, such as panda tourism, horse-racing tourism, country park tourism, financial tourism, gold tourism, as well as tourism related to heritage and the history of the War of Resistance;

(2) as it is learnt that the Government will enhance some hiking trails in country parks involving in the history of the War of Resistance and establish brand new historical trails, of the details of the brand new historical trails to be established, including whether it will establish the Sha Tau Kok Heritage Trail advocated by the community and launch comprehensive promotion for it in the future; and

(3) how to make good use of technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) to promote tourism related to the history of the War of Resistance in a more dynamic and diversified manner; as it is learnt that a community group has launched the "AI Chat With Veterans" project, under which the images of veterans and their experiences are presented on its website and all-in-one machines through AI technology, whether the authorities will consider collaborating with the relevant group to make use of the project's technology at the historical sites of the War of Resistance or at the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence?

Reply:

President,

Tourism is one of the major driving forces of Hong Kong's economy. Following the resumption of normal cross-boundary travel starting from February 2023, Hong Kong's tourism industry began to recover at full speed with a steady growth in visitor arrivals. From January to October 2024, some 36.7 million arrivals were recorded, representing a year-on-year increase of about 37 per cent. As the Chief Executive pointed out in this year's Policy Address, the Government will develop Hong Kong into a premier tourism

destination through innovative thinking and making better use of our rich and unique resources such as the Victoria Harbour, outlying islands, rural areas, cultures, cuisines, lifestyles and historic buildings. These elements, combined with our edges in technology, animation and comics, the performing arts, film and television culture, and more, will help instill the concept of "tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong".

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Chan Yung, in consultation with the Development Bureau (DEVB) and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the reply is as follows:

(1) In developing tourism products with characteristics, we will develop eco-tourism, explore more itineraries with characteristics related to the countryside and coastal routes, and enhance related amenities. The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) is organising signature creative arts and cultural tourism projects, namely Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival and Design District Hong Kong at Sha Tau Kok, and will promote cultural and eco-tourism initiatives and products at Sha Tau Kok. Relevant policy bureaux will also take part in such work. For example, the Environment and Ecology Bureau will promote in-depth eco-tour experience by integrating culture characteristics of countryside villages, which include the organisation of island hopping tour(s) at Yan Chau Tong early next year to facilitate urban-rural symbiosis; while the DEVB will utilise the natural resources of South Lantau in such ways as expediting the development of the South Lantau Eco-recreation Corridor, developing the ex-Lamma Quarry site into an area for leisure and outdoor recreational uses, and developing two eco-tourism nodes, namely Tsim Bei Tsui and Pak Nai. The DEVB plans to invite expression of interest on the aforesaid three projects in the first quarter of next year.

On the promotion of panda tourism, the CSTB is organising a series of promotional and marketing activities in collaboration with the Ocean Park (OP), the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and all sectors of the community. These include driving different policy bureaux, the tourism industry and different related sectors to conduct extensive promotion on the theme of giant pandas for sparking the craze for giant panda across the city. For example, the Giant Panda Naming Competition and Giant Panda Painting Competition, organised by the CSTB and co-organised by the OP, were launched on October 2 this year, inviting submissions by October 27 and November 8 this year respectively. Responses to the two competitions were overwhelming with over 22 600 and 3 000 submissions received respectively, showing the public's love for the giant pandas. Besides, the OP has launched dedicated social media platforms for the giant pandas and issued posts to update members of the public on the conditions of the two giant pandas after their arrival in Hong Kong and provide educational information about conservation of giant pandas. The HKTB has also launched a dedicated one-stop "Giant Panda Special Page" on its Discover Hong Kong website to enable both locals and visitors to obtain information about giant pandas' events at any time. Furthermore, we have been encouraging different sectors of the community to seize the opportunities brought by the giant pandas, exercise creativity and launch a series of panda-related promotional activities, merchandise as well as cultural, creative and tourism products, etc., thereby creating business

opportunities and actively promoting panda tourism. In fact, many merchants, organisations and groups have organised a number of promotional activities and events under the theme of giant pandas. For example, a number of shopping malls in different districts have already displayed installations and decorations featuring giant pandas for the public to take photos, and the China Travel Service Group will shortly launch promotional and marketing campaigns on the theme of giant pandas; the catering sector has introduced different giant panda-designed products, such as desserts, wines, gourmet vouchers; and the retail sector is rolling out a variety of crossover products featuring giant pandas.

In order to boost Hong Kong's reputation as a premier destination for horse racing tourism and establish the city as the finest in the Asia Pacific region, the CSTB will join hands with the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) to further promote horse racing tourism, focusing on international major races and themed local races. For example, the HKTB will encourage the trade to include horse racing experiences in the itineraries for cruise and MICE visitors; and will work with the HKJC in offering tailor-made luxury horse racing experiences for high value-added visitors to savour Hong Kong's long-standing and distinctive horse racing culture.

As regards making good use of historic buildings for tourism purposes, the Commissioner for Heritage's Office and the Antiquities and Monuments Office under the DEVB will continue to work closely with the Tourism Commission (TC) and the tourism sector in identifying historic buildings with high tourism potential, and collaborate with the owners or user departments and organisations of the historic buildings with a view to encouraging them to open up their historic buildings for local and tourist visits and appreciation and to arrange guided tours, wherever practicable. The DEVB will provide them with appropriate support from the heritage conservation perspective. In addition, the DEVB organises from time to time various visits to historic buildings and heritage exhibitions, such as the Heritage Fiesta cum Roving Exhibition 2024 and themed exhibitions at the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre, and shares the relevant information with the HKTB. The DEVB also consolidates information on declared monuments and graded historic buildings by building types to facilitate the tourism sector in arranging themed itineraries. The DEVB will continue to liaise with relevant owners or user departments and organisations to explore the installation of information plaques at their historic buildings to facilitate better understanding of the historical background and heritage value of the historic buildings by the local and tourists. For example, information plaques have been installed for most of the historic buildings along the Greater Bay Area Education Heritage Trail (Hong Kong Section) and "HKU Heritage Sights and Sites" heritage trail.

To achieve "tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong", we also need to solicit support from the travel trade. Therefore, we have all along been encouraging the travel trade to capitalise on the uniqueness of Hong Kong's East-meets-West culture to attract more visitors to experience the cosmopolitan appeal of Hong Kong. To further promote the development of in-depth travel itineraries and products with characteristics, the CSTB has allocated funding to implement the Characteristic Local Tourism Incentive Scheme to encourage

the travel trade to develop more in-depth travel itineraries under six distinctive themes, namely the Great Green Escape, the Water Adventure, the Legacy of Joy, the HK Pop Culture, the Journey Through National History and the Unconventional Journey.

On promotion aspect, the HKTB has been promoting to visitors itineraries and attractions with local characteristics through various channels including website, social media and visitor centres. In addition, the HKTB's "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" promotions showcase authentic culture, characteristics, history, etc. of these neighbourhoods, with a view to enhancing Hong Kong's tourism appeal. The HKTB will continue to promote the "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" and develop new elements into existing programmes to attract visitors with authentic culture. Through its year-round promotional platform "Hong Kong Great Outdoors", the HKTB also continues to introduce in detail and promote Hong Kong's unique natural scenery and countryside experiences, and actively promote Hong Kong's nature-based green tourism products and countryside through various promotional channels including guidebooks, webpages, production of television programmes, social media and mobile apps.

(2) The TC, in collaboration with the AFCD, has been taking forward the "Enhancement of Hiking Trails" (the Project) since 2018 to enhance the tourism supporting facilities of 20 hiking trails in country parks which are popular and with tourism potential. The Project covers hiking trails relating to war history, namely Lion Rock Historic Walk, Shing Mun War Relics Trail and Luk Keng War Relics Trail, with a view to enhancing hikers' understanding of the history of our country and Hong Kong. The AFCD completed the enhancement works at Lion Rock Historic Walk in December 2023 and has been taking forward the enhancement works at Shing Mun War Relics Trail and Luk Keng War Relics Trail. Regarding the proposal of establishing new heritage trails, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department would co-operate with departments that manage the different hiking trails and provide information on the historical background of relevant historical sites to enrich the content.

(3) At present, the permanent and thematic exhibitions at the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence (MWRCD) give an account of the history of Japan's aggression against China and Hong Kong's participation in the War of Resistance, as well as the missions and contributions of guerrillas after the fall of Hong Kong. Apart from using exhibition panels, historical photos and exhibits, the MWRCD also complements the exhibitions with interactive installations, videos and oral histories from veterans to introduce this period of history to visitors through various media and enrich their museum-going experience. With advancements in technology, the MWRCD, subject to availability of resources, will consider how to effectively utilise new technologies, so as to further enhance the visitors' museum experience.