

LCQ16: Handling of views expressed on Mainland social platforms

Following is a question by the Hon Paul Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

It has been learnt that in recent years, many Mainland netizens have expressed their complaints against Hong Kong through the social platform Xiaohongshu, with some Mainland bloggers describing this as "bashing Hong Kong has now become a kind of political correctness", and the relevant contents have aroused enormous reverberations from the HKSAR Government. For example, following the disrespectful remarks and behaviour of an airline's cabin crew towards Mainland passengers, the Chief Executive immediately gave a high-profile response, pointing out that the incident had "hurt the feelings of Hong Kong and Mainland compatriots"; in the light of allegations of impolite treatment of Mainland tourists during their stay in Hong Kong, the authorities immediately encouraged the trade to promote courtesy activities; after the "Hong Kong New Year Countdown Celebrations" fireworks musical on Victoria Harbour on New Year's Eve last year, when a large number of Mainland tourists were stranded on the streets, Mainland netizens criticized Hong Kong for its lack of contingency measures and poor hospitality to visitors, the Government also immediately held an interdepartmental meeting to formulate measures for a prompt response. Some members of the public have relayed to me that while Mainland residents' remarks are often taken very seriously by the HKSAR Government, on the contrary, the persistent views of many members of the public in Hong Kong have not received the same level of attention and response from the official authorities over a long period of time (e.g. calls for the suspension of Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) contributions or payments for MPF contributions to be made by the Government on people's behalf during periods of economic downturn, tax rebates, withdrawal of the "harsh measures", stamp duty reduction, concession of Government rent of owner-occupied properties, expansion of public dental services to provide the grass roots with, among others, services that are expensive in the private market such as endodontic treatment, dental prosthetics and dental implant), and this will easily lead to the perception of favouritism and even "Xiaohongshu administering Hong Kong". In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the authorities have reviewed the views directed against all major and minor issues in Hong Kong expressed through Xiaohongshu, and of the criteria adopted for determining whether and how to handle such views;

(2) of the government departments or officials currently responsible for monitoring, collecting and handling complaints or views about Hong Kong expressed on Mainland social platforms; and

(3) whether the Government will take into account views expressed on social platforms such as Xiaohongshu when formulating policies that may involve Mainlanders; of the Government's approaches and the criteria for (i) handling such views, and (ii) balancing the interests of both sides when discrepancies arise between such views and the mainstream views in Hong Kong, so as to avoid the aforesaid unnecessary perception among members of the public?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Information Services Department (ISD), the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Paul Tse is as follows:

In considering the formulation of various policies and measures, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has all along adhered to the "people-oriented" philosophy of governance, actively listened to the aspirations and views of the public from different sectors through various channels, and responded to their needs by making appropriate arrangements. ISD has been monitoring media reports and messages posted on major social media platforms to assist bureaux and departments in gauging public opinion in a timely manner. ISD is committed to raising public awareness and support for government policies and measures through dissemination of news and information through multiple channels, such as print and digital media, the Internet, social platforms, press conferences and briefings. Views on Hong Kong, whether expressed on local or Mainland social media, carry equal weight to the Government of the HKSAR.

We have noticed that Mainland residents from time to time shared and occasionally commented on content related to Hong Kong, including pop culture, social customs and tourist attractions on social media platforms, such as WeChat, Douyin, Sina Weibo, Kuaishou, Xiaohongshu and Bilibili, etc. Some of these posts may lead to heated discussion and feedback from netizens. The Mainland Offices of the Government of the HKSAR (Mainland Offices) and ISD have been keeping abreast of the reports and views related to Hong Kong on digital media and social platforms in the Mainland, responding to them when necessary and referring them to the relevant bureaux and departments for follow up as appropriate. At the same time, the Mainland Offices have made good use of the Mainland social media to promote Hong Kong's advantages and enhance Mainland residents' understanding of Hong Kong.

The Government of the HKSAR will continue to listen carefully to the views of all parties and continue to enhance various policy measures in a pragmatic manner, with a view to facilitating the overall development of Hong Kong and enhancing people's sense of happiness and contentment.