

LCQ2: Measures to improve reception of visitors to Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai and a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (May 23):

Question:

Since 2017, there has been a continued rebound in visitor arrivals to Hong Kong, reversing the downward trend since 2015 and bringing economic benefits to the local tourism and related sectors (including the retailing, catering and transport sectors). The visitor flows in districts frequented by visitors have also increased consequently. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the authorities have, since 2017, stepped up the relevant efforts in districts frequented by visitors to Hong Kong in response to the rebound in visitor arrivals, including deploying additional manpower to clean the streets more frequently and assigning additional patrolling police officers to maintain law and order; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will comprehensively review and improve the current measure of deploying District Tourism Ambassadors (DTAs) to station in Kowloon City District, including selecting candidates more stringently in the recruitment of DTAs, strengthening the training, supervision and management of those recruited, expanding their duties (e.g. answering visitors' enquiries in addition to calling upon the visitors to keep places clean and maintain smooth passages), as well as extending the measure to other districts frequented by visitors, with a view to reducing the inconvenience caused by visitors to the residents; and

(3) whether it has drawn up plans that may effectively divert visitors to various districts throughout the territory (e.g. by distributing at boundary control points leaflets on the characteristics of places in Hong Kong other than those tourist hot spots, so as to attract visitors to those places), thereby allowing tourism to bring benefits to local economy and, at the same time, minimising the inconvenience caused to certain districts by over-concentration of visitors?

Reply:

President,

The tourism industry, accounting for 5 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product and providing nearly 260 000 employment opportunities for people at different levels, is one of the important industries of Hong Kong. In recent

years, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Government and various parties, coupled with the improvement in the external environment, the tourism industry has regained growth. In 2017, total visitor arrivals to Hong Kong rose by 3.2 per cent year-on-year. We are glad to see a rebound in visitor arrivals, but at the same time will continue to steadfastly enhance the infrastructures and services of Hong Kong's tourism industry.

As regards the question raised by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai, with the relevant bureaux and departments consulted, my reply is as follows:

(1) The Hon Shiu Ka-fai asked whether the Government has strengthened district work in response to the rebound in visitor arrivals. My answer is affirmative, particularly with various arrangements already made to co-ordinate departments' efforts. Before peak periods of Mainland visitor arrivals, including the Chinese New Year and National Day Golden Weeks, the Tourism Commission convenes inter-departmental meetings to remind the departments concerned to strengthen visitor crowd control measures. It also maintains close liaison with District Offices to understand the situation of visitors' activities in different districts so as to make deployment and respond accordingly.

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department enhances the cleansing of streets and public facilities such as public toilets at popular gathering spots for visitors to keep the cityscape clean. It also calls upon members of the public and visitors to maintain environmental hygiene through various channels, including its website and public transport.

The Police deploys additional manpower to ensure smooth traffic flow and maintain public order at boundary control points, major tourist spots and shopping hotspots. During major festivals and holidays, departments including the Police, the Immigration Department, the Customs and Excise Department, etc strengthen the monitoring of land boundary control points, maintain liaison with the relevant authorities of the Mainland and, when necessary, implement contingency measures.

Furthermore, the Government has adopted various targeted measures to minimise the impact brought about by inbound tour groups to the community. Such measures include encouraging coaches to use legal parking spaces, urging the trade to maintain order when receiving tour groups as well as make good use of information technology to strengthen visitor and vehicular flow control, etc. From time to time, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) also conducts on-site inspections, and issues circulars to and holds talks for the trade to appeal for their proper management of tour groups.

(2) To alleviate the impact brought about by inbound tour groups to Kowloon City, the Kowloon City District Office (KCDO) has recruited District Tourism Ambassadors (DTAs), progressively increased to 60, on a part-time basis with the funding from the District-led Actions Scheme since October 2016. DTAs remind visitors to keep the environment clean and passage clear, and advise coach drivers not to pick up, drop off or park illegally, at popular

gathering spots for visitors. When necessary, they call upon law enforcement agencies to take follow-up actions on-site. The KCDO has also invited the Police and TIC to provide DTAs with safety instructions and practical information about inbound travel to strengthen training by enhancing their skills of handling different situations.

(3) Last October, the Government published the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry. One of the strategies is to nurture and develop tourism products and initiatives with local and international characteristics to cater for the preferences of different visitor segments. The aim is essentially to divert visitors to different districts of Hong Kong, thereby alleviating the congestion at tourist hotspots. For instance, last month, the Government finished the revitalisation works of the Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail. The Trail, together with the PMQ, "Old Town Central" campaign launched by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), as well as "Tai Kwun" to be opened later this month, will help promote the Central and Western District as a district of cultural and heritage tourism. In addition, the Government is planning to take forward different initiatives of cultural, creative and green tourism in Sham Shui Po, Wan Chai, Yim Tin Tsai of Sai Kung, etc.

Every year, the HKTB organises major events including the International Chinese New Year Night Parade, Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival, etc, and promotes to visitors various traditional festivals including the Yu Lan Ghost Festival, Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, the Tai O dragon boat water parade, Tai Hang fire dragon dance, etc, with a view to attracting visitors to experience Hong Kong as an events capital in different districts.

Furthermore, the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort is taking forward the expansion and development plan, of which the first new attraction "Moana: A Homecoming Celebration" stage show will be launched soon. The waterpark and two new hotels of the Ocean Park will be completed progressively from this year onwards until 2021. The various facilities of the West Kowloon Cultural District, including Xiqu Centre, M+ Museum, etc, will also be completed by phase in the years ahead.

The Government and HKTB have also been promoting the tourism offerings and specialities of various areas of Hong Kong through different channels, such as guidebooks, digital media platforms and public relations campaigns. Early this year, the HKTB revamped the website featuring travel information about the 18 districts of Hong Kong into a new thematic one called "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" to showcase the history, local culture, tourist spots and culinary delights of different districts of Hong Kong, with a view to attracting visitors to travel and spend there.

Looking ahead, the Government will continue to join hands with the HKTB and the trade to nurture and develop diversified tourism products and initiatives to entice visitors to patronise different districts of Hong Kong, while supporting the development of local economy at the same time.

Thank you.