

LCQ2: Measures to promote the development of the tourism industry

Following is a question by the Hon Shang Hailong and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 8):

Question:

It has been reported that a large number of members of the public travelled outside Hong Kong during the recent long Easter holidays, dealing a heavy blow to various sectors in Hong Kong. Moreover, the Financial Secretary has recently pointed out in his blog that while visitor arrivals exceeded 11 million in the first quarter of this year which provided support to the retail, catering and transportation sectors, changes in the consumption patterns of inbound visitors as well as some members of the public going north more frequently for spending have presented quite a number of challenges for the operations of small and medium enterprises. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider organising in collaboration with trade associations of various sectors citywide consumption festivals to distribute discount coupons to members of the public meeting specified spending amount, or even directly hand out holiday consumption vouchers to encourage members of the public to stay and spend in Hong Kong;

(2) as it is learnt that members of the public and the business sector generally support raising the duty-free allowance of the Mainland visitors arriving in Hong Kong, whether the Government has put forward to the Central Government a specific timetable for such proposal; if it has not, of the reasons for that; and

(3) given that members of various sectors have suggested that the Government should spare no effort in striving for the Central Government's reinstatement of "multiple-entry" endorsements under the Individual Visit Endorsements for Shenzhen permanent residents visiting Hong Kong, extension of the period of stay for inbound visitors under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS), as well as inclusion of more second and third tier cities of the Mainland in IVS, so as to enhance the economic benefits of the series of mega events to be organised in Hong Kong and stimulate visitors' spending, whether the Government will consider such suggestions?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Shang Hailong, the reply is as follows:

(1) Riding on various mega events and activities in town, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) has been partnering with the trade to step up publicity and promotion, with a view to encouraging spending by locals and visitors and boosting consumption ambience. For instance, the HKTb extended the vibes of the "Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival" held in October to launch the "Taste Around Town" campaign in November last year in partnership with some 400 restaurants and bars to step up promotion on the wine and dine activities and catering offerings in various districts in town. From late last year to early this year, the HKTb also distributed 200 000 "Hong Kong Night Treats for Locals" dining vouchers, valued at HK\$100 each, to locals in support of the "Night Vibes Hong Kong" campaign to enhance the appeal of local businesses and sustain business opportunities for the dining sector. In addition, riding on the Labour Day Golden Week, the HKTb launched a dedicated "one-stop webpage for Golden Week offers and activities" to promote shopping, dining, attractions and hotel offers for visitors and locals with information on traffic arrangements, opening hours of major attractions, etc, to create a vivid ambience citywide to stimulate consumption in town.

While different government departments will join hands to promote economic development, the HKTb will continue to closely communicate and collaborate with the trade. The HKTb will disseminate information on spending deals, events and offers from merchants through its one-stop e-platform with a view to attracting visitors to explore the different spending experiences in town.

(2) and (3) Expanding visitor sources to attract more high value-added overnight visitors has all along been one of the key strategies for developing Hong Kong's tourism. Hong Kong's capacity to receive tourists has been enhanced following the completion and optimisation of various large-scale cross-boundary infrastructure, tourist facilities, hotels and public transportation networks in the past few years. The Government is confident in providing more tourists from different source markets with a variety of high-quality travel experiences.

The Government has been in close liaison with the relevant Mainland authorities on the situation of Hong Kong and actively seeking policy initiatives to facilitate more high value-added Mainland visitors to experience Hong Kong's rich tourism resources in a more convenient and flexible way in a bid to promote the vibrant development of tourism-related industries.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government expressed sincere gratitude to the Central Government's support for expanding the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) to cover Xi'an and Qingdao, and thereby increasing the number of Mainland cities covered under IVS from 49 to 51 since March 6, 2024. In addition to leading the HKTb to visit Xi'an and Qingdao in mid-March to promote Hong Kong tourism, the HKTb has also immediately launched a series of publicity and promotional activities targeting the new visitor source markets. We will continue to work with the trade to link up and explore more high-quality travel itineraries and products and to improve service quality, with a view to providing visitors with a variety of high-quality travel experiences.

The Government will continue to maintain communication with the relevant Mainland authorities and strive for policy initiatives that are conducive to Hong Kong's tourism development, including raising tax free threshold for shopping and increasing IVS cities.