

LCQ2: Promoting tourism development in Sha Tau Kok

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (November 27):

Question:

The Chief Executive has indicated in the 2024 Policy Address that the Government will increase the daily visitor quota under the Sha Tau Kok opening-up plan to 3 000 within this year, and explore the application of facial recognition technology to complement the future opening up of the Chung Ying Street for tourism development. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will, in view of the continuous increase in the numbers of members of the public and visitors visiting Sha Tau Kok and the redevelopment of the Sha Tau Kok Control Point, allocate additional resources to upgrade the transport infrastructure in the area, e.g. constructing a public transport interchange for cross-boundary travellers and widening the Sha Tau Kok Road, so as to enhance the accessibility of Sha Tau Kok to connect to other districts;

(2) whether it will, in view of the vibrant development of low-altitude economy industries of the Mainland in recent years, consider introducing drones to carry sightseeing passengers on a pilot basis first in Sha Tau Kok, so as to make good use of the natural resources in the area and promote the development of blue and green recreation and tourism; and

(3) regarding the application of facial recognition technology to complement the future opening up of the Chung Ying Street for tourism development, whether the authorities have finalised the implementation details and specific timetable; if so, of the details; if not, whether the authorities will expeditiously commence a study, so as to make good use of the historical, cultural and tourism value of the area and promote the development of cultural and eco-tourism in Sha Tau Kok?

Reply

President,

In consultation with the Transport and Logistics Bureau and the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB), my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The first and second phases of the Sha Tau Kok (STK) Frontier Closed Area opening-up plan were implemented in June 2022 and January 2024 respectively, allowing individual and group tourists to apply for Closed Area Permit (CAP) and enter STK (except Chung Ying Street). Feedback received has been

positive, with about 134 000 visitors visited STK to date. The Government has been closely monitoring the implementation of the plan and views of the stakeholders, continuously reviewing the arrangements and introducing enhancement measures. As announced in the 2024 Policy Address, we have increased the daily visitor quota under the plan to 3 000. In respect of traffic, the traffic on Sha Tau Kok Road is generally smooth during peak hours on weekdays and holidays. There is no need for road widening at this stage. The Government will continue to closely monitor the traffic situation in the area.

In view of the aging facilities of the STK Control Point, and in order to enhance clearance efficiency and promote the development of the STK area, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government have reached a consensus to concurrently construct a passenger clearance building straddling the Sha Tau Kok River, taking the centre line of the Sha Tau Kok River as the boundary line to set up their respective passenger clearance channels immediately adjacent to each other, i.e. adopting a cross-river construction approach in the redevelopment of STK Control Point. The engineering feasibility study for the STK Control Point redevelopment project is underway and is expected to complete within 2025. The scope of the study includes matters such as road infrastructure, public transportation, land requirement, area of the control point, land ownership, environmental assessment and heritage conservation. The HKSAR Government will continue to closely collaborate with the Shenzhen Municipal Government to actively take forward the redevelopment project.

Subject to the outcome of the said study, the Government will consider the transportation facilities, including public transport interchanges, required for the control point area, and formulate service plans with relevant Mainland authorities and Hong Kong operators to address the travel needs of visitors and facilitate public usage of the control point. The study will also review the traffic impact of the project on the surrounding roads, for example, Sha Tau Kok Road. The Government will formulate complementary measures if necessary.

(2) Low-altitude economy (LAE), with its great potentials, can be applied widely in different areas and help promote the development of various industries. The 2024 Policy Address announced a series of initiatives to promote the development of LAE, including the establishment of a Working Group on Developing LAE (the Working Group) led by the Deputy Financial Secretary to formulate development strategies and inter-departmental action plans, and to plan for low-altitude infrastructure. The Working Group has convened its first meeting to discuss the overall development strategy and work plan. Adopting a forward-thinking mindset and from the perspective of a facilitator, the Working Group will take forward the relevant work through implementation of Regulatory Sandbox (Sandbox) pilot projects, enhancements to legislation, and study and plan for low-altitude infrastructure. The Working Group will also promote interface with the Mainland on the joint establishment of low-altitude cross-boundary air routes, immigration and customs clearance arrangements, and supporting infrastructure, etc.

At the same time, the Government will press ahead with the

implementation of pilot projects to explore unmanned aircraft applications at designated locations, and will amend the legislation to put in place a regulatory framework. The Government will collaborate with the industry and partner organisations to implement the Sandbox pilot projects starting from early next year. It is expected that the first phase will mainly cover drone deliveries, relaxation of restrictions on "flying beyond visual line of sight", and gradually expanding and enriching the scope of low-altitude flying applications.

The CSTB will actively participate in and complement the work of the Working Group as one of its members, and consider the feasibility of various proposals having regard to the relevant development, so as to promote the tourism development in Hong Kong. We will develop Hong Kong into a premier tourism destination through innovative thinking and making better use of our rich and unique resources, thereby instilling the concept of "tourism is everywhere in Hong Kong".

(3) The 2024 Policy Address announced that the Security Bureau will adopt facial recognition technology to enable people living or working at Chung Ying Street to enter and leave the street unimpededly via a "contactless" mode on a pilot basis, and will explore the application of relevant technology to complement the future opening up of Chung Ying Street for tourism. We will launch a facial recognition pilot scheme before the end of this year, and currently the preparatory work is near completion. In future, CAP holders who are allowed to access Chung Ying Street may, upon prior enrolment, pass through the checkpoint via a "contactless channel" without having to stop and produce their CAP or use their fingerprint to verify their identity. In adopting this pilot scheme, we hope to explore the application of innovative technology to replace the current mode of manual inspection, in order to maintain boundary security and facilitate users of the checkpoint at the same time.

Meanwhile, the Government is actively promoting the cultural tourism development in STK. The Tourism Commission will extend the "Design District Hong Kong" creative tourism project to STK from December this year to February next year. By integrating creative elements with STK's cultural, heritage and natural offerings, we will create and promote more cultural eco-tourism itineraries and products. Moreover, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong will continue to promote the two signature itineraries relating to tourism resources in STK under the respective theme of "Great Green Escapes" and "Journey Through National History", selected from the "Deeper into Hong Kong: Creative Itinerary Design Competition", so as to highlight the tourism characteristics of STK to visitors. Through the Working Group for STK Co-operation Zone jointly established by the Shenzhen and Hong Kong governments under the Task Force for Collaboration on the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy, the CSTB, under the principles of complementarity and mutual benefits, will work together with the Shenzhen side to promote the cultural tourism co-operation in STK based on the principles of "low density, high quality" and through enriching its historical and cultural elements, thereby further promoting the tourism development in STK.

Thank you.