

LCQ5: Developing tourism projects with aquatic features

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

There are views pointing out that Hong Kong should develop more tourism projects with aquatic features to, through diverse tourism, encourage members of the public to stay and spend in Hong Kong and attract more tourists to visit Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the displays of giant yellow rubber ducks in Hong Kong waters in 2013 and this year have roused two rounds of craze for "duck appreciation", whether the authorities will collaborate with local artists or arts groups to produce aquatic art installations with themes on local stories such as Old Master Q, McMug and Chocolate Rain as well as Chinese stories for regular display in Hong Kong waters, with a view to telling the stories of Hong Kong and China well; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will, by drawing reference from the mode of the Mainland's Qinhuai Lantern Festival, organise aquatic lantern festivals during festivals such as the Lunar New Year, Spring Lantern Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival with innovative features, such as dynamic lanterns complemented with smoke on water and lighting shows, so as to attract tourists to visit Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will discuss with local shipping companies providing passenger services to convert some of the ferries into leisure boat restaurants, so as to divert tour groups dining in the Kowloon City District and promote aquatic tourism in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Tourism industry is one of the key economic pillars of Hong Kong. It accounted for 4.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and offered 260 000 job opportunities before the pandemic. Since the launch of large-scale "Hello Hong Kong" global promotional campaign in February, the tourism industry has been recovering progressively and orderly and the number of visitor arrivals has been increasing continuously. There were around 10.14 million visitor arrivals in the first five months of this year, and the total number of visitor arrivals exceeded 2.82 million in May, which was around 55 per cent of the pre-pandemic level. In addition to promotion work, we have also been striving to offer diversified tourism projects to provide tourists with

different travel experience in order to attract them to visit Hong Kong.

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Yang Wing-kit, the reply is as follows:

(1) The Government has all along been actively promoting the development of arts and culture in Hong Kong, dedicating efforts to collaborate with local artists and organisations to launch various art projects for the enjoyment of and participation by the public and tourists. The "Art@Harbour", a large-scale outdoor art project organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) since 2022 is an example of how to bring brand new art experience to the public and tourists on both sides of the Victoria Harbour. This project is expected to be held once again in 2024 in collaboration with overseas and local artists as well as arts groups to set up an art installation on the waters of Victoria Harbour.

On comics, Create Hong Kong (CreateHK) provided funding support to the Hong Kong Comics and Animation Federation (HKCAF) in 2012 to establish the "Hong Kong Avenue of Comic Stars" in Kowloon Park to showcase the sculptures of classic comics characters (including Old Master Q, McDull, Cloud, Little Horse, etc) designed by more than 30 local comics artists. In 2021, the exhibition areas were refurbished and a "Comic Wall" co-created by local emerging comics artists was installed to promote Hong Kong comics to the public and tourists. In addition, CreateHK provided funding support to HKCAF to establish the "Ani-Com Park@HarbourFUN" (Ani-Com Park) from 2016 to 2021 in the Golden Bauhinia Square to showcase the sculptures of local original animation and comics characters of different generations (including Wind, Din-dong, Mandycat, etc).

Currently, CreateHK is discussing with the HKCAF a new project to establish a new Ani-Com Park at the Wan Chai promenade. In tandem with the Olympic Games Paris next year, elements of different sports will be integrated into animation and comics characters, with a view to further promoting Hong Kong animation and comics, while encouraging sports activities and telling good stories of Hong Kong.

Another example is the "Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival 2022", an arts cum cultural, historical and green tourism project covering Yim Tin Tsai, Sharp Island, Kau Sai Chau and High Island, rolled out last year by the Tourism Commission (TC) following the "Yim Tin Tsai Arts Festival" which was implemented from 2019 to 2021. Through a variety of local artworks, the islands were revitalised and the flow of people in the local community was improved. The TC is preparing for a new round of "Sai Kung Hoi Arts Festival" to be held at the end of this year.

In addition, the TC, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Design Centre and HKCAF, through cross-sector collaboration, implemented the "Design District Hong Kong" (#ddHK) between 2018 and 2021 in Wan Chai and Sham Shui Po to promote local tourism and showcase local cultural lives through various place-making artworks and creative tourism events. A new phase of #ddHK is expected to commence in the third quarter of 2023.

In fact, collaborating with local artists and groups to promote tourism development through artistic creation is one of the strategies for Hong Kong's tourism development, and it is in line with the country's direction of "shaping tourism with cultural activities and promoting culture through tourism". The TC and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) have been working hard to support local and international mega public arts exhibitions to stage in Hong Kong by assisting the organisers to closely liaise and communicate with different government departments. The "Double Ducks" as mentioned in the question is one of the examples. We will continue to publicise and promote globally various international art exhibitions and events to be held in Hong Kong with a view to showcasing unique artistic charm of Hong Kong where East meets West and bringing brand new experience to the public and tourists.

(2) Different cities make use of their local unique scenery to attract tourists and organise special activities to enhance the attractiveness of these attractions. The Qinhuai Lantern Festival is a good example. The unique scenery of Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour filled with the dazzling city lights has presented vividly this "Pearl of the Orient". We organise large-scale events from time to time with the backdrop of Victoria Harbour, including "Art@Harbour", fireworks displays, New Year countdown, "A Symphony of Lights" and other large-scale events. The "Harbour Chill Carnival" is also a large-scale integrated performance event held against the backdrop of Victoria Harbour this summer. At the same time, the LCSD has been actively promoting traditional Chinese culture through organisation of the Lunar New Year Lantern Carnival and Mid-Autumn Lantern Carnival annually to promote traditional Chinese arts. The Mid-Autumn Lantern Carnival to be held at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza water pool this year will create myriads of lighting effects through the combination of interactive and technological elements and include new elements for citizens' and tourists' enjoyment in festive occasions. The HKTb will also organise festive-themed mega events, including the "Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races" and "Chinese New Year Celebrations", to showcase Chinese cultural characteristics and provide tourists with rich and diversified experiences.

(3) At present, there are aquatic tourism projects and leisure boats available in the market for tour groups and independent visitors to enjoy the scenery of Victoria Harbour. As for the gathering of tourists in To Kwa Wan earlier, the Travel Industry Authority (TIA) has already strengthened management of Mainland inbound tour groups and urged the trade to make arrangements for diverging tourists. For the past Labour Day Golden Week, the TIA introduced special measures in response to the situation in Kowloon City and achieved remarkable result by improving the people flow problem caused by individual catering premises. In fact, in view of the situation in Kowloon City in the end of March, with the encouragement from the TIA and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, the trade voluntarily improved the meal arrangements of tour groups and arranged some to dine in the restaurant on a leisure boat roaming around Victoria Harbour, with a view to reducing the impact of tourism activities on the community in To Kwa Wan and Hung Hom. Tourists were satisfied with the relevant arrangements. We understand that some leisure boat operators are ready to strengthen services and we believe

that other leisure boat operators would also consider joining according to market demand.