

LCQ6: Work on publicising and promoting Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Kennedy Wong and a reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (July 13):

Question:

It has been reported that on the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland, the Government advertised, through the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (ETO) in Brussels, Belgium, on trams in Brussels to celebrate Hong Kong's return to the motherland. Although the content of the advertisement had been passed by the local transport company and the outsourced advertising contractor concerned, the advertisement was eventually pulled by the tram company due to the complaints from a group of anti-China netizens. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether similar incidents have occurred recently when other overseas ETOs of the Government are carrying out promotional work on celebrating Hong Kong's return to the motherland; if so, how the authorities follow up such incidents;

(2) whether, in the light of the aforesaid incident, the Government has assessed the difficulties that it may encounter in its work on publicising and promoting Hong Kong in future, and how it will deal with such difficulties; and

(3) of its plans to introduce in detail the actual situation of the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and the successful implementation of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong to the international partners of Hong Kong through its overseas ETOs, and whether it will formulate key performance indicators for the relevant promotional work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China is an important milestone for our country and HKSAR. Under the theme "A New Era – Stability • Prosperity • Opportunity", the HKSAR Government has organised a series of promotional events around the world, signalling the HKSAR's new chapter of governance and prosperity, and that Hong Kong will endeavour to integrate into the overall development of our country, proactively aligning with national development strategies such as the 14th Five-Year Plan, the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and the

high-quality development under the Belt and Road Initiative.

As the overseas official representatives of the HKSAR Government, the 14 overseas Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) have partnered with government departments and agencies, including the Information Services Department, Invest Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and the Hong Kong Tourism Board, as well as chambers of commerce and professional bodies, to organise over 160 events. These events comprise Hong Kong Month, Hong Kong Week, seminars on the Belt and Road Initiative/GBA, art and cultural performances, roving exhibitions, dragon boat races, food festivals, etc., showcasing Hong Kong's efforts and achievements in the past 25 years and fostering confidence and hope across all sectors overseas to jointly welcome a new era.

As regards the three parts of the question raised by the Hon Kennedy Wong, my reply is as follows:

(1) and (2) In celebration of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR, the Brussels ETO has organised 13 events including the Hong Kong Month in Europe. In June this year, the Brussels ETO launched a publicity campaign themed "Hong Kong is Moving Ahead – Hong Kong Trams in Europe" in Brussels, Istanbul, Lisbon and Milan, spreading the news of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR across Europe. Furthermore, in line with promotions of the 15th and the 20th anniversaries of the establishment of the HKSAR, the Brussels ETO planned to dress Mannekin-Pis, the Brussels tourist attraction, in his Hong Kong costume previously donated to the local city government. Throughout the planning of these two events, the Brussels ETO had maintained close communication with the relevant public transport authority and the city government. The Government expresses regret and disappointment over the decisions of the relevant institutions to withdraw from the promotional events. As a matter of fact, the tram publicity campaign was successfully held in Istanbul, Lisbon and Milan. Moreover, gala receptions hosted by the Brussels ETO for the 25th anniversary celebrations in Brussels, Dublin, The Hague, Lisbon and Milan were warmly received; and the reception cum exhibition on the West Kowloon Cultural District held in Paris was favourably reviewed by international travel news media. The HKSAR Government expresses gratitude to all sectors for their support in these events.

In addition, with the support from all sectors, the gala dinner in Vancouver and the art exhibition in Richmond were successfully organised by the Toronto ETO for the celebration of the 25th anniversary despite nuisances caused by a small number of protestors.

The Government regrets that certain individuals caused nuisances to the celebrations. These were isolated incidents. ETOs shoulder the responsibility of promoting Hong Kong overseas and will continue to perform their duties with perseverance, sparing no effort in enhancing Hong Kong's international reputation and sharing the joy of celebrating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR with communities worldwide.

In fact, as at end-June, ETOs have successfully hosted over 50 celebration events for the 25th anniversary, including the "Hong Kong: Through the Looking Glass" miniature art exhibition, the "Hong Kong Story" youth competition, the Dragon Boat Race Festival and the reception for international students from Hong Kong, receiving positive feedback and support across all sectors. For example, in May this year, the then Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development officiated at the opening ceremony of a roving exhibition and attended a business luncheon with more than 100 participants from the business community for the celebration of the 25th anniversary in Bangkok, Thailand; in June, the Minister of Trade of Indonesia delivered a speech at a business conference hosted by the Jakarta ETO to celebrate the 25th anniversary and attended by around 240 members of the local political and business sectors, exemplifying the close relationship between the two places. Furthermore, ETOs have organised celebration banquets and receptions in various cities, with participation from the local Chinese Consuls-General and members of the political, business and academic communities.

(3) ETOs have been providing updates on Hong Kong's latest situation to stakeholders from different sectors, including members of the political, business and academic communities, think tanks and media outlets, actively promoting the successful implementation of "one country, two systems", Hong Kong's new chapter of governance and prosperity following the enactment of the National Security Law and "patriots administering Hong Kong", as well as Hong Kong's important role under national development strategies such as the 14th Five-Year Plan, the Belt and Road Initiative and the high-quality GBA development, attracting investment and discovering more collaboration opportunities. Through organising various celebration events for the 25th anniversary, ETOs have deepened collaboration with overseas stakeholders and promoted the achievements of Hong Kong as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange.

The external promotion of Hong Kong is part of the regular duties of ETOs. The performance indicators for the operation of ETOs have been listed under the relevant heads of the Controlling Officer's Report in the Budget, including resources allocated to ETOs, policy objectives, event descriptions. The key performance indicators for evaluating the services of ETOs include the numbers of calls on senior government officials/organisations; seminars, exhibitions, workshops and promotional activities organised and participated; newsletters, pamphlets and press releases issued; and public speeches and media interviews/briefings given. In line with relevant policy objectives, ETOs will ensure proper utilisation of resources and assist policy bureaux in performing the duties of external promotion and liaison effectively.