

## LCQ14: City Gallery

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

The City Gallery is Hong Kong's first exhibition hall with the theme of urban planning and large-scale infrastructure development. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland, the Development Bureau and the Planning Department jointly hosted a special exhibition with the theme of Envisioning Beyond Legacy at the City Gallery from July to November 2022, which included displaying an exhibit to collect the views of the public on the uses of land on the future Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of thematic exhibitions held at the City Gallery in each of the past five years (with a breakdown by theme (i.e. (i) Hong Kong's major planning proposals, (ii) Hong Kong's major infrastructure projects, and (iii) the city's future development outlook), and the contents of those exhibitions;

(2) of the total attendance at the City Gallery in each of the past five years;

(3) of the respective numbers of secondary schools and primary schools participating in the City Gallery's School Thematic Tour Scheme in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by the learning unit (i.e. "Today's Hong Kong" as well as "Energy Technology and the Environment") in which they participated, and the number of students participating in the activities each time;

(4) of the amount and contents of public views collected on the uses of land on the future Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands in the special exhibition of Envisioning Beyond Legacy; and

(5) whether it has plans to adjust the exhibition contents and directions of the City Gallery and introduce innovative elements; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the various parts of the questions is as follows:

(1) The City Gallery (CG) showcases the achievements of Hong Kong's planning and infrastructure development. It provides a venue for permanent exhibitions and thematic exhibitions, and acts as a platform for collaboration and exchange of planning ideas as well as public engagement. Besides permanent

exhibitions, 40 thematic exhibitions were conducted in the past five years. The number and the contents of the thematic exhibitions in each of the past five years are set out at Annex.

(2) The total number of visitation at the CG in each of the past five years is set out below:

Year (Note 1)	Number of visitation in the whole year
2019	147 778
2020	10 940 (on-site: 4 776 and online: 6 164)
2021	69 333 (on-site: 58 463 and online: 10 870)
2022	325 926 (Note 2) (on-site: 133 696 and online: 192 230)
2023 (Note 3)	96 067 (on-site: 83 455 and online: 12 612)

(3) From September 2014 to June 2019, CG organised "School Thematic Tour Scheme" programmes with different themes each year. This Scheme mainly aimed to introduce the interactive exhibits of the CG systematically via guided tour, encourage students to learn proactively and enhance their understanding about the planning and infrastructural developments of Hong Kong in the past, present and future. The themes for 2019 were "Today's Hong Kong" and "Energy Technology and the Environment", with six participating schools (a total of 10 tours) and 274 participating students in total. The breakdown is set out below:

Learning unit	No. of participating schools	No. of participating students on each tour
"Today's Hong Kong"	Three primary schools	32 / 30 / 30 / 28 persons
	Two secondary schools	25 / 26 / 33 / 34 / 16 persons
"Energy Technology and the Environment"	One secondary school	20 persons

In addition to the above, the CG had arranged 67 other guided tours for 43 schools (a total of 2 498 students had participated) in 2019. To maintain the provision of services during the pandemic and the renovation works from late 2019 to early 2022, the CG had continued to organise online guided tours and workshops for schools in situations where on-site educational activities and public guided tour services (including "School Thematic Tour Scheme" programmes) had to be suspended. The CG has resumed guided tour services since May 2022, with a focus on the permanent exhibits and "Envisioning

Beyond Legacy", an exhibition staged to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. In addition, the CG has organised summer planning schools for primary and secondary school students, as well as Youth Ambassador Schemes for university students and youths. Riding on the recent renovation of the CG with new exhibition themes and innovative curatorial models, we will actively reach out to more schools and provide students with guided tour services with a view to enhancing the new generation's understanding of the future planning and development in Hong Kong.

(4) The "Envisioning Beyond Legacy" thematic exhibition was open at the CG from July 6 to November 30, 2022, and one of the thematic exhibition areas introduced the preliminary planning concept and infrastructure development proposal of the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Island (KYCAI) project. Visitors had the opportunity to understand some of the considerations in land planning, and plan for their ideal KYCAI through the "Build the Islands of the Future" town planning game. Later on, from December 2022 to March 2023, the study team launched public engagement activities on the preliminary proposals for four aspects (including the reclamation extent, broad land use, strategic transport infrastructure and possible financing options) of the project. About 7 800 public comments were received and the relevant Public Engagement Report has been uploaded to the website of the project study ([www.centralwaters.hk](http://www.centralwaters.hk)).

(5) We will update the exhibits in a timely manner so as to provide the latest information on Hong Kong's planning and infrastructures for visitors through interactive and user-friendly means. The five floors of the CG had been or planning to be renovated in recent years, including the works on the G/F, 3/F and 4/F were completed in 2021 to update the exhibits regarding the planning history of Hong Kong, the evolution of skylines and coastlines, the contrast of Hong Kong now and then and so on. In addition, renovation works on the 2/F have just been completed to showcase, in an innovative interactive way with technology, Hong Kong's macro planning, the two major strategic growth areas (Northern Metropolis and the KYCAI), transportation and other infrastructure projects. We are planning for the renovation on the 1/F, and exhibits in relation to the theme on sustainable development will be included upon completion of works, such as green living and nature conservation, and interesting parent-child interactive curatorial models will also be adopted to attract more different types of visitors.

Note 1: The CG was closed intermittently from January 29, 2020 to April 25, 2022, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Note 2: The number of visitation of the exhibition "Envisioning Beyond Legacy" (264 000 in total, including on-site: 111 000 and online: 153 000) has been included. The exhibition, jointly presented by the Development Bureau and the Planning Department, was held from July 6 to November 30, 2022, (the outdoor exhibition ended on January 2, 2023) to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Note 3: The CG was closed from December 20, 2022, to March 31, 2023, to

facilitate repair works of air-conditioning facilities.

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## LCQ7: Dental hygienists

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

Regarding dental hygienists, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of persons enrolled as dental hygienists in Hong Kong in each of the past five years;

(2) of the number of graduates from the Higher Diploma in Dental Hygiene programme jointly offered by the School of Professional and Continuing Education of the University of Hong Kong and the Prince Philip Dental Hospital in each of the past five years, and among which the number of those who have enrolled as dental hygienists;

(3) whether the authorities have plans to amend the Dentists Registration Ordinance (Cap. 156) and the relevant subsidiary legislation to relax the requirement for dental hygienists to undertake specified work in accordance with the directions of a registered dentist who is available in the premises when the work is being carried out, so as to enable them to perform and handle independently some of the dental care work (e.g. cleaning and scaling of teeth, and exposure of oral X-ray films), thereby releasing the manpower of dentists to cope with the public's demand for dental services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether the authorities have plans to increase the number of dental hygienists; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Chief Executive announced in the 2022 Policy Address to conduct a comprehensive review of the dental services provided or subsidised by the Government. The Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care (Working Group) was subsequently established in December 2022. The review covers policy objectives, implementation strategies, service scopes and delivery models of oral health and dental care, existing local dental services and supporting arrangements, primary dental services and manpower resources of dental professionals. With reference to the preliminary recommendations made by the Working Group earlier, the Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy

Address a series of measures, to increase the manpower resources of dental professionals, including the introduction of the amendment bill to the Dentists Registration Ordinance (Cap. 156) into the Legislative Council to modernise the regulatory framework for dentists and ancillary dental workers (including dental hygienists and dental therapists), and to gradually increase training places for ancillary dental workers from 2023/24 academic year, with a view to meeting the needs of enhancing the dental services for different age groups and target groups.

At present, there are two types of ancillary dental workers who provide dental care services to patients in Hong Kong, namely dental hygienists and dental therapists. Dental hygienists can work in the public or private sector, and may perform preventive dental care (e.g. education, consultation, risk assessment, regular screening, application of fluorides and scaling) in accordance with the directions of a dentist who is available in the premises at all times when such work is being carried out. Dental therapists work only under the Department of Health (DH) to provide the School Dental Care Service. Dental therapists may perform preventive dental care and basic curative dental care (e.g. dental restoration and extraction) in accordance with the directions of a dentist who is available in the premises at all times when such work is being carried out.

The reply to the questions raised by the Hon Holden Chow is as follows:

(1) and (2) According to the information provided by the Dental Council of Hong Kong, as at December 2023, the total number of dental hygienists enrolled under the Ancillary Dental Workers (Dental Hygienists) Regulations (Cap. 156B) is 612.

In the past five years, the number of newly enrolled dental hygienists in Hong Kong each year, who are graduates from the two-year Higher Diploma in Dental Hygiene programme co-organised by the Prince Philip Dental Hospital (PPDH) and the School of Professional and Continuing Education of the University of Hong Kong (HKU SPACE) or holders of non-local qualifications, are tabulated below:

Year	Number of newly enrolled dental hygienists
2019	23
2020	2
2021	34
2022	27
2023	54

Note: As a result of class suspension due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the enrolment of graduates for the Higher Diploma in Dental Hygiene programme from 2019/20 to 2021/22 academic year was postponed by one year respectively.

As for dental therapists, they are ancillary dental workers currently

not required for statutory registration or enrolment. At present, all dental therapists posts are under the School Dental Care Service of the DH. As at December 2023, there are 237 dental therapists in the DH. Currently, persons who have graduated from the one-year Advanced Diploma in Dental Therapy programme jointly organised by the PPDH, the DH and the HKU SPACE (or equivalent qualifications) meet the professional requirement for the application of dental therapist.

In the past five academic years, the respective number of graduates from the programmes of Higher Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Advanced Diploma in Dental Therapy are tabulated as follows:

Academic Year	Number of graduates	
	Higher Diploma in Dental Hygiene	Advanced Diploma in Dental Therapy
2018/19	22	10
2019/20	33	10
2020/21	27	9
2021/22	28	12
2022/23	26	10

(3) In its interim report recently released in December 2023, the Working Group considered that it is insufficient to merely rely on the dentist workforce to meet the needs for enhancing dental care services, and that ancillary dental workers could play a more significant role in dental care services. It also suggested exploring whether ancillary dental workers should be allowed to perform more primary dental services. The Government is considering to enable dental hygienists and dental therapists to perform preventive dental care (e.g. education, consultation, risk assessment, regular screening and application of fluorides) without the presence of a dentist, and dental therapists to perform basic curative dental care (e.g. dental restoration and extraction) in accordance with the directions of a dentist who is available in the premises at all times when such work is being carried out.

The Government plans to introduce the amendment bill to the Dentists Registration Ordinance into the Legislative Council in the first half of this year, which covers suitably adjusting the scope of work of ancillary dental workers, and introducing a statutory registration system for both dental hygienists and dental therapists to enhance the standard of professional training and management of ancillary dental workers under the regulatory control of the Dental Council of Hong Kong, with a view to establishing their professional status and ensuring patients' safety and service quality. After enhancing the training and professional development pathways for dental therapists, the Government will enable dental therapists to work in the public or private sectors in a timely manner so as to tie in with their roles in dental care services.

(4) To enhance local training, in addition to increasing training places for the current programmes of Higher Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Advanced Diploma in Dental Therapy, the Government is currently liaising with the Vocational Training Council for organising new course. The provision of training places of dental hygienists and dental therapists will be increased to nearly double from 95 in the 2023/24 academic year to 185 in the 2024/25 academic year.

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## LCQ5: Implementation of contactless clearance

Following is a question by the Hon Yim Kong and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

It is learnt that contactless clearance adopts biometric technologies such as facial recognition for automated clearance verification. There are views that apart from enhancing clearance efficiency, expediting the implementation of contactless clearance which goes without gate checking formalities at various immigration control points in Hong Kong also helps to actively dovetail with the National 14th Five-Year Plan to promote Hong Kong's development into an international innovation and technology centre. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government has indicated in the new Policy Address that it will study with the Shenzhen Municipal Government the use of facial recognition technology to achieve contactless clearance, so as to provide travel convenience for scientific research personnel at the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone, of the latest implementation progress and timetable of the Parks concerned, as well as the specific arrangements relating to contactless clearance (including whether the relevant arrangements will be implemented this year to expedite the co-operation between Shenzhen and Hong Kong in innovation and technology);

(2) whether it has discussed with the Shenzhen authorities the implementation of contactless clearance at the redeveloped Huanggang Port; if so, of the specific arrangements; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that eligible Hong Kong residents who have enrolled can go through self-service immigration clearance formalities in the "Contactless e-Channels" set up at various immigration control points with the use of the relevant QR codes and facial recognition technology, whether the Government has reviewed the security and reliability of the relevant service; if it has

reviewed and the outcome is in the affirmative, whether the Government will proactively consider implementing contactless clearance which goes without gate checking formalities at various immigration control points (including the airport) as a next step?

Reply:

President,

The Immigration Department (ImmD) has been utilising technologies to enhance the handling capacity of the ports. Back in December 2004, the ImmD has already introduced the automated clearance system (e-Channel) service, which uses identification documents and fingerprints for identity authentication.

In order to provide more convenient automated clearance services, the ImmD also launched the "Contactless e-Channel" at various ports in December 2021. Citizens can use the "iAM Smart" mobile application to verify their identity and complete their registration through the ImmD's "Contactless e-Channel" mobile application. Registered Hong Kong residents do not need to present their identification documents when using the "Contactless e-Channel". They only need to scan the encrypted QR code displayed on the mobile application for the system to read their personal data before entering the e-Channels. Facial recognition technology is used to compare the read personal data to confirm their identities. The immigration clearance will then be completed and they can pass through the gate to leave. The entire process only takes about seven seconds, which is 13 per cent faster than the eight seconds required by traditional e-Channels, and has further enhanced the efficiency of port clearance, providing passengers with more convenient immigration service.

As for contactless clearance, it generally refers to the clearance process which does not require presentation of any identification documents (including relevant QR codes) but by directly using facial recognition to verify the users' identities against the database. Since this technology requires real-time comparison against all data in the database, to ensure immigration clearance efficiency, at this stage we believe that contactless clearance is technically more suitable for ports serving specific groups of pre-verified individuals below the population of 100 000.

Currently, the ImmD already has an example of implementing contactless clearance. Starting from October 2022, the Hong Kong International Airport has put in place the Flight Token service. Passengers only need to show their faces for identity verification during the check-in procedure in order to store their personal data in the database for comparison purpose. Thereafter, for subsequent procedures in the airport including departure and boarding, it is only necessary to use facial recognition for identity verification, instead of repeated presentation of travel documents and boarding passes. During departure, eligible Hong Kong residents only need to scan their faces at the ImmD's Flight Token contactless e-Channel cameras to complete departure clearance without the need to present any identification documents

nor QR codes, thereby achieving contactless clearance.

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone (Co-operation Zone) locates at the convergence point of the Northern Metropolis and the Guangzhou-Shenzhen innovation and technology corridor, which consists of the 87-hectare Hong Kong Park (i.e. Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park) and the 300-hectare Shenzhen Park. The first three buildings of the first phase of the Hong Kong Park will be completed gradually from the end of 2024 as planned.

The Co-operation Zone will operate under the mode of "one zone, two parks", with research personnel going to work early and returning home late between 2 places every day. As such, it is necessary to provide convenient clearance mode and facilities to allow designated personnel to enjoy travel convenience by, for example, enabling those who have pre-registered under the system to enjoy streamlined travel between the two parks, and adopting technology to facilitate faster movement. In addition, to facilitate innovation and technology (I&T) personnel travelling frequently between two sides every day, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government are exploring the construction of cross-river footbridge between two parks but details such as exact location, clearance mode and construction timetable are subject to discussion between the two Governments.

To facilitate the travel of I&T personnel between the two places, the Security Bureau will collaborate with the mainland authorities concerned to actively explore an innovative clearance mode which will allow designated personnel of both places to go through immigration clearance by using a cross-river footbridge. Our target is to allow I&T personnel of both sides who have pre-verified their eligibility to use facial recognition technology to verify their identities, thereby achieving contactless clearance.

(2) The Governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen are currently pressing ahead with the redevelopment of the Huanggang Port in full steam, including actively studying the implementation of the user-friendly clearance mode of "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" in the new Huanggang Port.

Under this clearance mode, automatic channels/counters of both sides will be set up side by side within their respective jurisdiction at the boundary inside the port, such that outbound and inbound visitors only need to queue up to have their documents inspected and their identities verified once to pass through the immigration facilities of both sides in order to complete the respective immigration procedures, which is highly convenient.

At present, the two Governments have reached preliminary consensus on implementing the "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" mode at the new Huanggang Port and are discussing the operational details in depth. Taking Hong Kong residents holding Mainland Travel Permits for Hong Kong and Macao Residents as an example, if they wish to use the collaborative

inspection automatic channels, they will need to pre-register and already authorised the immigration departments of both Hong Kong and Shenzhen for the collection, holding, processing or use of their personal data (including travel document numbers, facial features and fingerprint information). During the clearance process for pre-registered Hong Kong residents, the immigration departments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen will only compare the read document data with their respective databases and there is no data sharing involved. For those who do not wish to use the collaborative inspection service, they can still choose other clearance channels such as traditional manual inspection channels.

Since the new Huanggang Port is expected to be a high-volume port that can be used by all residents and visitors from Hong Kong and Shenzhen, with the number of people who can use the port far exceeding 100 000, we are currently not considering implementing contactless clearance at the port.

(3) As contactless clearance is suitable for ports serving specific groups of individuals with pre-verified eligibility, we believe that it is not suitable for ports serving general passengers at this stage. As for the airport, we believe that the current gateway design of the Flight Token contactless e-Channels is conducive to immigration control by facilitating the interception and handling of individual cases (such as wanted persons), and hence is necessary for security purpose. If the gateways are not in place, it will not only pose certain difficulties in interception, but also hinder the smooth operations and maintenance of order of the clearance channels. We therefore will not consider the option at this stage.

The ImmD will review the use of immigration facilities and system operation from time to time, and continue to apply innovative technologies to immigration control with a view to providing services with enhanced convenience and quality.

Thank you, President.

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## **Tender results of re-opening of 15-year Government Bonds under Institutional Bond Issuance Programme**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority, as representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSAR Government), announced that a tender of 10-year Government Bonds through the re-opening of existing 15-year Government Bond (issue number 15GB3403) under the Institutional Bond Issuance

Programme was held today (January 17).

A total of HK\$1.5 billion 10-year Government Bonds were offered today. A total of HK\$4.798 billion tender applications were received. The bid-to-cover ratio, i.e. the ratio of the amount of bonds applied for over the amount of bonds issued, is 3.20. The average price accepted is 86.51, implying an annualised yield of 3.655 per cent.

HKSAR Government Institutional Bond Issuance Programme Government Bond tender results

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Tender results of the re-opening of 15-year Government Bonds under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme:

Tender Date	: January 17, 2024
Issue Number	: 15GB3403 (Re-open)
Stock Code	: 4237 (HKGB 2.02 3403)
Issue and Settlement Date	: January 18, 2024
Tenor	: 10-year
Maturity Date	: March 7, 2034
Coupon Rate	: 2.02 per cent
Amount Applied	: HK\$4.798 billion
Amount Allotted	: HK\$1.5 billion
Bid-to-Cover Ratio*	: 3.20
Average Price Accepted (Yield)	: 86.51 (3.655 per cent)
Lowest Price Accepted (Yield)	: 86.12 (3.706 per cent)
Pro-rata Ratio	: About 6 per cent
Average Tender Price (Yield)	: 85.20 (3.829 per cent)

\*Ratio of the amount of bonds applied for over the amount of bonds issued.

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## [LCQ4: Measures to attract visitors to Hong Kong](#)

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (January 17):

Question:

There are views that since the resumption of normal travel between the Mainland and Hong Kong early last year, the pace of recovery of visitor arrivals to Hong Kong has fallen short of expectation, and this, coupled with the change in tourism experience patterns of inbound Mainland visitors and the craze for going north for spending among Hong Kong people, has resulted in slackened consumer spending momentum locally, with the catering and retail sectors, among others, not achieving full recovery as expected. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government will explore with the relevant parties in the Mainland increasing the number of cities covered by the Individual Visit Scheme in order to further attract the massive consumer groups in the Mainland to visit Hong Kong, and raising the duty-free shopping quota for inbound Mainland visitors to accelerate the recovery of the local consumption market;

(2) as it is learnt that many visitors from the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Middle East countries are keen to visit Hong Kong, whether the Government will introduce measures to attract more visitors from those countries to visit Hong Kong; and

(3) as there are views in society pointing out that Hong Kong's tourist receiving capacity is still relatively inadequate, in particular, the relatively high accommodation cost which dampens the desire of visitors to stay overnight, while there are also occasional reports on inhospitable services provided by business operators which create a negative impact on Hong Kong's tourism industry, of the measures put in place by the Government to expeditiously enhance the standard and capacity of Hong Kong in receiving tourists?

Reply:

President,

Tourism industry is one of the important pillars of Hong Kong's economy, accounting for about 4.5 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product before the pandemic and provided over 250 000 employment opportunities. The local tourism industry started to resume in February 2023 and recovered at full speed with number of visitor arrivals gradually increasing. The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) forecasted 25.8 million visitor arrivals in the beginning of 2023. With the concerted efforts of the Government and the travel trade, visitor arrivals reached 34 million last year, far exceeding the previous estimate. During the previous New Year's Eve and New Year holidays, we recorded a total of around 430 000 Mainland visitor arrivals and a daily average of 140 000, which was 16 per cent and 6 per cent higher than that of the Labour Day and National Day Golden Weeks in the same year respectively and reached about 73 per cent of the average of the same period in 2017 and 2018.

The reply to the question raised by the Hon Elizabeth Quat is as follows:

(1) The Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) has been implemented since July 28, 2003, and is currently covering 49 designated Mainland cities. In 2023, the number of visitors arriving in Hong Kong through the IVS accounted for 60 per cent of the total Mainland visitors, which is comparable to the situation before the pandemic.

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. Regarding various proposals to enhance IVS in an orderly manner and adjust the duty-free allowance of the Mainland visitors arriving in Hong Kong, the Government will continue to maintain communication and discuss with relevant Mainland authorities in due course to provide Mainland visitors with more convenient and flexible ways to visit Hong Kong and enriching travel experience to facilitate the vibrant development of tourism-related industries.

(2) Member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are Hong Kong's target source markets. HKTB has been launching various tourism promotions, including launching Announcement in the Public Interest to tie with the Airport Authority Hong Kong and airlines' distribution of free tickets in source markets last year, as well as co-operating with key opinion leaders (KOLs) and the travel trade on promotion to attract visitors to Hong Kong.

HKTB organised a large-scale ASEAN familiarisation trip in late 2022, receiving nearly 60 trade representatives from Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore. It is hoped that they will launch novel tourism products in ASEAN source markets and attract visitors to visit Hong Kong after experiencing Hong Kong's brand new tourism elements and winter ambience. HKTB invited more than 40 MICE trade representatives from ASEAN to visit Hong Kong in October 2023 to take part in the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival organised by HKTB, as well as to visit the new World of Frozen of the Hong Kong Disneyland, and to try out Hong Kong's local cafes and cuisines, etc., to promote Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions tourism. HKTB also participated in a number of travel trade shows in the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, and organised briefings to promote Hong Kong's tourism appeals.

Besides, HKTB, together with the Department of Culture and Tourism of Guangdong Province and the Macau Government Tourist Office, organised the first large-scale overseas promotional campaign for the GBA in Bangkok, Thailand, titled "The Greater Bay Area – Fusion of Exciting Experiences", which introduced the GBA tourism experience, and launched a new one-stop website for tourism in the GBA, as well as a series of programmes and promotions.

Since cross-boundary tourism has started to resume, the number of visitors from ASEAN member states has recovered to 73 per cent of the average

of the same period in 2017 and 2018, higher than the recovery rate of overall visitors in the same period. Among them, visitor arrivals from the Philippines and Thailand recorded a significant growth, and the number of visitor arrivals in November and December, equals to 114 per cent and 104 per cent of the average of the same period in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

The Middle East markets are source markets with significant potential. HKTB will continue its promotional work on various fronts, such as organising briefings to introduce new tourism products to the local travel trade, promoting special tourism offers on travelling to Hong Kong and launching travel packages in collaboration with tourism brands, with a view to attracting visitors from the Middle East to visit Hong Kong.

In the meantime, HKTB has been actively promoting the Muslim source markets and invited media representatives from Muslim regions to come to Hong Kong to visit local "Muslim-friendly" establishments. The Muslim familiarisation trip organised in September let the incoming trade know that Hong Kong welcomes and is suitable for Muslim visitors. In addition, HKTB also consolidated a series of information about Hong Kong on its DiscoverHongKong.com website which catered for Muslim visitors, ranging from cuisine, hotel accommodation, local culture to activities suitable for Muslim visitors, etc., to attract them to visit Hong Kong and enhance their travel experience in Hong Kong.

HKTB will continue its publicity efforts in various aspects to promote Hong Kong's tourism appeals to the ASEAN and Middle East source markets to attract visitors.

(3) The HKSAR Government attaches great importance to the travel experience of visitors arriving in Hong Kong and has been continuously reviewing Hong Kong's capacity to receive visitors.

Regarding tourist attractions, the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, the Ocean Park, the Peak Tram and the Ngong Ping 360, etc, has launched many new facilities in the past two years. Moreover, various cultural spots including Hong Kong Palace Museum, M+ museum and Hong Kong Museum of Art have been built or renovated, which helped to attract visitors.

On the receiving capacity of hotels, there were currently a total of more than 100 000 rooms offered by hotels and guesthouses, representing an 8 per cent increase when compared with end-December 2018. Besides, the actual average hotel room rate was about HK\$1,500 in November, which is similar to the average level in the same period of 2017 and 2018.

Based on the findings of HKTB, the average length of stay of overnight visitors has extended from 3.1 nights before the pandemic to 3.5 nights in the third quarter of 2023. The proportion of overnight visitors has also increased. Over 50 per cent of visitors stayed overnight last year, surpassing the average of 46 per cent of the same period in 2017 and 2018. The proportion for non-Mainland overnight visitors remained at 66 per cent, similar to the average of the same period in 2017 and 2018.

On enhancing service quality, HKTB took the initiative to establish the "Professional Quality Tourism Services Pledge" in July 2023, gathering nearly a hundred representatives and frontline practitioners from tourism-related sectors to pledge on delivering the best experience to visitors. Moreover, HKTB will continue to enhance local service quality and hospitality through the "Quality Tourism Services Scheme" and organise the "Outstanding Quality Tourism Service Merchant and Service Staff Awards" to recognise efforts of high performing merchants and frontline practitioners. HKTB, together with the trade, will gradually organise a series of training videos and promotional activities this year and plans to launch new campaigns to mainly promote courtesy and service quality to consolidate Hong Kong's position as an international tourist destination and to encourage them to provide excellent services to customers.

Thank you, President.