

**Motion Debate on
“Fostering the Development of the Tourism Industry”
at the Legislative Council on
30 May 2007**

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council meeting on 30 May 2007, the motion on “Fostering the Development of the Tourism Industry” was carried, urging the Government to face up to the operational difficulties encountered by the industry and discuss with the industry measures to enhance the level of professional services and promote the long-term development of the industry. This paper updates Members on the progress of the corresponding measures taken by the Government and related organizations.

Enhancing the Professionalism of Tourism Practitioners

2. As pointed out by the Government when responding to the motion debate, great importance is attached to the education and training of tourist guides. Allocation of resources to this end will continue, such as subsidising various courses run by tertiary institutions, the Vocational Training Council and other educational institutions for those aspiring to pursue a career in the tourism industry, as well as encouraging serving tourist guides to apply for the Tourist Guide Pass by taking part in the Tourist Guides Accreditation Scheme. Since the implementation of the Scheme, over 9,200 serving tourist guides have been trained. Among them more than 7,000 have been issued with Tourist Guide Pass. The Government also launched a series of specialised courses in mid-2006 for tourist guides and employees of travel agents. Some 860 people have received training so far.

3. The Travel Industry Council (TIC) rolled out the Continuing Professional Development Scheme for Tourist Guides in July 2007 after consulting tourist guide unions on the Tourist Guides Accreditation Scheme. Under the new Scheme, Pass holders must pass a designated examination and spend a specified number of hours on training courses before they are eligible for renewal of their Passes. In view of the

importance of professional ethics, the Scheme requires tourist guides to take part in related workshops in order to broaden their knowledge in this area.

4. The Government and TIC will continue to pay close attention to the need of the market and the tourism sector, so as to provide more training courses to the practitioners of the tourism industry. To meet the need of the industry, the Government and TIC will listen to the views of the tourism sector before deciding on the types and content of courses to be offered.

Promoting Hong Kong's Tourism and Expanding Visitor Sources

5. To maintain the competitive edges of Hong Kong's tourism and diversify its visitor base, we have been working closely with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), TIC and tourism sector in promoting tourism development, enhancing the quality of services and expanding the sources of visitors.

6. Riding on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), HKTB has launched a series of targeted promotion and publicity activities in the Mainland. Apart from producing TV music videos, which juxtaposes new and old tourist attractions of Hong Kong to arouse the interest of Mainland youngsters, it has, in collaboration with Mainland education publishers, published a VCD titled "Hong Kong — the Shiny Pearl", which will be used as supporting material in Mainland primary schools. In addition, HKTB has teamed up with the Mainland media in organising the "Little Journalists Programme", which took place from 23 to 27 July. Under the Programme, a group of primary students from 30 Mainland cities of high development potential visited and experienced Hong Kong in the capacity of journalists. We hope these students on returning will help arouse the interest of people close to them in visiting Hong Kong and prompt their parents to choose Hong Kong as their travel destination.

7. In facilitating visitor clearance, we have put into place new initiatives since 25 June to streamline the procedures and shorten the processing time of application for business and visit visas by visitors from Vietnam and Russia. For example, Russian and Vietnamese business visitors can now apply for multiple-journey visit visas, and fast

track visa service is provided for Russian tour groups entering from Mainland China whereby visas will be issued to successful applicants within three working days. These measures are intended for the convenience of visitors to Hong Kong to entice their revisits.

8. In late 1999, HKTB introduced the “Quality Tourism Services” Scheme to upgrade the standard of tourism services and reinforce the positive business image of Hong Kong. To date some 6,500 retailing and catering shops have been accredited under the Scheme. HKTB is committed to extending the Scheme to other tourism-related trades. For example, the guesthouse sector was newly included in the Scheme in end 2006, with over 200 rooms of three guesthouses being accredited so far.

Honest Travel / Combating Unscrupulous Shops

9. On 9 May, the Legislative Council passed the motion on “Combating Unscrupulous Shops”, urging the Government to actively take vigorous measures against shopping scams and to step up the regulation of tourism so as to restore tourists’ confidence in shopping in Hong Kong. In the progress report submitted to the Legislative Council on 18 July, we updated Members on the progress of various measures taken by the Government and other relevant organisations, including law enforcement, legislative review, trade regulation as well as publicity and education, to provide Mainland tourists with further consumer protection and to combat such malpractice as forced shopping. All these are conducive to the healthy development of tourism as honest business operators, including travel agents, shops and tourist guides in the industry, are provided with a level playing field for healthy development.

Liability Insurance System for Tourism Trade

10. As for the proposal on establishing a liability insurance system for the tourism trade, TIC has commissioned a consultancy study on the industry’s operational risks and related management issues. The consultant has completed the study on the criteria for risk solutions, and

is preparing the “Hong Kong Tourism Risk Solution Handbook” for the industry’s reference and compliance in enhancing risk management. The consultant expects that recommendations on the detailed arrangements of the liability insurance system can be submitted to TIC within this year. The Government and the Travel Industry Compensation Fund Management Board will carefully consider TIC’s conclusion and recommendations on the consultant’s report, including the need for using the Fund to enhance the industry’s risk management as well as to strengthen the protection for outbound tour groups.

11. The Government will continue to publicise the importance of taking out travel insurance. We will continue to call upon travellers to take out travel insurance before setting off for duty visits or travelling overseas. To remind the public of the importance of taking out travel insurance, the Tourism Commission, Office of the Commissioner of Insurance, TIC and the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers have organised a series of promotional activities, including television announcements of public interest, posters and bus advertisements. A recent survey shows that 70% of outbound travellers have taken out travel insurance, representing a substantial increase over the past few years. This reflects the public’s better understanding of travel protection.

Sustainable Development and Joint Promotion

12. To ensure sustainable development of Hong Kong’s tourism, the Government will continue to devote resources to the development of tourism infrastructure and human capital as well as launching more publicity and promotion so that our tourism sector will be more competitive and business-friendly. We will also continue to liaise closely with the tourism and related trades and act as a co-ordinator in fostering co-operation among various sectors with a view to boosting tourism development.

Tourism Commission

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau

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