

LCQ21: Making good use of tourism resources in Sha Tau Kok area

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Pak-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (February 12):

Question:

In recent years, the Government has been committed to developing Sha Tau Kok (STK) into a tourist hotspot, including launching the First Phase "STK Pier opening up scheme" and the second phase of the STK opening-up plan, upgrading the tourism supporting facilities in STK, as well as providing photo-taking spots. In addition, there are views that the official opening of the Robin's Nest Country Park on November 2 last year has added more highlights to the STK area. On making good use of the tourism resources in the STK area, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of individual visitors and tour group visitors visiting STK each month since the launch of the second phase of the STK opening-up plan in January last year, and among which the numbers of non-local visitors (set out in Table 1);

Table 1

Month	Total number of visitors	Number of individual visitors (among which the number of non-local visitors)	Number of tour group visitors (among which the number of non-local visitors)

(2) of the respective numbers of individual visitors and tour group visitors on the 10 dates with the highest number of visitors to STK last year, and among which the numbers of non-local visitors (set out in Table 2);

Table 2

Date	Total number of visitors	Number of individual visitors (among which the number of non-local visitors)	Number of tour group visitors (among which the number of non-local visitors)

(3) as it is learnt that the Police can generally complete the processing of applications for electronic Tourism Closed Area Permits for access to STK at an earlier time (which originally required a minimum of three working days), of the distribution of the time taken by the Police to vet and approve such permits last year (i.e. (i) within four hours, (ii) more than four hours to 12 hours, (iii) more than 12 hours to 24 hours, (iv) more than 24 hours to 48 hours, (v) more than 48 hours to 72 hours, and (vi) more than 72 hours), and set out in Table 3 a breakdown by the type of applicants (i.e. (a) individual visitors and (b) tour group visitors, and (I) local visitors and (II) non-

□local visitors);

Table 3

Vetting and approval time	(a)		(b)	
	(I)	(II)	(I)	(II)
(i)				
.....				
(vi)				
Total				

(4) as some members of the industry have relayed that it takes time for non-local visitors to apply for electronic Tourism Closed Area Permits to gain access to STK, which is not conducive to travel agencies promoting relevant tourism products to tourists, whether the authorities will consider introducing visa-on-arrival arrangements for tour groups visiting on a "group in, group out" basis, so as to facilitate travel agencies in arranging for more tourists to visit STK;

(5) as it is learnt that currently the seven MacIntosh Forts built along the Shenzhen River are no longer in practical operational use, and two of them have undergone basic revitalisation works and are conditionally open to the public, whether the authorities have considered fully opening these two revitalised forts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; whether the authorities will consider using the forts as visitor service centres or open museums to make good use of heritage resources, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of Robin's Nest Country Park;

(6) given that the "contactless channels" at the Chung Ying Street Checkpoint in STK became operational on December 23 last year, of the progress of exploring the possibility of allowing Hong Kong tour groups to enter Chung Ying Street via such checkpoint on a "group in, group out" basis (including the estimated earliest implementation date); and

(7) given that with effect from January 24 this year, the Security Bureau has opened a specified section of road within the frontier closed area near Lin Ma Hang Village in STK, exempting the requirement to apply for a closed area permit for people travelling by green minibus passing through this section of road, with a view to facilitating tourists to travel to Robin's Nest Country Park, whether the authorities will consider allowing tourist coaches to access this section of road, so as to facilitate the launch of relevant tourism products by the industry?

Reply

President,

The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) published the Action Plan on Sha Tau Kok Cultural Tourism Zone on December 30, 2024, in tandem with the promulgation of the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0. The CSTB will continue to promote the tourism development in Sha Tau Kok (STK) under the overall principle of "low density, high quality" and through

enriching its historical and cultural elements. Specifically, the Government is progressively opening up STK Frontier Closed Area (FCA) for tourism, including rolling out of the second phase of the STK Opening-up Plan in January 2024, under which local and non-local visitors are allowed to enter STK FCA (except Chung Ying Street) for sightseeing. In light of its proximity to the Robin's Nest Country Park, STK has effectively linked up various tourists spots of the Blue and Green Recreation, Tourism and Conservation Circle of the district, serving as a starting point for visitors travelling by ferry to the surrounding islands and areas, such as Lai Chi Wo, Kat O and Ap Chau.

In consultation with the Security Bureau (SB), the Development Bureau and the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Yiu Pak-leung is as follows:

(1) and (2) The monthly figures of electronic Tourism Closed Area Permit (e-CAP) issued by the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) for entering STK in 2024, and the ten dates with most e-CAP issued in the same year, are set out at Annex.

(3) To facilitate the implementation of the second phase of the STK Opening-up Plan starting from January 2024, the HKPF launched e-CAP on December 1, 2023. The HKPF has been committed to processing applications as soon as possible. Upon submission by applicants of all the documents required and verification of the relevant information, the vast majority of the e-CAP applications were approved within three working days. The HKPF does not maintain breakdown information of the time required for approval of e-CAP as mentioned in the question.

(4) and (6) Since 2022, the SB has, in collaboration with relevant bureaux and departments, formulated specific measures to progressively open-up STK FCA in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The SB has fully consulted the local community in the process, closely monitored the implementation of the opening-up plan, as well as maintaining close liaison with relevant stakeholders to ensure timely responses to the concerns raised and implement the opening-up plan in an orderly manner.

As far as Chung Ying Street is concerned, due to its unique historical background and geographical factors, Chung Ying Street directly adjoins the Mainland without any barrier as a boundary demarcation. It is also the only place in Hong Kong where there is no boundary control facilities, while cross-boundary movement of people and cargo is allowed. In light of the boundary security considerations from the SB, Chung Ying Street has not been opened to tourists for entry from Hong Kong STK over the years.

With the gradual opening-up of STK FCA for tourism, the Government will continue to adopt an open stance in exploring the promotion of tourism at Chung Ying Street, as well as other feasible measures that can further facilitate the trade and tourists visiting STK FCA, with a view to fostering the development of cultural tourism in STK. The CSTB, the SB and Shenzhen Municipal Government, have been in ongoing communication with each other over

the development of cultural tourism in both Hong Kong and Shenzhen STK, and will explore the feasible option of allowing Hong Kong group tours to enter Chung Ying Street for sightseeing via the Chung Ying Street Checkpoint on a "group in, group out" basis, with a view to further deepening the historical and cultural elements of STK tourism.

(5) For security reason, the seven MacIntosh Forts located at the boundary of New Territories are currently not opened to the public. In view of the establishment of the Robin's Nest Country Park on March 1, 2024, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) installed an interpretation panel near the MacIntosh Fort (Kong Shan) at the Lin Ma Hang Country Trail to introduce the Forts. The AFCD also featured a thematic introduction of the Forts in an episode of the video series titled "Discovering Robin's Nest Country Park", which was produced in celebrating the establishment of the Robin's Nest Country Park, covering the history of the Forts and its role in boundary defence in the past.

(7) Starting from January 24, 2025, a section of road within the FCA near Lin Ma Hang Village in STK has been opened for public travelling on public light buses on scheduled service (i.e. green minibuses), by exempting the requirement to apply for a closed area permit. Members of the public concerned can enter Lin Ma Hang Village via the said section of road, thereby facilitating them to visit the Robin's Nest Country Park and nearby areas. The current exemption is applicable to passengers travelling by green minibuses, but does not apply to private vehicles, taxis or other vehicles without a valid closed road permit, and to members of the public using other means of travel such as walking or cycling. Taking into account the limitations in the road design and safety considerations of the concerned section, the said section of road is not suitable for entry by large coach buses. The Government will examine the effectiveness of the exemption and, on the premise that boundary security and traffic safety can be ensured, keep an open mind in studying the feasibility of extending the exemption arrangement in the future to cover other transportation means.