

LCQ16: Mechanism of Quality Tourism Services Scheme to handle
travellers' complaints

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs Rita Lau, to a question by the Hon Paul Tse, in the Legislative Council today (May 5):

Question:

Some travellers have recently relayed to me their dissatisfaction with the services provided by merchants certified under the Quality Tourism Services (QTS) Scheme, set up by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB). These travellers lodged complaints with HKTB but to no avail, and the HKTB staff were also unhelpful. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the total number of merchants certified as QTS merchants each year since the launch of the QTS Scheme; the number of complaints relating to the QTS Scheme received by HKTB each year, as well as the number of QTS merchants who were disqualified because they had been the subject of complaints or the level of their services had been assessed to be below standard;

(b) when travellers are dissatisfied with HKTB's handling of their complaints against the aforesaid merchants, what channels are available for them to request for a review; and

(c) which government department is currently responsible for monitoring the QTS Scheme; of the specific monitoring measures; whether the authorities have requested HKTB to review the effectiveness of the QTS Scheme in response to travellers' complaints about the QTS Scheme; if they have, of the details?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) introduced the Quality Tourism Services (QTS) Scheme with a view to helping visitors identify merchants that offer quality services, and encouraging the merchants to upgrade their service standards. Currently, the Scheme covers sectors such as retail and dining outlets, visitor accommodation facilities and hair salons.

The HKTB maintains a stringent mechanism to assess and monitor the merchants accredited under the QTS Scheme. The Secretariat of the QTS Scheme (the QTS Secretariat) has set up a dedicated team to handle visitors' complaints against the accredited merchants. Upon receiving a complaint, the dedicated team will contact the complainant and the merchant separately to understand the matter and conduct investigation, with a view to finding a solution acceptable to both parties.

If a complaint is substantiated, the QTS Secretariat will, based on the nature of the complaint and whether the merchants concerned have previous violations, submit its recommendation on the penalty points to be imposed on the merchant to the QTS Sub-Committee for decision. Upon accumulating certain penalty points, the merchant will receive a warning from the Secretariat. In more serious cases, the merchant's accreditation may be terminated. In addition, the dedicated team will write to the management of the QTS merchant being complained pointing out the need to take note of the complaint and seek improvement in its service quality. The QTS Secretariat will also submit to the QTS Sub-Committee a monthly report on the complaints, the status of investigation and the findings.

My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(a) Since the accreditation of merchants under the QTS Scheme began in 2000, the numbers of accredited merchant outlets, the complaints received by the HKTB and merchants that received penalty each year are set out at the annex.

(b) In case visitors are dissatisfied with the handling of their complaints, they can bring the case to the attention of the Board of the HKTB, or seek assistance from the Consumer Council. Since the introduction of the QTS Scheme, the HKTB has not received any request from visitors for reviewing the handling of complaints, or feedback that they have lodged complaints with HKTB to no avail or that HKTB staff members were unhelpful. As a matter of fact, the HKTB has all along reminded staff members to be courteous and professional when providing service.

The QTS Secretariat has been successful in settling all the substantiated complaints. As for those unsubstantiated cases, the HKTB will also make the best endeavour to mediate. Being committed to quality services, many merchants are willing to meet the visitors' requests.

(c) The QTS Scheme is administered by the HKTB, the work of which is monitored

by the Tourism Commission. Where necessary, the Commission will discuss with the Board of the HKTB possible improvements to the Scheme.

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