

業界快將進入新階段

The industry soon enters a new stage



政府已於三月二十二日把《旅遊業條例草案》提交立法會首讀及二讀(見「主題故事」)。雖然《草案》現在仍未通過，但經過了幾年諮詢與商議，相信各方人士都贊成改革的大方向——旅遊業需要一個具法定權力的獨立監管機構。將來旅遊業監管局成立後，會發牌監管旅行社、導遊、領隊，為業界揭開新的一章。業者將來觸犯《旅遊業條例》的後果，與現在違反議會規例不可同日而語，希望大家繼續提供優良服務。

為了幫助外遊業者多認識不同地方的新景點、新資訊，議會由去年五月開始，與駐港旅遊局代表協會合辦了將近二十個旅遊知識講座，已介紹或將介紹的國家或地區超過十個，遍佈亞洲、大洋洲、歐洲、北美洲。這類有助會員提高服務水平的活動，議會會繼續致力舉辦，希望會員喜歡。

「旅行社資訊科技發展配對基金先導計劃」自去年中推出以來，第一、二輪申請合共批准了四十九份申請，資助額合計超過港幣四百六十萬元。先導計劃的目標，是協助中小型旅行社善用資訊科技，以拓展業務，提高競爭力。如果會員認為先導計劃有功效，議會會游說政府繼續撥款。第三輪申請的截止日期是四月底；早點申請，早點拿取資助，早點拓展業務，何樂而不為？

今年外遊印花費經過連續兩個月的下跌後，幸虧三月的走勢相當不錯，所以現在雖然三月沒有整個月的數據，卻已可斷言勝過去年。會員應繼續為熱中外遊的香港人提供出色的旅遊產品與服務。☞

董耀中

On 22 March, the Travel Industry Bill was presented to the Legislative Council for first and second readings (see "Cover Story"). **Although the Bill has not yet passed into legislation, it is believed that after many years of consultation and discussion, all the parties concerned should agree with the overall direction of the reform – the travel industry needs an independent regulatory body with statutory powers.** When the Travel Industry Authority is established, it will license and regulate travel agents, tourist guides and tour escorts, thus marking the beginning of a new chapter for the industry. **Industry members who violate the future Travel Industry Ordinance will have to face consequences much severer than today when they breach the TIC's rules. Let's hope that they will continue to provide sterling services.**

To help outbound traders learn more about new attractions and new information of different places, the TIC and the Association of National Tourist Office Representatives in Hong Kong (ANTOR (HK)) have joined hands since May last year to hold close to 20 talks on travel knowledge, with more than 10 countries and places already covered or to be covered, spanning Asia, Oceania, Europe and North America. The TIC will continue to organise more activities of this kind, which can help members raise their standard of service, and hopes that members will like them.

Since the Pilot Information Technology Development Matching Fund Scheme for Travel Agents (Pilot Scheme) was rolled out in mid-2016, a total of 49 applications were approved (first and second rounds included), with the total amount of subsidies exceeding HK\$4.6 million. The objectives of the Pilot Scheme are to help SME travel agents expand business and enhance competitiveness through clever use of information technology. If members consider the Pilot Scheme to be helpful to them, the TIC will lobby the Government for more funding. The deadline for third-round applications is the end of April. Is there a better thing to do than to submit an application a little early, get subsidised a little early and expand business a little early?

This year, after two consecutive months of decreases in the outbound levy collected, it is a relief that the trend in March has so far been quite robust, thus making it certain that the amount for this March, though not available yet, will be better than last March. Members should continue to provide excellent travel products and services for enthusiastic travellers from Hong Kong.☞

Joseph Tung