

監管架構或將大變

Regulatory framework may face sea change



踏入二零一一年不久，外遊業就已碰到兩大危機。首先是埃及一月底出現大規模暴力衝突，保安局於是先後發出紅色和黑色外遊警示。然後是日本三月十一日發生九級地震、海嘯，其後還引發核輻射威脅，保安局分別對日本和福島等四個縣發出紅色和黑色外遊警示。埃及和日本都是香港人熱愛的旅遊勝地，現在這兩個市場受到重創，對會員的打擊不言而喻。

在上述危機中，旅行社一直竭盡所能，為旅客做好各種安排，我在這裡感謝旅行社的努力以及旅客的體諒。紅色或黑色外遊警示發出後，旅行團因而取消，為求旅遊保險可給予旅客充足的保障，議會將再次與保險界磋商。為救助日本災民，議會品質保障基金將捐出港幣十萬元，希望會員踴躍捐款(見通告C1320)。

二月五日年初三，有一名導遊與兩名內地旅客發生衝突，事件被傳媒廣泛報導，並且出現不少不確言論，議會於是在多份報章刊登聲明澄清(見「議會簡報」)。我在這裡再次重申，所有涉嫌違規個案都會秉公處理，會員沒有違規就無須憂慮被旅客誣告，而旅客有理就不用擔心議會偏袒旅行社。

內地入境市場問題重重，政府於是在二月底向立法會提交文件，就旅遊業現行監管架構的改革初步提出四個方向，並且會在四月諮詢公眾和業界，今年第四季公佈具體改革建議。議會對此表示歡迎，在這期間會繼續做好自律監管的工作。✎

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Just a few months into 2011, the outbound industry has already been confronted with two severe crises. The first one was in Egypt, which had seen widespread violent demonstrations in late January, thus resulting in the Security Bureau issuing a red and then a black Outbound Travel Alert (OTA). Then came the other crisis in Japan, which was struck by the magnitude-9 earthquake and tsunami on 11 March and the subsequent nuclear radiation threats, with the result that a red OTA was issued for Japan and a black OTA for four prefectures including Fukushima. Both Egypt and Japan are popular destinations for Hong Kong travellers; now that these two markets are in critical shape, the impact on members needs no elaboration.

I would like to thank travel agents for their efforts to make the best possible arrangements for travellers and to thank the travellers for their understanding during the crises. The TIC is going to meet the insurers again to discuss how travel insurance could provide sufficient cover for travellers whose tours are cancelled when red or black OTAs are issued. **The TIC Bonding Fund will donate HK\$100,000 to the earthquake victims in Japan, and I urge members to make donations as well (see Circular C1320).**

On 5 February, a guide had a scuffle with two mainland tourists, which was widely reported by the media, and quite a number of untrue remarks were made afterwards. The TIC therefore published a statement in several newspapers to clarify the matter (see "Council Bulletin"). **I hope to stress again that all suspected violation cases are handled impartially, and therefore there is no need for members to be worried about being set up by tourists or for tourists to be concerned about the TIC being biased in favour of travel agents.**

The many problems in the China inbound market have prompted the Government to submit a paper to the Legislative Council in late February, in which four tentative directions of reforms in the current regulatory framework of the industry were outlined. A public and trade consultation will be launched in April and concrete reform proposals announced in the fourth quarter of this year. The TIC welcomes the Government's initiative and will continue to strive for excellence in its self-regulatory work during the period. ✎

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