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Summary of Feedback on Proposed Amendments to the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) (Amendment) Bill

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) have concluded the public consultation exercise on the proposed amendments to the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) Act. The three-week long consultation exercise ended on 13 December 2013. The public and industry members were generally supportive of the proposed amendments.

2. Apart from the 22 responses received via the REACH portal, the Government has also gathered feedback from seven industry briefings. A total of 155 representatives from the industry, comprising tourist guides (TGs), the NTUC Tourist Guide Chapter and the Society of Tourist Guides Singapore, travel agents as well as attraction owners and operators participated in these briefings conducted by STB. In addition, responses from other sources such as media articles and direct feedback to MTI and STB were also considered.

Overview of proposed amendments

3. The review of the STB Act is part of the Government's ongoing efforts to raise the professionalism of tourist guides and the quality of tourist guiding in Singapore.

4. To strengthen STB's investigative powers against illegal guiding, the Government proposed to add a presumption of remuneration. This, together with the powers to compound offences, will help STB take swifter enforcement action against offenders.

5. Other proposed amendments include updating the types of guiding offences to keep pace with the modus operandi of unlicensed guiding, raising the maximum penalty for unlicensed guiding and related offences to maintain their deterrent effect and repealing outdated provisions.

Feedback on legislation to strengthen the regulatory framework

Presumption of Remuneration

6. Respondents commented that the presumption of remuneration could be misinterpreted to describe scenarios when a licensed tourist guide is required. STB clarified that the clause was not meant to define tourist guiding but rather the circumstances upon which STB can presume the involvement of remuneration to enable STB to take swift enforcement actions against suspected illegal guiding activities. In response to feedback, the proposed presumption clause has been drafted as a standalone section in the proposed STB (Amendment) Bill.

Prescribing key definitions

7. Industry members were also supportive of prescribing key definitions such as “tourist guide” and “guiding services” in the proposed STB (Amendment) Bill. They also suggested a definition for “tourist” to give greater clarity on when a person is considered to be a tourist. This has been taken into consideration in the drafting of the proposed STB (Amendment) Bill.

Non-Regulatory Feedback: Raising Capabilities through the Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Framework

8. Industry members commented that there is a need to raise the capabilities of tourist guides through enhancements to the training and licensing framework. STB will continue to engage relevant industry partners on capability development efforts.

Conclusion

9. MTI and STB would like to thank the public and industry partners for their feedback on the draft STB (Amendment) Bill and will consider them when finalising the legislative amendments. The draft STB (Amendment) Bill will be tabled in Parliament today and is scheduled to be discussed in Parliament next month.

MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
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