

1 Foreword

The tourism industry of Macao had faced an ordeal when Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) broke out in some of our neighboring cities at the beginning of this year. The entire economy, especially the tourism industry, had been dealt a heavy blow, due to the drop in tourist arrival number in Macao. However, during the difficult period, the industry had showed strong spirit of cooperation. They had worked together to launch a series of creative campaigns and plans to revive the economy. In support of the Government's emergency relief policies, the Institute For Tourism Studies (IFT) had assisted related organisations in providing a number of training courses tailored for the industry, so as to help Macao tourism recover rapidly after the abatement of the epidemic.

Having passed the difficult period, there comes bliss out of the depth of misfortune. Residents from a certain number of cities of Mainland China are allowed to visit Macao on an individual basis. This is really a piece of good news for the tourism industry. It is expected that both the number of visitors and the demand for the tourism facilities will increase. Thus it is necessary for the industry to be well prepared to cope with these new challenges. At the same time, IFT has to take up the responsibility of producing more internationally-recognised professionals. Besides, owing to the liberalisation of the gaming sector in Macao, there is an increasing demand for tourism professionals and technical staff in casinos. Hence the "Macao Tourism and Casino Career Centre", established jointly by the Macao Polytechnic Institute and IFT, plans to offer various training courses this year. It is anticipated that the Centre will be able to train 3,000 professionals every year to satisfy the demand of the industry.

This year, the applications for the bachelor degree programmes of the Tourism College of Macao, from local, Mainland and overseas graduating students, reached a record high of more than 1,000. In response to the increasing demand for tourism education indicated by this figure, IFT had expanded student intake by 60%. In the meantime, the Professional and Continuing Education School will be launching, this year, Diploma and Certificate Programmes in "Event and Tourism Operations" and "Hospitality Industry Operations", so as to cope with the need of people at work and of those who want to further their studies. In addition, several improvements had been made on the teaching facilities. The new campus building, named as "Inspiration Building", was inaugurated in September 2003. The Pousada de Mong-Há, the Multimedia Library and the Windows Cafeteria had undergone renovation and expansion during the summer holiday. They can all cater to the studying and training needs of students.

During the past year, IFT had extended its international network by signing cooperation protocols with various overseas institutes of higher education. In addition, the Institute had enthusiastically supported its academic staff to participate in international conferences and to present their research papers. Through the recently launched 'Residential Research Grants', IFT had invited some outstanding scholars, from all around the world and within the country, to work together with its academic staff in Macao on tourism-related research projects and to give lectures. This scheme really benefits both students and lecturers. I hope that IFT will continue to enhance itself and to contribute to the development of human resources for the tourism industry of Macao.



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1 September 2003