

香港特別行政區政府
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25 April 2007

Miss Erin Tsang
Clerk to Panel
Panel on Commerce and Industry
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central,
Hong Kong

BY FAX: 2869 6794

Dear Miss Tsang,

**Panel on Commerce and Industry -
Promotion of Inward Investment**

At the Commerce and Industry Panel meeting held on 13 February 2007, the Administration undertook to follow up with relevant bureaux/departments on the Panel's proposal to facilitate the issuing of business visas to overseas applicants. We have conveyed the Panel's views to the Security Bureau. The Administration's response is set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

The Administration adopts a liberal visa policy to facilitate the travel convenience of bona fide visitors. Nationals of about 170 countries and territories enjoy visa-free access to Hong Kong for visits ranging from seven to 180 days. However, there is a need to maintain an effective immigration control regime to provide travel convenience on one hand and safeguard Hong Kong's security and stability on the other. The Administration's policies and practices in relation to our current visa requirements on persons from different economies are in line with international practices.

The Immigration Department (ImmD) pledges to finalize a visit visa application within four weeks upon receipt of all necessary documents. The vast majority of these applications, including those from nationals of such emerging economies as Eastern Europe, Russia and Vietnam, are processed ahead of the pledged timeframe. In urgent cases, they could be finalized within a few days. ImmD will also consider issuing multiple-journey visit visas valid up to 24 months for frequent travelers to Hong Kong.

Regarding the entry of Taiwan residents, ImmD introduced in early 2002 the "iPermit" scheme, under which approval for applicants to visit and stay in Hong Kong for up to 14 days generally comes within minutes after online submission of a simple application. Since June last year, Taiwan residents holding "Mainland Travel Permit for Taiwan Residents" with a valid entry endorsement to the Mainland are allowed to visit Hong Kong for a stay up to seven days. Alternatively, Taiwan residents may apply for single entry permits allowing them to stay in Hong Kong for 90 days, or one-year or three-year multiple-journey entry permits which are valid for a stay of up to 14 days on each landing.

The Administration reviews the visa policies on a regular basis, and will continue to explore the possibility of streamlining the relevant procedures further. Moreover, ImmD always stands ready to offer assistance to businessmen to obtain visas to visit Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms Linda Lai)
for Secretary for Commerce,
Industry and Technology

c.c. Director General of Investment Promotion (Attn: Mr MJT Rowse)
Secretary for Security (Attn: Ms Grace Lui)