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LCQ7: Entry arrangements for visitors from Mainland and Taiwan

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs Rita Lau, to a question by the Hon Paul Tse in the Legislative Council today (December 10):

Question:

Given that the financial tsunami has dealt a heavy blow to the tourism industry in Hong Kong, will the Government inform this Council whether:

(a) it has recently discussed with the relevant departments of the Guangdong Provincial Government or the Central People's Government the introduction of new measures to allow residents of the Guangdong Province with no criminal record to visit Hong Kong without the need to apply for an endorsement under the Individual Visit Scheme, so as to revitalise the tourism industry in Hong Kong; if it has, of the progress of the discussion; if not, whether it will expeditiously proceed with the discussion; and

(b) it has considered allowing Taiwan visitors to apply for entry visas upon arrival (i.e. visa-on-arrival); if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(a) The Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) is a policy of the Central People's Government. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG) welcomes the Mainland authorities to further enhance the IVS, having regard to the development needs of provinces and cities, arrangements of their outbound travel trades and security considerations. In this regard, the HKSARG maintains close liaison with the Mainland authorities concerned to reflect the views of Hong Kong's travel trade and explore feasible proposals, with a view to facilitating more Mainland visitors to visit Hong Kong.

(b) The Immigration Department introduced in 2002 the iPermit, which allows Taiwan visitors to apply online and instantly confirm their entry permits through authorised airlines or airlines' agents before departure. The Department will further introduce two measures in January next year, including (i) lifting the restriction that only two iPermits can be applied within 30 days; and (ii) extending the period of stay in Hong Kong for iPermit and multiple entry permit holders from 14 days to 30 days. The application procedure for iPermits is simple, and the entry permits are confirmed before departure, offering greater convenience to visitors than having them to apply for entry visas upon arrival in Hong Kong.

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