

Government to provide one-off extra payment to recipients of Working Family Allowance and Individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy

The Government announced today (April 24) that, after the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2019 (the Bill), the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency would adjust the computer system to make one-off extra payments to recipients of Working Family Allowance (WFA) and Individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (I-WITS) proposed in the 2019-20 Budget as soon as possible.

Recipients who are eligible for the extra payment are those whose WFA/I-WITS applications were made in the Applicable Period (i.e. from first day of the month in which the Bill is passed to date of passage of the Bill; and six calendar months before that month), and eventually approved. For applications sent by post, the date of the post-stamp will be considered as the application date.

Starting from April 1, 2019, the claim period for I-WITS applications has been revised from the "past six to 12 calendar months" to the "immediate past six calendar months" before the application. In this regard, the WFAO will implement a one-off transitional arrangement: the claim period of the first application submitted by an applicant between April 1, 2019, and March 31, 2020, may cover the past six to 12 calendar months before its submission. Applicants may submit applications before the expiry of the Applicable Period having regard to their personal circumstances.

The extra payment is equal to the average monthly amount payable to the corresponding recipients in their most recently submitted (and eventually approved) applications in the Applicable Period. The amount varies from case to case.

In addition, a WFA household cannot receive Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or Household-based WITS concurrently in the same month. WFA applicants and household members whose working hours have been aggregated for WFA applications cannot receive I-WITS concurrently in the same month. If, during the Applicable Period, a household receives WFA in some months and WITS in some other months, or is receiving CSSA on the date of the passage of the Bill, it is eligible for one single extra payment, the amount of which is the highest it is eligible for under the above schemes. This arrangement does not apply to WFA household members (i.e. non-WFA applicants; and household members whose working hours have not been aggregated for WFA applications) who receive I-WITS.

For enquiries, applicants may call the WFAO 24-hour hotline (2558 3000) or visit the WFAO's enquiry counters at 9/F, 181 Hoi Bun Road, Kwun Tong, or

visit the website of WFAO (www.wfa.gov.hk) or the thematic website of I-WITS Scheme (www.iwits.gov.hk).

[SCED meets with Minister of Culture and Tourism in Beijing \(with photos\)](#)

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, met with the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mr Luo Shugang, in Beijing today (April 24) to exchange views on the latest situation of the tourism markets in Hong Kong and the Mainland, and to explore further strengthening the tourism co-operation between the two places.

Mr Yau updated Mr Luo on the latest tourism developments in Hong Kong. He expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for its continued strong support in the development of the tourism industry in Hong Kong, including the Ministry's presence in the Hong Kong International Tourism Convention last December, and its promotion on the tourism development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, as well as co-operation in regulating the tourism markets in the Mainland and Hong Kong.

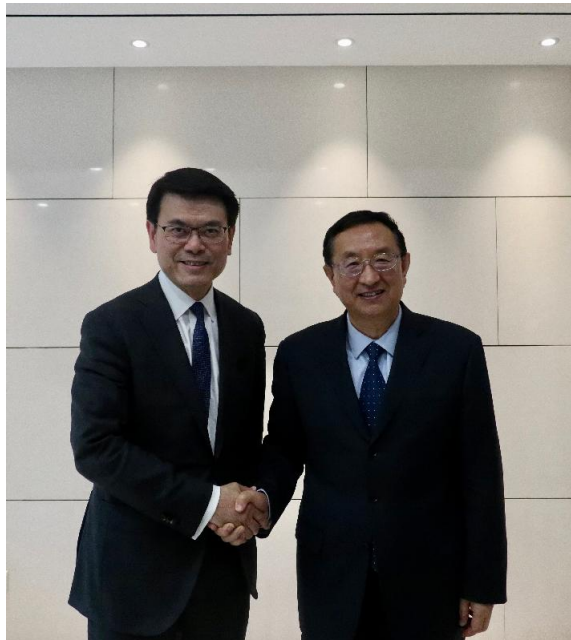
The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area announced in February this year supports Hong Kong in developing into an international tourism hub and a core demonstration zone for multi-destination tourism, as well as a diverse tourism platform.

"Hong Kong, with its rich tourism resources and well-established transport infrastructure, can take up the role of the international travel hub of the Greater Bay Area, attracting more foreign visitors to travel to the region via Hong Kong and facilitating the overall tourism development in the region. To further strengthen our role as the tourism hub, we look forward to launching more facilitating immigration policies or measures for the travel trade of Hong Kong to help them open up business opportunities," Mr Yau said.

Mr Yau said that the Tourism Federation of Cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area was jointly established by the tourism authorities of Hong Kong and 10 other cities in the Greater Bay Area in December 2017 to strengthen the co-operation on tourism exchanges and promotion, as well as enhanced regulation amongst the cities concerned.

He added that he looks forward to joining hands with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and other local culture and tourism authorities in the Mainland to promote the healthy and vibrant development of the tourism industry in the two places.

Mr Yau will attend the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region delegation tomorrow (April 25) and on April 26. He will join the opening ceremony and the high-level meetings. He will deliver remarks at the thematic forum on economic and trade cooperation zone promotion, and serve as the moderator and speak at the thematic forum on trade connectivity.



[Red flag hoisted at Clear Water Bay First Beach](#)

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (April 24) that the Environmental Protection Department has classified the water quality at Clear Water Bay First Beach in Sai Kung District as Grade 4, which means the beach is not suitable for swimming. The red flag has been hoisted. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach until further notice.

Exhibition hall boosts economic and cultural ties between Hong Kong and Inner Mongolia (with photo)

Inner Mongolia Shi Qi Group today (April 24) officially opened its Hong Kong exhibition hall by staging its debut seminar to strengthen the economic ties between the two places, as well as promote Inner Mongolia's agricultural and livestock products and culture to the world via Hong Kong's international platform.

Located at a grade-A commercial office tower next to the harbourfront promenade in Tsim Sha Tsui, the new venue is named Hong Kong Kublai's Exhibition Hall and has a floor area measuring 1 322 square metres. Its facilities include an exhibition hall that can be used to promote the autonomous region's agricultural and livestock products, plus a meeting zone, conference rooms, a joint office area and a smart video system with which exhibitors can meet their business partners, organise promotional events and foster brand co-operation.

The seminar was hosted by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Committee and organised by the Group's Inner Mongolia Grasslands Cultural Protection and Development Foundation. It also had the support of the People's Government of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

The spokesperson for the Group said, "Hong Kong is not only the third largest financial centre in the world, but also a significant centre for international economic, trade, shipping and innovation and technology activities. The city is one of the freest and most competitive economies in the world. We can leverage all these advantages to take Inner Mongolian brands to the international markets."

The spokesperson added, "The grassland culture in Inner Mongolia is unique. Apart from promoting the agricultural and livestock products, the exhibition hall can help us showcase our traditional tourism, culture and emerging green tourism. We also plan to open a fine-dining restaurant in Hong Kong to offer popular Mongolian food. By and large, we aim to promote Inner Mongolian culture, tourism, food and art, as well as its brands, to Hong Kong and other countries around the globe."

Associate Director-General of Investment Promotion Dr Jimmy Chiang said, "Hong Kong as a global business centre serves as the international gateway for Mainland companies. The new exhibition hall offers a perfect point for business people from around the world to learn more about Inner Mongolia's brands and for Inner Mongolia companies to connect with the world."

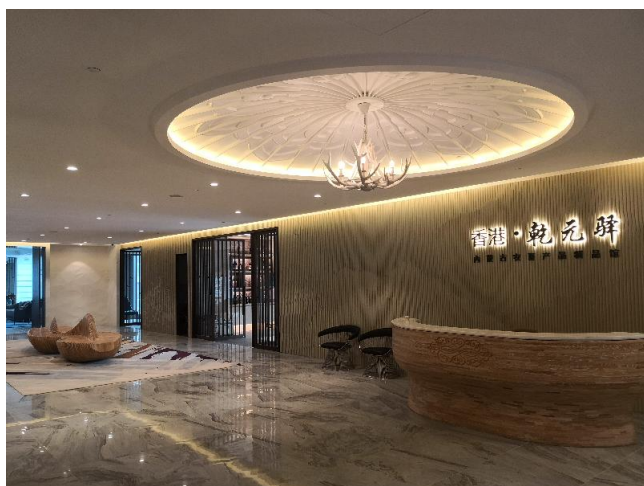
About Inner Mongolia Shi Qi Group

Founded in May 1997 and formerly a wholly state-owned enterprise, the Group was restructured as a joint stock company in 2000. It has since diversified into businesses including textiles, fashion, hotels, wine and cultural industries. For more information, please visit www.shiqi.group.

About Invest Hong Kong

Invest Hong Kong is the department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government responsible for attracting foreign direct investment and supporting overseas and Mainland businesses to set up or expand in Hong Kong. It provides free advice and customised services for overseas and Mainland companies. For more information, please visit www.investhk.gov.hk.

For an event photo, please visit www.flickr.com/photos/investhk/albums/7215767772870457.



[2019 Mainland-Hong Kong Joint Funding Scheme opens for application](#)

The Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) today (April 24) launched the Mainland-Hong Kong Joint Funding Scheme (the Scheme) to further enhance research and development (R&D) collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland. The Scheme is now inviting proposals for applied R&D projects jointly conducted by both sides under two specific themes, namely biotechnology and artificial intelligence. Applications for the Scheme will close on June 12.

Since 2004 and 2005, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has collaborated with Guangdong and Shenzhen to fund R&D projects with an element of Hong Kong/Guangdong or Hong Kong/Shenzhen cooperation respectively through the Guangdong-Hong Kong Technology Co-operation Funding

Scheme under the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF). To encourage further R&D collaboration between Hong Kong and various provinces on the Mainland, the Innovation and Technology Bureau of the HKSAR Government signed the "Agreement on Commencing Jointly Funded Projects between the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and the Innovation and Technology Bureau of the HKSAR Government" with MOST in September 2018 which agreed on the launch of a new joint funding scheme and set out its framework and modus operandi.

Applications for the Scheme must be submitted simultaneously by the Hong Kong and the Mainland institutions to the ITC and MOST respectively, and the R&D work must be conducted in both places. The ITC and MOST will provide funding to the Hong Kong and the Mainland applicant organisations respectively, and will monitor project progress according to their own requirements.

Further information on the Scheme is available on the ITF website (www.itf.gov.hk). For enquiries, please contact the ITF Secretariat (Tel: 3655 5678; email: enquiry@itf.gov.hk).