

Cash subsidies provided by subsidy scheme for tourism industry under Anti-epidemic Fund disbursed today

The seventh round of the subsidy scheme for supporting the tourism industry under the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF) disbursed cash subsidies today (March 2) to over 99 per cent of the companies and persons with eligibility confirmed after vetting, including some 1 530 travel agents, some 17 570 travel agents' staff and freelance accredited tourist guides and tour escorts whose main occupation is/was tourist guide and tour escort, some 3 310 drivers of tour service coaches who are/were mainly serving tourists, and hotels which have submitted applications and have had their eligibility confirmed after vetting. The total amount of subsidies disbursed so far under the seventh round of the subsidy scheme is around \$264 million.

Details of the seventh round of the subsidy scheme for the tourism industry are as follows:

(1) To provide a one-off subsidy to eligible licensed travel agents and travel agents' staff: travel agents with 10 or less staff members will be provided with a subsidy at a flat rate of \$50,000 each. For travel agents with 11 staff members or more, the subsidy level will be directly proportional to the number of staff members they have, with a subsidy level of \$5,000 per staff member as the basis of calculation. Each travel agent staff member will be granted a one-off subsidy of \$7,500.

Under the seventh round of the scheme, eligible licensed travel agents and their staff include (i) licensed travel agents that have been issued with a valid travel agent licence on or before February 8, 2022, and still hold the licence at the time when the new round of subsidy is disbursed, and their staff; and (ii) travel agents' staff who received subsidies in the second round or subsequent round(s) of the subsidy scheme for the tourism industry under the AEF (including travel agents' staff whose employer closed down on or before February 8, 2022);

(2) To provide each freelance accredited tourist guide and tour escort whose main occupation is/was tourist guide and tour escort and received a subsidy in the last round of the subsidy scheme with a one-off subsidy of \$7,500;

(3) To provide each driver of tour service coaches who received a subsidy in the last round of the subsidy scheme with a one-off subsidy of \$5,000; and

(4) To provide a one-off subsidy to hotels which, on February 8, 2022, held a valid hotel licence issued under the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance (Cap. 349) and continue to hold a valid licence when the subsidy is disbursed. Hotels with 100 licensed guestrooms or below may receive \$300,000, whereas hotels with 101 licensed guestrooms or more may receive \$400,000. At

the meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee held on February 15, the tourism sector requested expanding the coverage of the subsidy to benefit more hotels. Having duly considered the relevant views, the Government decided to accede to the request and expanded the subsidy to cover nearly 40 designated quarantine hotels and hotels serving as designated quarantine facilities for foreign domestic helpers. Based on the same principle, hotels serving as transitional housing also became eligible for the subsidy. The number of hotels benefitting from the subsidy thus increases from originally around 290 to around 330. This subsidy arrangement does not cover hotels which were used en bloc as quarantine facilities on February 8, 2022, with rent fully paid by the Government.

The Tourism Commission reminded that eligible travel agents and their staff who have never applied for the subsidy or have not applied in the last round are required to submit an application with documentary proof to the Travel Agents Registry on or before March 17. The application guidelines and forms have been uploaded to the Tourism Commission's website (www.tourism.gov.hk).

In addition, eligible hotels are required to submit applications to the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department on or before March 17. The application guidelines and forms can be downloaded from the website of the OLA (www.hadla.gov.hk) or the Tourism Commission (www.tourism.gov.hk).