

Expansion of Individual Visit Scheme to Xi'an and Qingdao

A Government spokesman expressed sincere gratitude today (February 23) to the Central Government for the positive response to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG)'s proposal of enhancing the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) in an orderly manner and further expanding the eligible cities of the scheme to Xi'an in Shaanxi Province and Qingdao in Shandong Province.

The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, said, "The Central Government has all along been providing staunch support towards Hong Kong's economy and tourism development. Further enhancement of the IVS is conducive to the development of Hong Kong's tourism sector and will benefit tourism-related industries such as hotels and retail. Hong Kong will welcome visitors with hospitality, making them feel at home and helping them enjoy the local unique culture. We will also continue to improve Hong Kong's capacity to receive tourists as well as ensuring the smooth operation of boundary control points, tourist facilities, hotels and public transportation networks. Hong Kong's capacity to receive tourists has been enhanced following the completion and optimisation of various large-scale cross-boundary infrastructure, tourist facilities, hotels and public transportation networks in the past few years. The Government is confident in providing more tourists from different source markets with quality travel experiences."

Mr Yeung said that the recovery of Hong Kong's tourism industry was strong in the past year. In particular, during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland that just ended, the number of Mainland visitors exceeded the level before the pandemic, and the overall number of visitors reached the level before the pandemic. Under the co-ordination and overall planning of the Government, different receiving parties worked strenuously to provide visitors with wonderful travel experiences. The HKSARG is very pleased to learn that the IVS has been further expanded to Xi'an and Qingdao, which will enable residents of both cities to explore and feel the unique metropolitan glamour of Hong Kong in a more flexible and convenient manner.

He added, "In 2018, the IVS tourists, which accounted for more than 60 per cent of the total number of Mainland visitors visiting Hong Kong, represented an important force in driving the business of tourism-related industries in Hong Kong. It is believed that Xi'an and Qingdao, having a population of over 10 million respectively, will bring along more high-value-added overnight tourists to Hong Kong. We also expect that with more frequent contacts between the residents in Hong Kong and those in Xi'an and Qingdao following the enhancement of the IVS, cultural integration and people-to-people bonds between the two places will be further strengthened."

Under the IVS, which was implemented on July 28, 2003, in accordance with the main document of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic

Partnership Arrangement, eligible residents of the designated Mainland cities can apply for an endorsement to visit Hong Kong in their individual capacity. The IVS was first introduced in four Guangdong cities (namely Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen, Foshan) and the number of eligible cities was gradually increased in the following years to a total of 49 Mainland cities in 2007. With the expansion of the IVS to cover Xi'an and Qingdao starting from March 6, 2024, designated Mainland cities eligible for the IVS will be increased to 51.