

Further support by Anti-epidemic Fund to tourism industry

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau said today (January 17) that the Government has earmarked a provision of around \$570 million under the Anti-epidemic Fund for providing the sixth round of support to the tourism industry, which includes one-off cash subsidies to the travel trade and its practitioners and funding injection to extend the Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme (GLIS).

Taking into account the latest round of support, the various targeted support provided by the Government to the tourism industry amounts to a cumulative commitment of around \$3.42 billion in total in the past two years.

All persons who are eligible for and have been granted special further subsidies in the last round of the Tourism Industry Additional Support Scheme are not required to submit fresh application for cash subsidies. The Tourism Commission (TC) has informed the aforesaid eligible persons of the arrangement for cash subsidy disbursement by SMS notifications today. The subsidies will be disbursed before the Chinese New Year.

The new round of one-off cash subsidies involves around \$270 million with details as follows:

(1) travel agents: 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. Some 1 580 travel agents are expected to benefit from this measure;

(2) travel agents' staff and freelance accredited tourist guides and tour escorts whose main occupation is/was tourist guide and tour escort: each will be provided with a one-off subsidy of \$7,500. Some 18 300 persons are expected to benefit from this measure; and

(3) drivers of tour service coaches who are/were mainly serving tourists: a one-off subsidy of \$3,350 will be provided to each tour service coach driver. Some 3 400 drivers are expected to benefit from this measure.

The arrangement for cash subsidy disbursement will be uploaded to the TC's website (www.tourism.gov.hk).

Besides, the Government will inject \$300 million to extend the GLIS so as to encourage the trade to continue to explore more local tour itineraries with special characteristics during the time when cross-border/boundary travel has yet to be resumed, thereby creating more tourism-related job opportunities for practitioners like travel agents, tourist guides, tour

escorts, and drivers of tour service coaches, while assisting to enhance the standards of attractions and their supporting facilities, as well as the services of tourist guides and other aspects, so as to equip them well for the return of visitors.

The GLIS, which involves \$100 million, was launched in January 2020. The scheme provides a cash incentive of \$200 per participant based on the number of tour participants, and the number of participants which each travel agent can claim for incentive payment is capped at 1 000. The incentive scheme was originally scheduled to run until the end of March 2022.

Details of the scheme will be announced on the website of the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (www.tichk.org).