

LCQ15: Employment visas for personnel of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Cheuk-ting and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

It has been reported that the former Director General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) (the Taiwan authorities' representative office in Hong Kong) left Hong Kong at the end of July this year upon completion of his term of office, and his successor has so far been unable to come to Hong Kong to take office because he has not been granted an employment visa by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the SAR Government is required to consult the Central Authorities beforehand on matters relating to the granting of employment visas to TECO's personnel; if so, of the details;

(2) whether it has explained to the Taiwan authorities why it has not granted an employment visa to the Director General – designate of TECO; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it has assessed the impacts of leaving the office of TECO's Director General vacant for several months on (i) the operation of TECO, (ii) the economic, trade and cultural exchange activities between Taiwan and Hong Kong, and (iii) the relationship between the authorities of both places; if it has assessed, of the outcome; if not, whether it will conduct such an assessment expeditiously?

Reply:

President,

Our consolidated reply to Hon Lam's question, after consulting the relevant bureaux, is as follows:

The economic, trade and cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and Taiwan have all along been ongoing. Last year, Taiwan was Hong Kong's third largest trading partner and Hong Kong was Taiwan's fourth largest trading partner; there were also over two million visitor arrivals from Taiwan, which was Hong Kong's second largest visitor source market after the Mainland. Meanwhile, arts groups in the local communities of Hong Kong and Taiwan also visit one another from time to time. The Hong Kong Week, which aims to showcase the cultural characteristics of Hong Kong, has been held in Taiwan for six years.

In 2010, the Hong Kong-Taiwan Economic and Cultural Cooperation and Promotion Council (ECCPC) and the Taiwan-Hong Kong Economic and Cultural Co-

operation Council (THEC) were established in Hong Kong and Taiwan respectively to promote exchanges and co-operation between the two places. Achievements have been made in various areas. We will continue to foster economic, trade and cultural exchanges and co-operation between Hong Kong and Taiwan through the ECCPC-THEC platform in a pragmatic manner.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government will not comment on individual cases or make public information concerning individual cases. In handling each application, the Immigration Department acts in accordance with the laws and policies, and decides whether to approve or refuse the application after careful consideration of circumstances of each case.