

LCQ18: Attracting Mainland business personnel and talents to visit Hong Kong

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Tan Yueheng and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Security, Mr Michael Cheuk, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

On the 28th of last month, the National Immigration Administration announced the introduction of six policy initiatives on immigration control to facilitate the public and enterprises, including the extension of the period of stay in Hong Kong for holders of an exit endorsement for business visit travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao (Endorsement for business visit) to 14 days, and the expansion of the application of the exit endorsement for talents travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao (Endorsement for talents) to Beijing, Shanghai, etc, so as to further facilitate business exchanges and talent interactions between the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macao. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of persons who came to Hong Kong with Endorsement for business visit in each of the past three years, and the average number of days of their stay;
- (2) whether it has grasped the main purposes of persons who visited Hong Kong with Endorsement for business visit and Endorsement for talents in the past year (e.g. participating in exhibitions, business negotiations and business travel), and the average amount of their spending in Hong Kong; and
- (3) whether it has plans to proactively complement the national policy by providing incentives to attract more high-spending overnight business visitors to Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Mainland authorities announced on April 28, 2024, that with effect from May 6, 2024, the duration of stay in Hong Kong for holders of exit endorsement for business visit travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao would be extended from seven days to 14 days and applications for exit endorsement for business visit would be accepted nationwide at any of the relevant offices across the country, irrespective of applicants' place of household registration or place of residence. In addition, the application of exit endorsement for talents travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao would

be expanded from the Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) to Beijing and Shanghai. These enhancement measures will greatly enhance convenience for Mainland businesspersons and traders who travel to Hong Kong for business activities and attract more Mainland talents to gather in Hong Kong for exchanges, thereby reinforcing Hong Kong's unique role as the country's international talent hub and the gateway for talents in the GBA.

In consultation with the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB), the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB), the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Immigration Department (ImmD), my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) In the past three years, the numbers of Mainland visitor arrivals on exit endorsement for business visit are as follows:

	Number of Mainland visitor arrivals on exit endorsement for business visit
2021	317
2022	1 961
2023 (Note)	353 909
2024 (January to April)	150 889

Note: Normal travel between the HKSAR and the Mainland has fully resumed since February 6, 2023.

The ImmD does not maintain statistics on the duration of stay of the above Mainland visitors in Hong Kong.

(2) Mainland residents visiting Hong Kong must hold valid Exit-entry Permits for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao, and apply to the Mainland authorities for exit endorsement for travelling to Hong Kong that corresponds to the purpose of their visits. Holders of exit endorsement for business visit travel to Hong Kong mainly for business purpose. The validity period of exit endorsement for business visit is either three months or one year, during which a single journey or multiple journeys to Hong Kong would be allowed with each stay being not more than 14 days.

As for the six categories of eligible talents (namely outstanding talents, scientific research talents, education talents, healthcare talents, legal talents and other talents) in the GBA, Beijing and Shanghai, they may also apply to the Mainland authorities for exit endorsement for talents for travelling to Hong Kong, apart from exit endorsement for business visit. Holders of exit endorsement for talents travel to Hong Kong mainly for exchanges and visits in the fields of scientific research, education, healthcare, law and business, etc. The validity period of exit endorsement for talents is either one year, three years or five years, during which multiple journeys to Hong Kong would be allowed with each stay being not more

than 30 days.

Generally, activities that visitors (including those travelling to Hong Kong on exit endorsement for business visit or exit endorsement for talents) may engage during their stay in Hong Kong include concluding contracts or submitting tenders; examining goods or supervising their installation; participating in exhibitions; participating in business or technology-related visits upon invitation; and attending short-term seminars or other meetings, etc. For details, please refer to the ImmD's website:
www.immd.gov.hk/eng/services/visas/permmissible-activities.html.

In order to promote the development of relevant sectors and raise Hong Kong's international profile, the Government launched the Pilot Scheme on Immigration Facilitation for Visitors Participating in Short-term Activities in Designated Sectors in June 2022, providing immigration facilitation for visitors participating in short-term activities in designated sectors in Hong Kong. Organisations authorised by the relevant bureaux or departments of the Government can issue invitation letters to relevant non-local talents in their sectors. Invited persons may come to Hong Kong to participate in specified short-term activities as visitors and receive remuneration without the need to apply for employment visas from the ImmD. Besides, the DoJ has launched the Pilot Scheme on Facilitation for Persons Participating in Arbitral Proceedings in Hong Kong. Eligible persons may come to Hong Kong to participate in arbitral proceedings as visitors and receive remuneration without the need to apply for employment visas from the ImmD. Both schemes cover Mainland residents who meet the relevant eligibility criteria. For details, please refer to the websites of the ImmD and the DoJ:
www.immd.gov.hk/eng/services/visas/stv.html
and www.doj.gov.hk/en/featured/the_pilot_scheme_on_facilitation.html.

The Government does not maintain statistics on the expenditure incurred in Hong Kong by Mainland visitors holding exit endorsement for business visit or exit endorsement for talents.

(3) The aforementioned enhancement measures on exit endorsement for business visit and exit endorsement for talents will help attract more business visitors to Hong Kong. The Government will continue to actively complement national policy and attract more high-end business visitors to Hong Kong through promoting Meetings, Incentive travels, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism.

The CEDB launched the \$1.4-billion Incentive Scheme for Recurrent Exhibitions (the Scheme) on July 1, 2023, to provide financial incentives to attract exhibitions of different scales, particularly international trade shows, to be staged recurrently in Hong Kong. International exhibitions attract high-spending business visitors and bring in businesses to such related sectors as accommodation, catering, retail and entertainment. As at April 30, 2024, a total of 73 applications for completed events have been approved under the Scheme, exceeding the target of providing incentives to more than 200 exhibitions over the three-year period of the Scheme on a pro-rata basis. These exhibitions together attracted some 90 000 exhibitors,

including around 39 000 local exhibitors and about 51 000 non-local exhibitors, and over 1.67 million buyers, including around 1.49 million local buyers and about 180 000 non-local buyers.

According to information provided by the CSTB, an additional funding of about \$200 million was allocated to the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) in the 2023-24 Budget for stepping up its efforts in securing the staging of more MICE events of various scales and types in Hong Kong in 2023-24 and 2024-25, with a view to attracting more high-value added overnight business visitors. The HKTB has successfully bid, assisted in the successful bidding or subsidised the staging of over 800 international MICE events in Hong Kong, which are expected to attract over 400 000 overnight business visitors and further diversify our visitor source markets.

In the coming year, the HKTB will focus its work on:

- 1) proactively bidding for and supporting the staging of major international MICE events in Hong Kong as well as attracting more small-scale enterprises, international meetings and incentive travels to Hong Kong through various funding schemes;
- 2) launching a new "Hong Kong Incentive Playbook" to present over 100 new and unique incentive travel experiences and team activities as well as producing a dedicated website, a series of themed videos and online training programmes for MICE trade partners;
- 3) stepping up marketing efforts, including partnering with internationally renowned business media to stage A-list international conferences with top keynote speakers in Hong Kong to demonstrate Hong Kong's unique edge as the "World's Meeting Place"; and
- 4) strengthening the "Meet Hong Kong, Meet GBA" promotion through partnerships with international MICE associations and inviting industry leaders in the Mainland to be the HKTB's Hong Kong Convention Ambassadors to continue to showcase the vast opportunities in the GBA and attract more overseas MICE events to be held in Hong Kong for connecting to the GBA markets, thereby further establishing Hong Kong as the MICE hub of the GBA.