

Immigration Department reminds public that special arrangement for applications for extension of stay due to pandemic will be discontinued next January 1

The Immigration Department (ImmD) today (November 1) reminded the public that the special arrangement under the pandemic for Hong Kong non-permanent residents outside Hong Kong to apply for an extension of stay will be discontinued on January 1, 2024. In other words, for extension of stay applications reaching the ImmD on or after January 1, 2024, the applicants are required to be physically present in Hong Kong, namely both at the time of application and at the time of collection of the "e-Visa" for the extension of stay.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ImmD allows Hong Kong non-permanent residents who are outside Hong Kong and are unable to return to Hong Kong in time to apply for an extension of stay. Such a special arrangement has been in place since April 8, 2022. Taking into account that society has resumed normalcy in full, and the steady recovery of cross-boundary and international travel, the ImmD announced on June 29, 2023, the discontinuation of the abovementioned special arrangement on January 1, 2024 (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202306/29/P2023062900637.htm), so as to allow ample time for eligible non-permanent residents who intend to apply for an extension of stay to make suitable arrangements.

Under the special arrangement which is to be discontinued, eligible non-permanent residents who are admitted into Hong Kong under the following immigration policies/schemes and whose limit of stay is about to expire (generally within four weeks) but are presently outside Hong Kong may apply for an extension of stay:

1. General Employment Policy (including both employment and investment as entrepreneurs);
2. Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals;
3. Quality Migrant Admission Scheme;
4. Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates;
5. Admission Scheme for the Second Generation of Chinese Hong Kong Permanent Residents;
6. Technology Talent Admission Scheme;
7. Capital Investment Entrant Scheme;
8. residence as dependants; and
9. students enrolled in full-time study programmes.

Non-permanent residents are reminded that the approval of an extension of stay does not constitute any implication or acknowledgement from the ImmD that they can fulfil the ordinary residence requirement under the relevant provisions of the Immigration Ordinance (Cap. 115) for acquiring the right of abode. Even if their applications for an extension of stay are approved, whether they can fulfil the seven-year continuous ordinary residence requirement for acquiring the right of abode in Hong Kong will have to be assessed by the ImmD at the time when they apply for verification of eligibility for a permanent identity card. The said special arrangement is set out on www.immd.gov.hk/eng/ext/npr.html.

For enquiries, please call the ImmD enquiry hotline 2824 6111, or send enquiries to the ImmD by fax at 2877 7711 or by email at enquiry@immd.gov.hk.

LCQ8: Assisting small and medium enterprises in business development on the Mainland

Following is a question by the Hon Maggie Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (November 1):

Question:

There are views that the Government should help more small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Hong Kong collaborate with Mainland enterprises mutually, facilitate the optimization of measures adopted by Mainland authorities at various levels to assist Hong Kong businessmen, and provide one-stop support to help SMEs develop their businesses on the Mainland. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has compiled statistics on the current number of branch offices established by Hong Kong SMEs on the Mainland and the major industries such SMEs engage in;
- (2) whether it has conducted studies on the major projects invested by Hong Kong SMEs on the Mainland, the total amount of investment, as well as the scale and characteristics of such projects;
- (3) whether regular official exchanges have been conducted with the Mainland Government regarding the policies to support Hong Kong SMEs, with a view to assisting Hong Kong SMEs in promoting "Brand Hong Kong" in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; if so, of the implementation situation of the relevant policies; and

(4) given that Biz Expands Easy launched by the Hong Kong Productivity Council is a one-stop integrated platform providing consolidated information on various government funding schemes, whether the Government has measures in place to promote the online platform, so as to help SMEs apply for suitable funding schemes to develop their businesses on the Mainland; if so, whether it has assessed the effectiveness of such measures?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau and the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau, the consolidated reply to the four parts of the question is set out below:

The Mainland Offices of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) have been actively serving as an important bridge between Hong Kong and the Mainland, including enhancing communication and liaison with their Mainland counterparts, representing and promoting Hong Kong's commercial interests, as well as providing information to the Hong Kong business sector on the latest laws and regulations, policies and significant regional developments on the Mainland through various channels including delivering public speeches, giving media interviews, conducting briefings, issuing information circulars, newsletters and press releases, etc. The Government of the HKSAR does not have any data on the establishment of offices and investment situation of Hong Kong enterprises on the Mainland.

To help drive the harmonisation of rules in different sectors in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and improve product and service quality, the Governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao strive to develop the GBA Standards for different products and services for voluntary adoption by the trade and, on April 24, 2023, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on jointly promoting the development of the GBA Standards and announced the first batch of a total of 110 GBA Standards. The Guangdong provincial authorities recently issued the guidelines on the formulation of a new batch of GBA Standards, and are inviting applications from the trade in the three places. The Trade and Industry Department (TID) will continue to liaise with relevant authorities of Guangdong Province and Macao, and co-ordinate within the Government of the HKSAR to jointly take the work forward.

For promoting Hong Kong brands, we continue to provide funding support to enterprises under the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales (BUD Fund). Since the launch of the BUD Fund in June 2012 and up to end September 2023, over 5 100 applications targeting the Mainland market had been approved, involving funding of around \$3.1 billion which accounts for about 75 per cent of the total funding approved under the BUD Fund.

The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address a range of measures to support SMEs in developing electronic commerce (e-commerce) business. These include launching "E-commerce Easy" under the BUD Fund to

enable each enterprise to make use of \$1 million for the implementation of e-commerce projects within the cumulative funding ceiling of \$7 million; organising Hong Kong Shopping Festivals on e-commerce platforms; as well as strengthening the provision of information to SMEs on conducting e-commerce on the Mainland, to be led by the Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs (SUCCESS) under the TID with the co-operation of the other three SME centres (including the SME Centre under the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, the SME One under the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC), and the TecONE under the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation), with a view to assisting SMEs in leveraging e-commerce to promote awareness of Hong Kong brands for developing the Mainland domestic sales market.

Since the launch of the Biz Expands Easy (BEE) platform by the HKPC in September 2022 and up to mid October 2023, there have been more than 460 000 views. The HKPC also launched the mobile application "BEE@HKPC" in end March 2023 to facilitate SMEs to receive information on Government funding schemes. The HKPC has been working closely with relevant Government departments to promote the BEE platform in relevant media, including the websites of the Innovation and Technology Fund, the TID's "SME Link" and SUCCESS, as well as that of Invest Hong Kong, to strengthen the promotion of support measures for SMEs, including on applying for suitable funding schemes to develop business on the Mainland.

[LCQ21: Search and rescue operations under adverse weather conditions](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Nixie Lam and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Security, Mr Michael Cheuk, in the Legislative Council today (November 1):

Question:

In recent years, the occurrence of extreme weather conditions in Hong Kong has become increasingly frequent. However, it has been reported that some members of the public have disregarded the Government's warnings and engaged in outdoor activities when typhoons or rainstorms hit Hong Kong, making it necessary for the Hong Kong Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Government Flying Service (GFS) to conduct search and rescue (S&R) operations under adverse weather conditions from time to time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of cases received by the authorities in each of the past three years in which people sought assistance due to dangerous situations encountered while engaging in outdoor activities under adverse weather conditions, together with a breakdown by the type of adverse weather

conditions (e.g. storms and rainstorms) and the nature of the requests for assistance; the respective numbers of such cases in which the Hong Kong Police Force, the FSD and the GFS were involved in S&R operations;

(2) of the average cost of the S&R operations conducted by the GFS during adverse weather conditions; and

(3) as it has been reported that there have been cases of misuse of the S&R services of the GFS, whether the authorities will (i) step up publicity and education to call on members of the public not to misuse such services, (ii) review the existing mechanism and S&R guidelines, (iii) follow up on cases of service misuse, and (iv) by making reference to overseas practices of adopting deterrent measures, impose charges on a cost-recovery basis on those who seek assistance due to dangerous situations encountered while engaging in outdoor activities under extreme weather; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Government Flying Service (GFS), the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), our consolidated reply to the question raised by the Member is as follows.

(1) Since 2020, the FSD and the HKPF have been deployed to handle a total of 35 mountain rescue or immersion incidents when an Amber, Red or Black Rainstorm Warning, or Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or above was issued by the Hong Kong Observatory (see table below). Among these incidents, 11 required the deployment of the GFS to provide air search and rescue services.

Year	Number of mountain rescue incidents		Number of immersion incidents	
	When a Rainstorm Warning Signal was in force	When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or above was in force	When a Rainstorm Warning Signal was in force	When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or above was in force
2020	1	0	2	0
2021	2	3	1	1
2022	7	3	0	1
2023 (as at September 30)	5	3	6	0

Total	15	9	9	2
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(2) The annual average direct operating costs of the helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft deployed by the GFS for search and rescue call-outs in 2022 are tabulated below. The figures only include the maintenance cost and fuel cost of the aircraft type concerned, and have not taken into account the salary cost of the staff deployed and the related administrative cost of the department in the calculation. The GFS has not maintained a statistical breakdown of the operating cost under inclement weather either.

	Average direct operating cost per hour flown (\$)
Helicopter H 175	26,740
Helicopter EC 155B1	42,020
Fixed-wing aircraft CL 605	17,970

(3) The Government has always accorded top priority to public safety and the protection of people's life and property. When calls for various emergencies are received, the HKPF and the FSD will immediately assess the nature of each incident and deploy appropriate resources to the scene. The GFS will be requested to provide air search and rescue services if deemed necessary upon assessment. Members of the public cannot directly call up the GFS for assistance. Upon receiving an emergency request, the GFS will make prompt and appropriate deployment having regard to the conditions and location of the wounded and the sick, and arrange aircraft and/or helicopters services to provide appropriate emergency support for those in need of help or to evacuate them from dangerous locations as soon as possible. While the Government strongly discourages the public from taking risks to perform outdoor activities under inclement weather, effective, reliable and efficient emergency services will still be provided to people in distress or in need under all circumstances. The last thing we want to see is those in need being hesitant in seeking emergency call services due to any reasons, including levy.

Different government departments have been appealing to members of the public through various channels for their special attention to the risks of engaging in outdoor activities under inclement weather to prevent accidents. Relevant departments have also constantly reviewed their emergency response capabilities during accidents, and stepped up their educational and publicity efforts to raise effectiveness. For instance, the GFS has disseminated information through its website and social media platform pages about safety in outdoor activities, including knowledge about safe hiking, tips on pre-trip preparation, points to note on safety during the activities and ways to seek help when in distress. The GFS has also joined with the FSD and the Civil Aid Service, etc, to regularly organise the Mountaineering Safety Promotion Day with a view to enhancing public knowledge and safety awareness of mountaineering activities.

LCQ22: Parking spaces for commercial vehicles

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, in the Legislative Council today (November 1):

Question:

As at February this year, the ratio of parking spaces for commercial vehicles (CVs) to licensed CVs was about 0.6, meaning that four out of every 10 CVs are "homeless". Moreover, the shortage of parking spaces will become more acute under extreme weather as there is a need for all CVs to park. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on (i) the number of CVs damaged due to extreme weather, and the total amounts of repair costs and insurance compensation involved, and (ii) the number of fixed penalty notices issued by the Government against illegal parking of CVs the day before and after, and on the day of extreme weather, in each of the past three years (set out in a table);

(2) whether it will consider formulating new measures to increase the provision of CV parking spaces, including designating parking spaces specifically for night time or under inclement weather in the vicinity of Kwai Chung Container Terminals and in industrial areas/remote areas; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that the current Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines require the provision of one "shared-use" parking space for light goods vehicles and light buses per 260 flats in subsidised housing development projects, whether the authorities will consider revising the relevant standard to increase the provision of CV parking spaces; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Attaching great importance to the parking needs of commercial vehicles (CVs), the Government has been paying heed to the demand for parking of CVs, and proactively pursuing a host of short-term and medium-to-long-term measures to increase the supply of such parking spaces accordingly as far as possible, including:

(i) Continuing to provide additional on-street CV parking spaces at suitable

locations and designate night-time CV parking spaces while ensuring that traffic flow, road safety or the loading/unloading activities of vehicles will not be affected;

(ii) Continuing to actively utilise idle government lands, such as sites in new development areas where construction works have yet to commence, by exploring the feasibility of providing more short-term tenancy (STT) car parks. Meanwhile, the Government has been stipulating the minimum provision of CV parking spaces in the tenancy agreements of suitable STT car parks;

(iii) Encouraging schools to open for parking of student service vehicles during non-school hours;

(iv) Providing additional public parking spaces, including those for CVs, in suitable "Government, Institution or Community" facilities and public open space projects under the principle of "single site, multiple use". Subject to the results of technical feasibility assessments and the progress of seeking required approvals for the projects under planning, as well as the construction progress of the approved projects, it is expected that about 20 suitable development projects will be completed by batches to provide additional CV parking spaces starting from 2024-25;

(v) Revising the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPSG) in 2021, which increased the type and number of parking spaces for CVs in subsidised housing development projects; and

(vi) Requiring that a certain number of ancillary parking spaces and loading/unloading bays in suitable new development projects be opened for night-time parking of CVs.

In consultation with the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Insurance Authority (IA), the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the Transport Department (TD), a consolidated reply to the questions raised by the Hon Chan Han-pan is as follows:

(1) Regarding the total amount of insurance claims paid for CVs damaged due to extreme weather in the past three years, there is no relevant breakdown in the motor vehicle insurance market statistics maintained by the IA, and hence the relevant information cannot be provided.

Moreover, as regards the HKPF's enforcement work against illegal parking, there is no specific differentiation with respect to CVs, and therefore the HKPF does not maintain a separate breakdown on the number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued to CVs. According to the prosecution records of the HKPF, for the period between January 1, 2021 and October 15, 2023, the numbers of FPNs issued against illegal parking (including those to CVs and other vehicles) the day before and after, and during Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal (No. 8 or above) and the Black Rainstorm Warning Signal were in force are as follows:

Year	No. of FPNs against illegal parking issued during extreme weather (Note 1), and the day before and after (i.e. including days with non-extreme weather) (Figure (i))	Ratio of the daily average of Figure (i) to the daily average of FPNs against illegal parking issued in the corresponding year
2021	around 82 400 (including Tropical Storm Lionrock, Typhoon Kompasu and Black Rainstorm Warning Signals amounting to 14 days in total)	around 1:1.4
2022	around 88 400 (including Typhoon Chaba, Typhoon Ma-on and Severe Tropical Storm Nalgae amounting to 12 days in total)	around 1:1.25
2023 (As at 15 October)	around 89 700 (including Typhoon Talim, Super Typhoon Saola, Severe Typhoon Koinu and Black Rainstorm Warning Signals amounting to 17 days in total)	around 1:1.59

Note 1: Including the durations when Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal (No. 8 or above), the Black Rainstorm Warning Signal were in force and when there were extreme conditions.

(2) and (3) As mentioned earlier, the TD has been taking forward a host of measures, including striving to continuously provide additional on-street CV parking spaces at suitable locations and designate night-time CV parking spaces while ensuring that traffic flow, road safety or the loading/unloading activities of vehicles will not be affected, with a view to increasing the supply of CV parking spaces. Considering the demand for on-street parking spaces for goods vehicles (including the time when goods vehicle drivers get off work) as well as the views of the trades, the TD is also reviewing the arrangements for on-street night-time parking spaces for goods vehicles in different districts. If the traffic conditions of individual locations allow, the TD would advance the opening hours of parking of these spaces from 8pm to 7pm. The TD will continue to closely monitor the changes in parking space supply in different districts and pay heed to the needs of the trades concerned, with a view to proactively increasing the supply of parking spaces for CVs in different districts and making flexible arrangements with regard to the local circumstances as far as possible.

According to the findings of the consultancy study on parking for CVs commenced by the TD in 2018, most of the CV drivers would park their vehicles near their places of residence or at STT sites. To address the parking needs of CV drivers, the Government revised the HKPSG in August 2021 to increase the type and number of parking spaces for CVs in subsidised housing

development projects. After revision, the provision standard has been raised to one "shared-use" space for light goods vehicles (LGV) and light buses per 260 flats from the previous standard of one LGV parking space per 200 to 600 flats (i.e. about per 400 flats on average). Moreover, the revised HKPSG stipulates that loading/unloading bays have to be opened for night-time parking of large-sized CVs. Subject to the progress of individual development projects, it is expected that the relevant development projects will be providing additional CV parking spaces progressively in the coming two to three years at the earliest.

In light of the parking demand of CVs, the Government will continue to proactively provide additional parking spaces for CVs at suitable locations, such as in the vicinity of container terminals, industrial areas and remote areas. The Government will also stipulate the minimum provision of CV parking spaces in the tenancy agreements of suitable STT car parks. Generally speaking, locations suitable for parking during adverse weather can also be used for parking under normal weather. From the angle of increasing the provision of parking spaces, it is not necessary to restrict the use of such spaces to parking during adverse weather.

LCQ12: Impact of United States executive order on Hong Kong's innovation and technology industry

Following is a question by the Hon Tang Fei and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, in the Legislative Council today (November 1):

Question:

In August this year, the President of the United States (US) signed an executive order (E.O.) which restricted US outbound investment in three areas in China, namely semiconductors and microelectronics, quantum information technologies, and artificial intelligence systems. There are views that this may have a significant impact on Hong Kong's innovation and technology (I&T) industry. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has assessed the direct or indirect adverse effects of the aforesaid E.O. on Hong Kong's I&T industry;
- (2) whether it has assessed if the E.O. will make it more difficult for Hong Kong's I&T companies to access international capital; and
- (3) of the support to be provided by the Government for the I&T industry affected by the E.O.?

Reply:

President,

The United States (US) implemented a series of measures unreasonably targeting Hong Kong to undermine and cause damage to normal trade and investment activities. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government indicated clearly its strong objection and disapproval and emphasised that the US should withdraw the unreasonable restrictions concerned.

The HKSAR Government has been striving to promote innovation and technology (I&T) development in Hong Kong. Against a complicated and volatile environment of international competition, integrating into national development, strengthening our own I&T system, and consolidating our edge as an international city is the best way to safeguard the sustainable I&T development in Hong Kong. With the support of our country, the HKSAR Government is confident in developing Hong Kong into an international I&T centre.

Having consulted the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Office of the Government Economist, a consolidated reply to the various parts of the question is provided as follows:

(1) and (2) As a highly international city, Hong Kong's I&T sector has all along been attracting capital, enterprises, technologies and talents from different regions successfully for diversified development in Hong Kong. When engaging in procurement and launching products, Hong Kong's I&T sector would typically not rely on or target at a single market. The HKSAR Government has also been encouraging enterprises to adopt a diversified marketing strategy to attract investments from various places around the world, so as to reduce dependence on a specific market. At the same time, we have been taking forward the sustainable development of Hong Kong's I&T ecosystem by strengthening our research and development (R&D) capabilities, allocating more resources on I&T, and enhancing the supporting infrastructure, and more. Impact of any unilateral policies implemented by individual country on Hong Kong's I&T development is relatively limited. Nevertheless, the HKSAR Government will continue to closely monitor the developments and respond with appropriate measures.

(3) The HKSAR Government has been supporting the development of Hong Kong's I&T industry through various measures. The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address the setting up of a \$10 billion New Industrialisation Acceleration Scheme (NIAS), with a view to promoting the downstream development of new industrialisation. Under the NIAS, we will provide financial assistance for enterprises in the fields of life and health technologies, artificial intelligence and data science, advanced manufacturing, and new energy technologies. These include providing funding support for the set-up of new production facilities on a one (Government) to two (company) matching basis, subject to a funding ceiling of \$200 million. In addition, the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) supports various funding schemes, including schemes that provide funding to R&D projects

carried out by eligible organisations and enterprises or provide cash rebate on the enterprises' eligible R&D expenditure. We also provide enhanced tax deduction for qualifying R&D expenditure incurred by enterprises.

The HKSAR Government has also set up a \$2 billion Innovation and Technology Venture Fund under the ITF to co-invest with co-investment partner (CP) at a matching ratio of approximately one (Government) to two (CP) in local I&T start-ups upon invitation of the latter. In addition, the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation's Corporate Venture Fund co-invests, on a matching basis, with angel investors or venture capital funds in start-ups which are currently located in the Hong Kong Science Park or have participated in its incubation programmes. The Cyberport has also been proactively providing early financing for its community start-ups through the Cyberport Macro Fund.

The HKSAR Government will continue to widen the fundraising channels for different companies including I&T enterprises. For example, with the successful experience in facilitating listing of pre-revenue biotechnology companies in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited launched the listing regime for specialist technology companies in March this year to facilitate I&T enterprises' access to international capital. The HKSAR Government has also introduced diversified fund structures, provided a facilitating tax environment and strengthened co-operation with the Mainland, with a view to attracting investment funds from around the world to set up in Hong Kong and broadening the financing channels for different industries, including I&T enterprises.