

LCQ12: Measures for recruiting talents from Vietnam, Laos and Nepal

Following is a question by the Hon Jimmy Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

The Chief Executive proposed in the 2023 Policy Address delivered on October 25 last year the relaxation of the visa policy in respect of employment for Vietnamese talents and the criteria for Vietnamese applying for "multiple-entry visas" for business and travel, as well as the visa policy for Laotian and Nepalese talents for employment, training and study in University Grants Committee-funded institutions in Hong Kong starting from that day. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) since the implementation of the aforesaid measures, of the respective numbers of visa applications for employment made by Vietnamese talents which were received, approved and rejected by the Government, and the average time required for vetting and approving each application; whether it has compiled statistics on the employment of such talents in Hong Kong after obtaining employment visas, such as the trades in which they are engaged and the average salary; if so, of the details;

(2) since the implementation of the aforesaid measures, of the respective numbers of visa applications made by Vietnamese through the multiple-entry visa arrangement for (i) business and (ii) travel which were received, approved and rejected by the Government, and the average time required for vetting and approving each application;

(3) since the implementation of the aforesaid measures, of the respective numbers of visa applications made by Laotian and Nepalese talents for (i) employment, (ii) training and (iii) study in Hong Kong which were received, approved and rejected by the Government, and the average time required for vetting and approving each application; whether it knows the employment and training details of such talents in Hong Kong; and

(4) whether it will step up efforts in promoting the aforesaid measures to Vietnamese, Laotian and Nepalese nationals and helping them acquire more up-to-date information about Hong Kong; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

To further attract more talents to Hong Kong, the 2023 Policy Address announced that starting from October 25, 2023, the visa policy would be

relaxed for Vietnamese talents to come to Hong Kong for employment. In response to the calls of society, we have also relaxed the criteria for Vietnamese applying for multiple-journey visas to come to Hong Kong for business and travel, so that more Vietnamese frequent travellers are eligible for such multiple-journey visas. Meanwhile, we have also relaxed the visa policy for Laotian and Nepalese talents for employment, training and study in eligible full-time programmes at undergraduate level or above offered by University Grants Committee-funded (UGC-funded) institutions, with a view to promoting exchanges on various fronts with talents from these places.

Having consulted the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and the Immigration Department (ImmD), my reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) In the past, Vietnamese talents could only take up employment in Hong Kong through the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates. Under the relaxation measures introduced in October 2023, Vietnamese talents may apply for entry for employment in Hong Kong through other talent admission schemes, including the General Employment Policy and the Top Talent Pass Scheme, etc. A breakdown of the number of applications and approvals as at the end of February 2024 is set out as follows:

	October 25, 2023 to February 29, 2024
Number of applications received	42
Number of applications approved	31
Number of applications rejected	0
Number of applications withdrawn by the applicant / which could not be processed further	6
Number of applications being processed	5

For visa applications submitted under various talent admission schemes, the assessment will normally be completed by the ImmD within four weeks upon submission of all required information and supporting documents by the applicants.

Relevant government departments do not maintain other statistical information mentioned in the question.

(2) At present, travelers of individual countries/regions (including Vietnamese) are required to apply for a visa to visit Hong Kong. Regardless of whether they intend to come to Hong Kong for leisure or business, they may apply for a "visit visa" from the ImmD. A person who has been granted a "visit visa" may enter Hong Kong as a visitor. In addition to leisure

activities, visitors may also engage in general permitted business-related activities specified by the ImmD, such as concluding contracts, participating in product orientation, and attending seminars, etc.

Statistics on applications made by the Vietnamese for multiple-journey "Visit Visas" to Hong Kong between the introduction of the relaxation measures in October 2023 and the end of February 2024 are set out in the following table:

	October 25, 2023 to February 29, 2024
Number of applications received	493
Number of applications approved	490
Number of applications rejected	0
Number of applications withdrawn by the applicant / which could not be processed further	1
Number of applications being processed	2

Following the implementation of the new measure, the average monthly number of multiple-journey "visit visa" applications approved for Vietnamese is about six times the number in 2019 (a monthly average of 19 applications). In general, the multiple-journey "visit visas" are valid up to two years, for a stay of not more than 14 days in Hong Kong for each journey.

It normally takes four weeks for the ImmD to process visa applications for visiting Hong Kong upon receipt of all required documents.

(3) Under the relaxation measures, Laotian and Nepalese talents may apply for employment in Hong Kong through various talent admission schemes. They may also apply for training and study in eligible full-time programmes at undergraduate level or above offered by UGC-funded institutions. A breakdown of the number of applications and approvals between the introduction of the relaxation measures and the end of February 2024 is set out as follows:

Laos

	Employment	Training	Study
Number of applications received	5	0	0
Number of applications approved	4	0	0

Number of applications rejected	0	0	0
Number of applications withdrawn by the applicant / which could not be processed further	0	0	0
Number of applications being processed	1	0	0

Nepal

	Employment	Training	Study
Number of applications received	90	41	0
Number of applications approved	74	28	0
Number of applications rejected	0	0	0
Number of applications withdrawn by the applicant / which could not be processed further	0	10	0
Number of applications being processed	16	3	0

For visa applications submitted under various talent admission schemes, the assessment will normally be completed by the ImmD within four weeks upon submission of all required information and supporting documents by the applicants. For applications for training and study in Hong Kong, the ImmD normally takes four weeks and six weeks respectively to process the visa applications upon receipt of all required documents.

Relevant government departments do not maintain other statistical information mentioned in the question.

(4) Following the introduction of the relaxation measures, we have been promoting and/or introducing our new policy to relevant stakeholders through

the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, the Tourism Commission and/or relevant departments and organisations under their purview, including the Hong Kong Talent Engage, respective overseas Economic and Trade Offices, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and the Hong Kong Tourism Board, etc. We have also maintained close contact with the Consuls-General in Hong Kong concerned. Looking ahead, the Government will continue to actively take forward publicity and promotion efforts on the relaxation measures, and maintain communication with the stakeholders.

[LCQ7: Attracting Mainland residents to visit Hong Kong](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Duncan Chiu and a written reply by Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

According to the information released by the Government on the 18th of last month, during the eight-day Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland from the 10th to the 17th of last month, the Immigration Department preliminarily recorded a total of around 1.436 million visitors to Hong Kong and, among them, 1.255 million Mainland visitors came to Hong Kong through various sea, land and air control points, representing an average of about 157 000 Mainland visitors entering Hong Kong per day. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of a breakdown of the aforesaid number of Mainland visitors by province (including the Guangdong Province) and the relevant percentages;
- (2) of the following information on Mainland visitors to Hong Kong during the aforesaid period: the average number of days for which they stayed, per capita spending, the proportion of overnight visitors, and the number of visitors who travelled to other countries or regions to continue their journeys;
- (3) of the respective changes in the figures in (1) and (2) compared to the figures for the Chinese New Year Golden Weeks of the Mainland in 2018 and 2023; and
- (4) whether it will conduct an in-depth study on the situation of Mainland visitors to Hong Kong during the Chinese New Year, including the changes in visitors from various provinces, as well as their travel patterns, spending situation. and, in the light of the relevant findings, formulate afresh appropriate tourism-related policies and measures to attract more Mainland

residents to visit Hong Kong, extend their stays in Hong Kong and promote their spending; if so, of the specific details and work schedule; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Duncan Chiu, having consulted the Immigration Department, the reply is as follows:

(1) to (3) During the eight-day Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland from February 10 to 17, 2024, the Immigration Department (ImmD) recorded a total of around 1.436 million inbound visitors to Hong Kong, among which around 1.255 million were Mainland visitors coming to Hong Kong through various sea, land and air control points. The ImmD does not maintain a breakdown of figures concerning Mainland inbound visitors by provinces.

According to the results of the annual Departing Visitor Survey conducted by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) in 2018 and 2023, Mainland visitor arrivals' information regarding average percentage of overnight visitors, average duration of stay in Hong Kong, per capita spending and visitors in transit through Hong Kong to another country or region is set out below:

Mainland visitor arrivals	2018	2023
(i) Percentage of Mainland overnight visitors	39 per cent	46 per cent
(ii) Average duration of stay in Hong Kong	3 days	3.5 days
(iii) Per capita spending of Mainland overnight visitors	\$7,000	\$6,500
(iv) Visitors in transit through Hong Kong to another country or region	18 per cent	20 per cent

Regarding the figures during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland, the sample size of the Departing Visitor Survey conducted by the HKTB during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland is not sufficient for comparison.

(4) The Government has been keeping a close watch on the situation of Mainland visitors coming to Hong Kong, including their travel preferences, habits and consumption patterns, in order to provide good travel experiences to Mainland visitors.

The HKTB has conducted a series of analyses on Mainland visitor arrivals during this year's Chinese New Year holidays of the Mainland, including visitors' common modes of transport, reasons for visiting Hong Kong and major drawing factors of Hong Kong. In terms of means of transportation, the most

frequently used means by Mainland visitors was High Speed Rail, accounting for more than 20 per cent of all Mainland visitor arrivals. The series of mega events held during the Chinese New Year of the Mainland holidays also helped attract Mainland visitors. According to the results of the Departing Visitor Survey conducted by the HKTb, 55 per cent of Mainland visitors came to Hong Kong for the celebratory activities held during the Chinese New Year holidays of the Mainland. Visitors agreed that Hong Kong was full of festive ambience and attached importance to traditional culture while remaining to be a vibrant international city. In addition, tourism with themes on arts, culture and city walks were popular among Mainland visitors, many of whom came to Hong Kong specifically for visiting photo hotspots as well as arts and cultural attractions.

The Government and the HKTb will continue to promote new thematic travel experiences anchoring different seasons, festivals and mega events which integrates elements of Chinese and Western arts, pop culture, wine and dine experiences, outdoor explorations, active sports, etc., to cater for the interest of various visitor segments while promoting immersive in-depth tourism activities in the light of the new travel trends. We will also encourage the travel trade to launch more tourism products with diversified portfolios.

Regarding arts and culture, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau has launched "Art March" as a brand for the first time this year to promote mega arts and cultural events organised, subsidised, or supported by the Government, providing residents and visitors with an enriching, colourful cultural and arts journey and generating greater economic benefits through the mega arts and cultural events. The HKTb will promote a series of world-class arts events through its "Arts in Hong Kong" year-round promotional platform to showcase to the world Hong Kong's arts appeal. For instance, in this year's promotion, the HKTb has partnered with Mainland arts experts and media to promote various world-class arts events to consolidate Hong Kong's role as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. The HKTb, in partnership with Xiaohongshu, also produces and recommends contents for arts and cultural maps and photo hotspots on its official Mainland social media accounts, including WeChat, Xiaohongshu, Douyin and Weibo. The HKTb also invites key opinion leaders (KOLs) on these platforms to visit Hong Kong to jointly promote Hong Kong's arts and cultural tourism appeal. Various airlines and Mainland travel agencies also target the affluent young Mainland customers with high spending power and roll out travel packages with hotel and attraction spots' tickets to stimulate their spending in town.

In terms of local culture, in addition to continuously enhancing the contents of the HKTb's "Hong Kong Neighbourhoods" programme, the HKTb launched a half-year promotion on Temple Street in mid-December 2023, injecting new momentum to the community with the themes "A taste of Temple Street" and "Captivating street decor" to attract visitors and residents to take photos and discover in-depth authentic Hong Kong experiences.

In terms of promotion, the HKTb strategically distributes customised contents to designated customers at a suitable timing through different

platforms to drive Greater Bay Area visitors to visit and spend in Hong Kong, including sending out weekly notifications featuring travel tips in Hong Kong and introducing mega events of the week and recreation hotspots, so as to boost visitors' interest in visiting Hong Kong on selected Mainland media platforms, including news, transport information portals and social media platforms before every weekend. In addition, the HKTB also invites different famous Mainland KOLs to Hong Kong every week to share their first-hand experiences to help attract visitors to Hong Kong. Moreover, the HKTB cooperates with well-known Mainland lifestyle guides to send out the latest information on offers to visitors to encourage their spending in Hong Kong.

We will continue to keep a close watch on the visitors' interest and changes in their travel patterns so that we can update and enhance our tourism products to attract more visitors to the city and drive the tourism development of Hong Kong.

[LCQ2: Remittance service provided by money changers](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Kingsley Wong and a reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

The Customs and Excise Department is responsible for the licensing and monitoring of money changers in Hong Kong, and it is learnt that many members of the public regard the remittance service provided by money changers as legal and safe. However, it has been reported that recently, many members of the public remitted money to Mainland personal bank accounts through money changers, and subsequently the money or bank accounts concerned were frozen by Mainland public security authorities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of requests for assistance or reports received by the Government in the past five years in respect of remittance of money to the Mainland through money changers (including those relating to money or bank accounts being frozen) and, among them, the number of cases which were resolved after intervention by the relevant government departments;

(2) of the measures in place to monitor the remittance service provided by money changers, so as to ensure compliance of such service with the laws and regulations of the Mainland and Hong Kong, and protect the money of members of the public; and

(3) whether the authorities will deepen their communication and collaboration with the Mainland to ensure the flow of funds and the safety of remittance of money between the Mainland and Hong Kong as well as the resolution of cases of requests for assistance by members of the public, and will at the same time step up publicity and education to enable members of the public to have a better grasp of the points they need to note in respect of remitting money to the Mainland; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

According to the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance (Cap. 615) (AMLO), anyone who wishes to operate remittance or money changing services must obtain a licence from the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department (C&ED). Apart from considering whether an applicant (including its partners, directors and ultimate owners) is a fit and proper person to operate a money service, the C&ED also provides guidelines to ensure that licensees comply with a series of requirements, including establishing and maintaining effective internal monitoring policies to mitigate money laundering and terrorist financing risks, operating a money service at suitable premises, properly keeping accounts, so as to ensure that licensees properly operate their business. If a licensee is found to have contravened the AMLO or relevant guidelines, the C&ED can initiate criminal prosecution or impose administrative sanctions against the licensee, including publicly reprimanding the licensee, ordering the licensee to implement remedial measures or pay a fine and/or impose additional licensing conditions.

In consultation with the C&ED, the reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Kingsley Wong is as follows:

(1) In 2023, the C&ED received a total of 161 requests for assistance relating to remittance service or bank accounts being frozen, involving an amount of about RMB10.7 million. With the C&ED's intervention, so far 94 persons requesting for assistance have settled their cases through bilateral negotiation, involving an amount of about RMB6.9 million.

(2) The C&ED attaches great importance to the compliance situation of remittance service and has been implementing various measures to ensure that money service operators (MSOs) handle customer funds and complete relevant transactions appropriately. Specifically, the C&ED has formulated the Money Service Operators Licensing Guide and the AMLO Guideline to ensure that MSOs comply with the regulations on customer due diligence, record keeping, proper handling of customer funds and other licensing requirements. Moreover, besides investigating and following up on reports and complaints from members of the public, the C&ED also conducts regular and surprise inspections. If an MSO is found to have contravened the AMLO, the C&ED will take immediate enforcement actions. Apart from criminal prosecution, the offender may face disciplinary or administrative sanctions (e.g. licence suspension or revocation). For MSOs with higher operational risks (arising from the nature of customers or products, services, transactions or delivery channels, etc),

the C&ED would impose specific conditions on their licences to protect consumer interests.

(3) In addition to the above regulatory and enforcement work, the C&ED has been reminding members of the public to use the services of licensed MSOs and pay attention to the points-to-note and risks of remittance, through various channels such as press releases, social media and educational seminars customised for different groups (e.g. non-local tertiary students, foreign employees, etc). The C&ED will take suitable actions immediately upon detecting any contravention, so as to protect consumer rights. The C&ED will, within the remit of the relevant legislation, explore with Mainland and overseas authorities concerned how to enhance collaboration to assist the affected members of public.

Thank you, President.

[LCQ19: Measures attracting travellers to visit Hong Kong](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Benson Luk and a written reply by Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, in the Legislative Council today (Mar 20):

Question:

In the Budget announced last month, the Government proposed various mega-events to attract more travellers, including holding pyrotechnic and drone shows every month, as well as revamping the light-and-sound show, "A Symphony of Lights". In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has estimated the growth in the number of travellers and the amount of spending value for Hong Kong to be brought by the holding of pyrotechnic and drone shows every month;

(2) as the Government announced in the aforesaid Budget that a Mega Events Coordination Group had been set up, of the scope of work of such coordination group, and whether the Government has formulated performance indicators for the work of such coordination group; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it will provide travellers with one-stop tour packages by linking up different tourist attractions, so as to extend the number of days and the time spent by travellers in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as the authorities of Macao have, since the 1st of last month, provided a special offer of free bus and ferry tickets from Hong Kong to Macao for international visitors in Hong Kong, whether the authorities will draw reference from such practice and provide similar special offers to travellers visiting the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (including Macao), with a view to attracting them to visit Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) whether it will draw reference from foreign light shows (e.g. the architectural mapping light extravaganza of Casa Batlló by Gaudí in Spain), and hold immersive light shows which integrate media arts into large open buildings on both sides of the Victoria Harbour, so as to enhance the attractiveness and artistic value of "A Symphony of Lights"; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Benson Luk, the reply is as follows:

(1), (3) and (5) "A Symphony of Lights" light and sound show (SoL) is one of the attractions for visitors. There are currently 43 buildings and two attractions along Victoria Harbour participating in SoL with interactive lights and musical effects to showcase the vibrancy and glamorous night vista of Victoria Harbour. The lighting effects on participating buildings include searchlights, lasers, beam lights, LED screens and facade lighting.

The Tourism Commission is working with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) to revamp SoL with a view to presenting the splendid night views of Victoria Harbour to visitors with a fresh look and enhanced beauty, thereby bringing new experiences to visitors. The HKTB will invite tenderers to select a contractor to re-conceptualise the content and design of SoL. It is expected that the revamped SoL will be launched within the first half of 2025.

Before the launch of the revamped SoL, the HKTB will, in conjunction with festivals and major events, regularly organise pyrotechnics and drone shows with different themes and designs. These shows will add vibrancy and create a joyful atmosphere in the evening to attract locals and visitors to enjoy the shows. Furthermore, leveraging on the show, the HKTB will encourage the travel trade to introduce more tourism products and packages, such as harbour cruises and pyrotechnics-themed dinners for locals and visitors. This will bring business opportunities for the catering, retail and other related sectors, stimulating consumption and generating economic benefits.

Together with the HKTB, we will also promote new thematic travel experiences anchoring seasonal, festival and mega events as well as integrating Chinese and Western arts, pop culture, wine and dine experiences,

outdoor explorations, active sports and more to cater for the interest of wide-ranging visitor segments while developing immersive in-depth tourism activities in the light of the new travel trends. We will also encourage the travel trade to launch a more diversified portfolio of tourism products.

(2) The Government has set up the Mega Events Coordination Group (the Group) chaired by the Deputy Financial Secretary, with the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism as deputy. Members include representatives from relevant bureaux/departments (B/Ds), the HKTB and other statutory bodies.

The Group is responsible for the high-level steer in relation to mega events, including steering various relevant B/Ds and statutory bodies to reach out and solicit proactively mega events to be staged in Hong Kong, and strengthening the communication and coordination amongst departments in terms of event organisation. As the first point of contact, the HKTB will focus on liaising with event organisers alongside relevant B/Ds and conducting preliminary assessments on event proposals. The assessments, such as the benefits of hosting relevant events in Hong Kong and the necessary supporting arrangements, will be submitted to the Group. The Group will ensure that mega events hosted in Hong Kong receive sufficient inter-departmental support.

In addition, the Group provides steer on the publicity of mega events, as well as the launching or consolidation of promotion. The Group will also offer advice for different B/Ds on stepping up the promotion of mega events with a view to creating an atmosphere of citywide involvement and enjoyment.

(4) The HKTB will join hands with the local trade to launch various travel packages taking into account the preferences and trends of different source markets to attract visitors to Hong Kong. For example, riding on the expansion of the Individual Visit Scheme to Xi'an and Qingdao, the HKTB will collaborate with airlines, travel agencies and online travel platforms to offer various packages of air tickets, hotel accommodation, and attractions, enticing visitors from these two cities to visit Hong Kong.

To develop Hong Kong into an international tourism hub and promote multi-destination travel, the HKTB will continue to strengthen co-operation with Macao and other Greater Bay Area cities to participate in overseas promotions, as well as to collaborate with the travel trade to develop and promote multi-destination themed itineraries and tourism products that cater for the different interest and preferences of visitors with a view to attracting more overseas visitors to Hong Kong.

Implementation of Wake Turbulence

Group and Approach Spacing Management System at Hong Kong International Airport wins global air traffic management award (with photos)

The implementation of the Wake Turbulence Group (WTG) and Approach Spacing Management System (ASMS) at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) won runner-up honours at the Air Traffic Management (ATM) Awards 2023 in the "Greener Skies" category by the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO). The Director-General of Civil Aviation, Mr Victor Liu, attended the Airspace World 2024 and award presentation ceremony yesterday (March 19, Geneva time) in Geneva, Switzerland, and received the award.

The award recognises the significant achievements of leading organisations in civil air navigation services that utilise advanced technologies to promote greener skies. CANSO commended the collaborative efforts of the Civil Aviation Department (CAD) and the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) in implementing the WTG and ASMS, enabling environmentally sustainable operations at HKIA. This technology innovation enhances the capacity and efficiency while reducing fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions in a safe and sustainable manner.

The ASMS employs advanced technologies to calculate the optimal approach spacing between arriving aircraft based on their real-time positions, aircraft performance, WTG information, and wind conditions. The system assists air traffic control officers in delivering consistent and optimal approach spacings between arriving aircraft, thus enhancing the capacity and efficiency of HKIA, while reducing delays and carbon dioxide emissions from arriving aircraft.

The CAD and the AAHK expressed their gratitude to CANSO for recognising their close collaboration in successfully implementing this technology innovation at HKIA, resulting in significant environmental benefits.

Moreover, Mr Liu spoke as part of an expert panel during the event on the theme of seamless ATM operations. He highlighted the rapid growth of the Asia Pacific region in civil aviation and emphasised the importance of strengthening collaborations among states/administrations, air navigation service providers (ANSPs), and the industry to ensure sustainable development and efficient operations. Mr Liu shared the CAD's experiences in enhancing capabilities and fostering collaboration with various ANSPs and stakeholders, aligning with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)'s initiative in assisting members in implementing ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices.

Established in 1996, CANSO has been providing support for air navigation service providers worldwide and promoting knowledge sharing among

stakeholders by hosting regular conferences/symposia to enhance efficiency and safety in air traffic management. Currently, CANSO has more than 180 members, including regulators, air navigation service providers, and related service providers.

