

For discussion  
On 28 January 2002

## **Legislative Council Panel on Economic Services**

### **Protection of Hong Kong tourists visiting the Mainland**

#### **Introduction**

This paper sets out the general assistance that is available to Hong Kong residents who are involved in accidents in the Mainland.

#### **Background**

2. At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Economic Services (ES Panel) held on 18 June 2001, Members asked for information on the general assistance that is available to Hong Kong residents who are involved in accidents in the Mainland. The Tourism Commission issued a letter providing relevant information to the Clerk to the ES Panel in July 2001.

#### **General assistance to Hong Kong residents**

3. Hong Kong residents who are involved in accidents or are in distress when travelling in the Mainland may request assistance from the Immigration Department or the Office of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in Beijing as appropriate. The scope of assistance/services provided covers the following:

- To issue of Entry Permits to Hong Kong residents, who have lost their identity documents in the Mainland, to facilitate their return to Hong Kong;
- Upon receipt of information that serious accidents or casualties have happened to Hong Kong residents, to notify relatives of the parties concerned in Hong Kong and to seek advice from the Mainland authorities on the related procedural matters;
- On request from the parties concerned, to liaise with their relatives and friends in Hong Kong on matters such as financial assistance;

- On request from the parties concerned or their relatives and friends, to provide information on lawyers in the Mainland; and
- To provide any other relevant advisory services.

Annex A

Details are outlined in a leaflet published by the Immigration Department (Annex A). The Department has set up the “Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit” and a hot-line 2829 3010 (2543 1958 outside office hours) to handle enquiries and requests for assistance. The leaflet is distributed to the public free of charge at the Information Office and branch offices of the Immigration Department, the Beijing Office and through Home Affairs Department’s District Offices. The relevant information is also made available on the HKSAR Government web site.

4. In case of a special or serious incident happening outside Hong Kong involving deaths or injury of Hong Kong residents, the Immigration Department will immediately publicise a hotline number through the media so that the public can make enquiries or seek assistance where necessary.

5. The Government monitors the existing mechanism from time to time and makes improvements where appropriate to enhance the protection available to Hong Kong travellers in the mainland.

**Assistance provided by the responsible travel agents**

6. When an accident occurs involving members of a package tour, the travel agent concerned is usually first to get details through its staff or local agent at the place of the accident. These personnel will provide immediate first-line assistance to the injured, such as reporting the accident to the local authority and transferring the injured travellers to nearby medical facilities for treatment.

7. Upon receipt of a package tour accident report, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) and the Travel Agents Registry of Economic Services Bureau will immediately liaise with each other and be prepared to provide all necessary assistance. This may include liaising with the Immigration Department, Security Bureau and Hospital Authority, informing family members of the injured travellers, arranging comfort visits, setting up hotline for public enquiries, arranging for uninjured tour members to return directly to Hong Kong and assisting victims to apply for assistance under the Package Tour Accident Contingency Fund Scheme.

**Financial assistance under the Travel Industry Compensation Fund**

**(TICF)**

8. The “Package Tour Accident Contingency Fund Scheme” is funded by the Travel Industry Compensation Fund (TICF). It provides emergency financial assistance to package tour participants in the event of travel accidents. The payment covers expenses for medical treatment, funeral or return to Hong Kong of the remains of those killed, and compassionate visits by relatives up to a stipulated ceiling (the maximum assistance in total is \$180,000 per person). The details of the compensation scheme are at Annex B.

Annex B

**Conclusion**

9. The mechanism described above is intended to provide practical assistance to Hong Kong travellers in the mainland in case of accidents. It is, of course, important that all those traveling outside Hong Kong take necessary precautions to protect themselves, including taking out travel insurance to cover the duration of their trip.

**Economic Services Bureau  
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