Daily Information Bulletin

LCQ15: Entry of Indonesian passport holders

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Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuen-han and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mrs Regina Ip, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday) :

Question :

It is reported that quite a number of ethnic Chinese living in Indonesia have come to Hong Kong to seek refuge since rioting erupted in that country in May this year, some of them being Hong Kong residents and their family members. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the number of ethnic Chinese Indonesians who have come to Hong Kong since May this year; the number of them who are Hong Kong permanent residents or holders of Hong Kong Identity Cards; whether there has been an increase in the number of ethnic Chinese Indonesians who have come to Hong Kong as compared with that in the corresponding period of last year;

(b) of the circumstances under which holders of Indonesian passports are required to have an entry visa when entering Hong Kong; of the shortest, the longest and the normal periods of time which the Immigration Department needs for processing visa applications by these people; whether the time required to process such visa applications has been shortened since May;

(c) whether the Immigration Department conducts questioning or makes special arrangements when considering whether to permit the entry of ethnic Chinese Indonesians into Hong Kong; if so, what the details are;

(d) of the respective periods of stay in Hong Kong granted to Indonesian passport holders who are exempted the visa requirement, and those who have been issued an entry visa; whether there has been an increasing trend in the number of cases involving overstaying since May; and

(e) of the conditions and procedures for applying for an extension of stay; whether the Immigration Department has received applications for an extension of stay from ethnic Chinese Indonesians so far; if so, of the respective numbers of families and persons involved; whether the Government has provided special assistance to such families; if so, what the details are?

Reply :

Madam President,

(a) Immigration Department's statistics are compiled according to an individual's nationality but not race. As far as Indonesia is concerned, all holders of Indonesian passports are classified as Indonesian nationals irrespective of whether or not they are of the Chinese race. Therefore, we do not have statistics on the number of Indonesian visitors who are ethnic Chinese.

The number of Indonesian passport holders who came to Hong Kong as visitors between May and July in 1998 and the corresponding figures in 1997 are as follows :

1997 1998

May 11 658 10 953 (decreased by 6.0%)

June 21 463 8 853 (decreased by 58.8%)

July 23 615 8 662 (decreased by 63.3%)

The number of Indonesian nationals holding Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards or Hong Kong Identity Cards who visited Hong Kong during the above period are as follows :

1997 1998

May 2 481 3 425 (increased by 38.0%)

June 3 110 3 294 (increased by 5.9%)

July 3 317 4 184 (increased by 26.1%)

(b) Under existing immigration policy, Indonesian passport holders may visit Hong Kong visa free for 14 days for sight-seeing, business or social visit. Those who wish to enter Hong Kong for employment, investment, study, training, joining relatives or residence need to apply for an appropriate visa before coming to Hong Kong.

The time required for processing a visa application depends largely on whether the sponsor is able to provide the supporting documents promptly. If the required documents are furnished promptly, visas can be issued within a short period of time. In practice, the majority of the visa applications can be processed within six weeks. Immigration Department does not have separate statistics on the processing time for handling visa applications submitted by Indonesian passport holders.

(c) When considering applications from Indonesians to enter Hong Kong, immigration officers may, in accordance with law, ask questions to confirm the identity of the person and to establish the purpose of the visit, the intended duration of stay and whether the applicant meets the relevant policy criteria for entry. This is in line with international practice, and applies to visitors of all nationalities. There are no special clearance procedures applying to Indonesian nationals.

(d) Indonesian passport holders may visit Hong Kong visa free for 14 days, while those coming with visit visas may be allowed to stay for one month. As regards those holding visas for employment, investment, study, training, joining relatives or residence, they would normally be granted a stay of one year, depending on the purpose of coming to Hong Kong. No trends of increase in the number of Indonesian visitors overstaying have been detected.

(e) Those who entered Hong Kong as visitors and wish to stay longer may apply to the Immigration Department for an extension of stay. Applicants need to produce their valid travel documents, the reason for seeking an extension, onward/return trip air tickets and if necessary, evidence showing that adequate funds are held, etc.

For applicants who have entered Hong Kong for employment, investment, study, training, joining relatives or residence, they should produce with their applications the following documents as appropriate: their valid travel document, Hong Kong identity card, current employment letter, employment contract, sponsors documentation or school letter, etc.

The Immigration Department will carefully consider each case on its own merits in accordance with prevailing immigration policies.

The number of Indonesian visitors applying for extension of stay is as follows :

Applications Cases

1998 Received Approved*

May 566 546

June 847 832

July 705 685

*The remaining cases were withdrawn, not pursued by applicant or under investigation.

The Immigration Department does not keep statistics on the number of families involved. Since May 1998, not a single application for extension from Indonesian nationals has been refused.

End/Wednesday, September 9, 1998

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