

HONG KONG: CHINA TO CHANGE TRAVEL REGULATIONS FOR MAINLAND VISITORS



The Chinese government has embarked on a mission to reassess the rules governing individual visits from the mainland to Hong Kong, which is a specially administered region of China. The revisions of the rules will affect the regulations on individual visits to Hong Kong, as well as the policy on multiple-entry permits to the region. The reason of new regulations are shortages of commodities in local shops caused by increased number of Chinese visitors.

According to China Daily, the deputy head of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the government of China, Zhou Bo, said that the Chinese government was talking with the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region about reconsidering the policies governing visits to the area.

In the recent past, there have been many complaints from the residents of Hong Kong regarding the shortage of goods in the shops. Traders from the mainland, commonly referred to as parallel traders, use multiple-entry permits to travel to Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, they buy goods that are tax-free and then re-sell them back home, at a profit. This repeated action has led to shortages of household goods in parts of Hong Kong.

In 2003, an individual visit program was implemented on the mainland. The program allowed residents of only four cities in the neighboring province of Guangdong to make visits to Hong Kong and Macao, but within a specified period of time. Later, the program was expanded to accommodate 49 cities in the mainland. This covered more than 300 million people! Residents of Shenzhen have also been allowed to travel to Hong Kong several times a year, since April 2009.

Zhou Bo said **that both policies have impacted greatly the growth of the economy of Hong Kong, as well as the creation of jobs in the quickly growing industries of tourism, restaurants and retail.** He noted however, that the dramatic increase in the number of mainland visitors was becoming a heavy burden for the two regions, Hong Kong and Macao. He added that visitor facilities should be improved.

To reduce the pressure on popular tourist areas, there have been suggestions by other politicians for the construction of a shopping center near the border.

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