

非常危局，當行非常之法

Unprecedented crisis calls for unprecedented action

二零一九冠狀病毒病全球大流行令旅遊業承受巨創。
The Covid-19 global pandemic has devastated the travel and tourism industry.

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雖然此刻難以掌握冠狀病毒疫症如何重創本地旅遊業，因為疫症在多國仍遠未受控，但要是談到疫症何時開始打擊業界的話，則相當清楚，那就是今年一月二十四日。

當天是農曆年三十，不少外遊團本來會出發往內地度歲的。可是，內地當局為遏止疫症蔓延，於是下令即時暫停所有旅行團，結果不僅由內地來港的入境團全數取消，連由香港到內地的外遊團也落得同一結局。

此後多國陸續對香港旅客施加各種限制，例如暫停簽發落地簽證及電子簽證，禁止香港特區護照持有人入境等等，於是連並非前往內地的外遊團也都陸續被迫取消。可歎的是，疫症迅速擴散至世界各地，香港政府因此自二月底開始，先後對多個國家及地區發出紅色外遊警示，更於三月中對所有海外國家發出紅色外遊警示。另一

Although the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the local travel industry is difficult to grasp at this moment as the pandemic is far from contained in many countries, the time when it began to strike the industry is quite clear, namely 24 January 2020.

It was the day of Lunar New Year's Eve, when quite a number of outbound tour groups would have travelled to the mainland to spend their holidays. The mainland authorities, however, demanded immediate suspension of package tours in order to contain the coronavirus outbreak, with the result that not only were all mainland inbound tours to Hong Kong cancelled, all outbound tours to the mainland had also to be cancelled.

After that, many countries began to impose various kinds of restrictions on travellers from Hong Kong, such as suspending the issuance of landing visas and electronic visas and refusing entry to travellers with HKSAR passports, thus causing a string of cancellations of outbound tours whose destinations were not China. Unfortunately, the coronavirus disease began to spread rapidly to different parts of the world, and the Hong Kong Government started, in late February, to issue the Red Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) successively for many countries and places and even issued, in mid-March, the Red OTA for all over-

圖一：外遊印花金額
Figure 1: Outbound levy amounts



資料來源：香港旅遊業議會
Source: Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong

方面，多國為防疫需要，都實施封城、甚至封國措施。至此，外遊業已完全停頓(由二零一九年一月起的外遊印花金額，見圖一)。

至於入境業方面，雖然去年下半年的反修例運動已令內地入境團的數目暴挫約百分之九十五，但世界衛生組織於一月底宣佈冠狀病毒疫症爆發為「國際關注的突發公共衛生事件」後，多個國家先後對香港發出旅遊警示，令香港二月的入境旅客總人數銳減百分之九十五左右，三月的數字恐怕會更差(由二零一九年一月起的入境旅客總人數，見圖二)。

外遊業與入境業固然一片愁雲慘霧，但議會也無法獨善其身。現在外遊團不能外遊(於是估議會收入七成的外遊印花費沒有了)，訓練課程及考試不能舉辦(於是課程及考試費的收入也都沒有了)，會費又已於去年九月退回給會員，結果議會為應付財政困難，雖然工作量因投訴數字急升而增加，但也不得不裁員百分之十，並且實施強制無薪假等節流措施。

疫症肆虐，業界無力回天，唯有倚仗外力救援而已。雖然政府已推出三項計劃援助業界(即旅行社鼓勵計劃、綠色生活本地遊鼓勵計劃、旅行代理商資助計劃)，但旅行社因要應付固定開支及退款要求而出現資金周轉問題，而業界從業員則可能已失去工作或收入大減，兩者因而同樣需要援助。

議會深知問題所在，因此已聯同屬會多次促請當局儘速推出救援措施，否則大批旅行社倒閉，業界失業人數急升，必然會令行業復甦艱難百倍。

真的不能再坐視不理了。 

seas countries. On the other hand, many cities and even nations have been in lockdown in an effort to contain the outbreak. At this juncture, the outbound industry has ground to a complete halt (see Figure 1 for the amounts of outbound levy from 2019 onwards).

As for the inbound industry, although tour groups from the mainland had already plummeted by about 95% in number because of the anti-extradition movement spanning the second half of last year, the World Health Organisation's declaration of the coronavirus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern in late January triggered many countries to issue travel advisories for Hong Kong, with the result that the number of total visitor arrivals in Hong Kong plunged by about 95% in February, with the March figure expected to be worse (see Figure 2 for the number of total visitor arrivals from 2019 onwards).

While the outbound and inbound industries have been gripped by woe, the TIC has fared no better. Now that outbound tours cannot go out (which means 70% of the TIC's income in the form of outbound levy is gone), training courses and examinations cannot be held (which means the income from course and examination fees is gone, too) and subscription fees were already refunded to members in September last year, the TIC has had to tackle financial difficulties by taking various retrenchment measures, including laying off 10% of its staff and imposing

mandatory unpaid leave on all staff, just at a time when its workload has been on the rise because of a surge in complaints.

The impact of the pandemic is so devastating that the industry is no longer able to stand on its own feet without external assistance. Despite the three schemes launched by the Government (the Travel Agents Incentive Scheme, the Green Lifestyle Local Tour Incentive Scheme and the Travel Agents Subsidy Scheme), both travel agents (which are burdened with serious cash-flow problems arising from fixed expenditure and refund requests) and the industry's practitioners (who may have already lost their jobs or whose earnings may have dropped drastically) need to be helped out.

Fully aware of the problems, the TIC, together with its Association Members, has repeatedly appealed to the authorities to roll out more relief measures as quickly as possible, or else large numbers of travel agents may close down and mass unemployment may occur, which will make a full recovery of the industry much more difficult.

Really there is no more time to sit idly by. 

