

6 April 1970

Agents gear for boycott

By Vivian Tse

A BOYCOTT of Hongkong by Taiwan tour operators is due to start today despite efforts by the Immigration Department to solve the crisis.

Taiwan travel agents, angry over the treatment of Taiwanese transit passengers at Kai Tak airport, have planned the boycott.

Several tours have already been cancelled and the Hongkong tourist industry is worried about the potential loss of revenue.

The Taiwan travel agents have also decided not to apply for any new visas for Hongkong.

They are also urging Taiwanese passengers in transit at Kai Tak airport not to enter the territory or buy Hongkong products.

The boycott is in response to an incident in which 1,200 Taiwanese travellers in transit were stranded in Hongkong on March 22 due to bad weather in Taipei.

Only 33 were allowed to enter the territory. The rest had to stay in the transit lounge overnight.

The boycott was initiated by the 1,000-member Taipei Travel Agents Association and Travel Quality Assurance Association of the

Republic of China. The two associations said the boycott will continue indefinitely until they receive a satisfactory reply from the Hongkong Government.

The travel agents have asked the Immigration Department to set up an office in Taipei to process visa applications.

Members of the two associations will hold an emergency meeting later today to discuss the matter.

Mr Chen Yau-chyh, chairman of the Taipei Travel Agents Association, yesterday said the boycott will continue unless members changed their views at today's meeting. He said this was unlikely.

Mr Chen said he received a letter from the Hongkong Immigration Department explaining its stand.

"In the letter, the department said it would try to shorten the time taken to process visas from the current four or six weeks to two weeks. This still falls short of our demand. We want visas processed within four days."

But Mr Chen said the letter indicated the Immigration Department intended to improve its services.

Passenger angry at treatment

A TAIWANESE woman yesterday claimed the Hongkong Immigration Department detained her and 39 other Taiwanese transit passengers "unreasonably" in Kai Tak airport lounge, despite a guarantee from Air France.

Under international practice, travellers in transit can enter a territory under the airline's guarantee.

The woman, a Miss Lee, complained to *The Hongkong Standard* that the group was travelling to Paris and needed to change planes at Kai Tak on November 4 last year.

They arrived at 4 pm but were delayed until 9 am the next day.

Miss Lee said the Immigration Department would not allow them to enter Hongkong, despite the airline's guarantee.

In a letter attached to Miss Lee's the airline's general manager in Taiwan said: "Despite strong efforts made by our staff, the Hongkong Immigration authorities did not grant a transit visa to our Taiwan-passport passengers in order to let them take rest in city hotels which were provided freely by Air France."

The Immigration Department refused to comment yesterday.