

## Hong Kong e-News Bulletin

April 8, 2020



### SPECIAL NOTICE

In response to the local government's appeal for concerted efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (Toronto) has been closed temporarily until further notice. Users may continue to reach us via the following channels:

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Phone: (416) 924-5544 or

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For urgent assistance outside office hours, Hong Kong residents in Canada may call the 24-hour hotline of the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit of the Immigration Department in Hong Kong at +852 1868. In the event that Hong Kong residents who need assistance are not able to call the hotline due to the service settings of their telecommunication services operators or other reasons, they may try adding "0000" after entering "1868". Hong Kong residents in Canada in need of consular assistance may contact the Chinese Embassy or Consulate Offices in your province (<http://ca.china-embassy.org/eng/zlgli/>).

### HONG KONG NEWS

#### **Entry restriction on non-Hong Kong residents coming from overseas extended**

A spokesman of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government said on April 6 that the Government will extend, until further notice, the entry restriction on non-Hong Kong residents coming from overseas countries or regions by plane and those having been to overseas countries or regions in the past 14 days preceding arrival at Hong Kong. All transit services at the Hong Kong International Airport will also continue to be suspended until further notice.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proliferated around the world and the situation is severe. With effect from March 25, the HKSAR Government implemented enhancements to the anti-epidemic measures in four aspects, including the following measures on entry restriction, quarantine and airport transit which aim to prevent imported cases:

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- All non-Hong Kong residents coming from overseas countries and regions by plane will be denied entry to Hong Kong;
- Non-Hong Kong residents coming from the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan will be denied entry to Hong Kong if they have been to any overseas countries and regions in the past 14 days;
- All transit services at Hong Kong International Airport will be suspended; and
- All travellers coming from Macao and Taiwan, including Hong Kong and non-Hong Kong residents, will be subject to a 14-day compulsory quarantine, which is the same as the arrangements for people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland.

At present, the COVID-19 pandemic remains severe around the globe. The HKSAR Government has decided to extend the aforementioned temporary entry restriction and suspension of airport transit services until further notice.

In implementing the above entry restriction measures, the Government has taken into consideration the practical need and exempted a small number of persons. Such exemptions would remain applicable, including:

- Crew members of aircraft who need to commute to and from foreign places for performance of necessary duties or crew members of goods vessels;
- Government officials carrying out government duties including personnel of consular posts;
- Personnel engaged in anti-epidemic work endorsed by the HKSAR Government; and
- Spouses and minor children of Hong Kong residents.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/06/P2020040600671.htm>

### **Law enforcement officers step up inspections on implementation of regulations in relation to social distancing**

The HKSAR Government on April 6 urges members of the public to continue to support the temporary measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community. They should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings, and maintain an appropriate social distance with other people in order to prevent the spread of epidemic.

The Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirement and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) have taken effect since March 28 and 29 respectively to regulate the business and operations of catering business and

12 categories of premises with relatively high risk of spreading the virus (scheduled premises); as well as to prohibit group gatherings with more than four people in public places.

The enforcement departments have enhanced manpower to step up patrols in various public places, and remind the operators of the relevant premises and the public to comply with the requirements of the Regulations by verbal explanation, advice or warning. Fixed penalty tickets were also issued.

The HKSAR Government reminds the persons responsible for carrying on the catering business and the managers of scheduled premises that contravening the requirements under Cap. 599F would be a criminal offence. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of HK\$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

In addition, according to Cap. 599G, anybody who participates in or organises a prohibited group gathering or owns, controls or operates the place of the gathering, and knowingly allows the gathering to take place, commits an offence. People who participate in a prohibited group gathering may be subject to a fixed penalty of HK\$2,000, while people who organise or allow a prohibited group gathering, if charged in a court, are liable to a maximum penalty of a HK\$25,000 fine and six months' imprisonment.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/06/P2020040600737.htm>

For the latest directions under Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation, please visit:

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/02/P2020040200608.htm>

For details of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirement and Directions) (Business and Premises) (Amendment) Regulation 2020, please visit:

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/01/P2020040100495.htm>

For details of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation, please visit:

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202003/28/P2020032800720.htm>

### **Hong Kong residents safely returned from Peru by chartered flights arranged by HKSAR Government and received testing**

A HKSAR Government spokesman said that 65 Hong Kong residents who took the chartered flights arranged by the government safely arrived Hong Kong from Peru on

April 5 in the afternoon. They subsequently proceeded to the Centre for Health Protection's testing centre at the Asia World-Expo for COVID-19 testing and are now awaiting the testing results. If tested negative, they can return home or proceed to a designated place to continue completion of the 14-day compulsory quarantine.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/05/P2020040500674.htm>

### **HKMA and banking sector join forces to help Hong Kong's economy overcome outbreak of COVID-19**

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) together with the major banks and Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Insurance Limited (HKMCI) met representatives from the commercial sector (including Members of the Legislative Council) on March 3 to exchange views on the effectiveness of banks' measures to support SMEs and discuss future follow up work in this regard.

At the meeting, the HKMA reported that, since the establishment of the Banking Sector SME Lending Coordination Mechanism in October 2019, the banking industry has introduced several rounds of measures to help corporate and retail customers. Nearly 9 000 applications from SMEs involving principal repayment holidays, loan extensions and relief loans have been approved thus far, involving over HK\$57 billion.

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues, the HKMA and the HKMCI put forward another round of five initiatives to further support SMEs in addressing cash-flow pressure:

- The HKMA will introduce a series of measures aimed at increasing the banking sector's liquidity so that banks will have ample liquidity to support local economic activities.
- The current level of regulatory reserves will be reduced by half to release a total of HK\$200 billion of lending capacity, providing banks with more room on their balance sheets to cater for future financing needs.
- The HKMA has asked banks to consider arrangements to automatically offer extensions of loan tenor or principal repayment holidays to qualified SMEs without requiring them to make an application.
- Preparatory work by HKMCI and banks for the special 100 per cent Loan Guarantee under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme announced in the Budget has entered an advanced stage.

- Banks said that they will allow SME customers in the import-export and manufacturing sectors facing cash-flow pressure due to delays in shipments to further extend the repayment period of trade financing facilities. They will also consider allowing more customers to apply to convert trade financing lines into temporary overdraft facilities so that customers can manage their cash flow more flexibly.

In addition, the HKMA has made adjustments to regulatory requirements in a timely way to allow banks more flexibility to provide credit and support the local economy.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/03/P2020040300661.htm>

### **Government approves six more production lines under Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme**

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau of the HKSAR Government announced on March 27 that it has approved five applications (involving six production lines) under the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme.

Together with the two production lines approved last week, a total of eight production lines have been approved under the Scheme. The Scheme will provide subsidies to a maximum of 20 local production lines. Having reviewed the information provided in the applications received so far, the HKSAR Government estimated that the number of potentially eligible production lines would very likely have exceeded the remaining quota. Therefore, the Hong Kong Productivity Council who is administering the Scheme has stopped receiving applications.

The HKSAR Government launched the Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund to facilitate local production of masks as soon as possible to help address the imminent shortage as well as to build up stock.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202003/27/P2020032600834.htm>

### **Updates on Novel Coronavirus Infection in Hong Kong**

The HKSAR Government has implemented a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus and protect the health of the community while maintaining Hong Kong's position as an international city and aviation hub.

An information page “Latest Situation of Novel Coronavirus Infection in Hong Kong” has been added to the official website of HKETO. Information in the page includes the latest local situation, reported cases, health tips, travel advice etc.

You are invited to browse the page by clicking the banner on top of HKETO website or the following link:

<https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/index.html>

### **Free Trade Agreement and Investment Agreement between Hong Kong and ASEAN take effect for the Philippines**

A spokesman of the HKSAR Government said on March 31 that the part relating to the Philippines under the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Investment Agreement (IA) between Hong Kong and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will take effect on May 12.

On trade in goods under the FTA, the Philippines will progressively eliminate and reduce customs duties on goods originating from Hong Kong. The tariff commitments made by the Philippines cover different kinds of Hong Kong commodities, including jewellery, articles of apparel and clothing accessories, watches and clocks and toys.

On trade in services, Hong Kong service providers will enjoy better business opportunities and legal certainty in market access for a comprehensive range of services sectors in the Philippines under the FTA. These include business services, telecommunications services, construction and related engineering services, financial services, tourism and travel related services and transport services.

Under the IA, the Philippines will provide Hong Kong enterprises investing in its area with fair and equitable treatment of their investments, physical protection and security of their investments as well as the assurance of the free transfer of their investments and returns.

With the entry into force for the part relating to the Philippines, there will be a total of seven ASEAN member states (viz. Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) for which both the FTA and the IA have taken effect. The dates of entry into force for the remaining three ASEAN member states (viz. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia and Indonesia) will be announced as soon as they are confirmed.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202003/31/P2020033100251.htm>

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### International media partnership of the Information Services Department

Two articles with branded contents were published at the international media platforms to promote Hong Kong. Please click the links of the articles for details.

Financial Times

[Driving Hong Kong's Workforce](#)

The Economist

[How Hong Kong is winning at eSports](#)

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