

Hong Kong e-News Bulletin

May 6, 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:

Toronto

Phone: (416) 924-5544 or

Email: info@hketotoronto.gov.hk

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Phone: (604) 331-1300 or

Email: info_vancouver@hketotoronto.gov.hk

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

HKSAR Government strongly refutes foreign politicians' recent remarks on Hong Kong

On recent allegations made by certain officials and politicians in the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Parliament relating to a Hong Kong Police's arrest operation on April 18 and other security matters, a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government said on May 1 that they were totally unfounded and amounted to a serious intervention in Hong Kong's affairs. The HKSAR Government strongly disagreed with the grossly irresponsible remarks and expressed deep regret about them.

The spokesman pointed out that since its return to the Motherland, the HKSAR had maintained stability and prosperity under the principle of "One Country, Two Systems", exercising "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and a high degree of

autonomy in strict accordance with the Basic Law (BL) of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China.

The HKSAR Government always respects and protects human rights and freedoms. Any allegation that there has been an erosion in freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong people is unfounded. However, these rights are not absolute. As pointed out by the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal at the Ceremonial Opening of the Legal Year 2020, it is important to understand that the enjoyment of these rights has limits so as not to affect adversely to an unacceptable level the enjoyment by other members of their community of their rights and liberties. There are clear limits in the law as to the exercise of these rights. When law is broken, action will be taken in accordance with the criminal justice system.

The HKSAR Government therefore takes great exception to comments made by officials and politicians in foreign countries concerning the recent arrests and prosecution of a number of persons for organising and participating in unauthorised assemblies in Hong Kong. The allegation by some that those arrests amounted to an attack on Hong Kong's freedoms and a breach of the BL is absurd and can hardly stand the test of any law-abiding jurisdiction.

The well-established procedures of Hong Kong's criminal justice system include the independent investigations by law enforcement agencies, the independent prosecutorial decisions based on the objective assessment of evidence, applicable laws and in accordance with the Prosecution Code, and finally, open trials by an independent judiciary.

On legislating for BL Article 23, the HKSAR Government has the constitutional duty to ensure that the necessary legislation is in place to safeguard national security. Having laws in place to protect national security is common in many jurisdictions, and the government does not see how any defence of sovereignty and security by a jurisdiction would impact on its local and overseas investment. Coincidentally, it is relevant to note security issues arising from the social unrest last year were part of the causes affecting Hong Kong's score under "Investment Freedom" according to the US-based Heritage Foundation 2020 Index of Economic Freedom.

As regards enquiries about the role of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, they represent the Central People's Government to which the HKSAR comes directly under pertaining to BL Article 12. These offices have the power and responsibility over the proper and full implementation of the BL and "One Country, Two Systems" in the HKSAR.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202005/01/P2020050100454.htm>

Phased resumption of public services as epidemic situation stabilises

The HKSAR Government announced on April 28 that, upon the instruction of the Steering Committee cum Command Centre in relation to the COVID-19 virus, the Government will embark on a resumption of public services by phases from May 4 while maintaining a high degree of vigilance and adopting all necessary precautionary measures, as the epidemic situation has stabilised with only single digit cases reported over the past two weeks.

The first phase started on May 4, during which public services resumed normal opening hours as far as possible. Nevertheless, members of the public are encouraged to continue to use alternative means (such as online channels and telephone) to receive the services they need. Bureaux/Departments will announce their latest service arrangements separately.

Resumption of public services under the first phase is subject to the continuation of social distancing and precautionary measures such as flexible working hours and lunch hours of government employees; video conferencing instead of face-to-face meetings where possible; keeping physical distances or using physical partitioning among staff and between staff and clients.

The Steering Committee cum Command Centre will continue to closely monitor the situation and determine when to embark on a full resumption of normal business under the second phase.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/28/P2020042800362.htm>

Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong (Amendment) (No.2) Regulation 2020 gazetted

The number of confirmed cases in Hong Kong has stabilised in recent weeks and the situation in the Mainland has improved. Nevertheless, it is necessary to sustain the control over any secondary infections brought about by imported cases or cases with travel history from cross-boundary travel.

With a view to continuing our safeguards against any sudden turn in the COVID-19 situation in Hong Kong while allowing for adjustments of the public health measures, the

HKSAR Government published in the Gazette on April 28 the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong (Amendment) (No.2) Regulation 2020 (the Amendment Regulation) which has commenced at 0.00am on April 29.

Major amendments under the Amendment Regulation are –

(1) extending the expiry date for the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) to June 7, 2020.

(2) broadening the exemption of person or category of persons from compulsory quarantine arrangement.

In light of the gradual resumption of passenger movement and economic activities, the Amendment Regulation will further empower the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) to exempt persons fulfilling the following criteria from compulsory quarantine (including all persons arriving from the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan) –

(a) persons who need to enter Hong Kong in receiving or providing nursery, kindergarten, primary or secondary education at any school registered under the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279) in Hong Kong or for the safe travelling of these persons for the abovementioned purpose, including cross-boundary students and related personnel and service providers; and

(b) persons whose travelling is necessary for purposes relating to manufacturing operations, business activities or the provision of professional services in the interest of Hong Kong's economic development.

(3) empowering the Director of Health to cancel quarantine order.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/28/P2020042800821.htm>

In addition, the HKSAR Government announced on May 4 the mechanism for Hong Kong enterprises with manufacturing operations in the Mainland to apply for exemption from the compulsory quarantine arrangement. The Trade and Industry Department (TID) has started processing applications on the same day.

In accordance with the Amendment Regulation, the CS has exempted the following categories of persons from the compulsory quarantine arrangement with effect from May 4, 2020:

(a) either the owner of a Hong Kong enterprise with a valid business registration

certificate issued under the Business Registration Ordinance (Cap. 310) and with manufacturing operations in the Mainland, and up to one person employed and so authorised by the enterprise; or

(b) up to two persons employed and so authorised by such an enterprise as described in (a).

The application form is available for download from the website of the TID (www.tid.gov.hk/english/aboutus/form/publicform/download.html).

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202005/04/P2020050400339.htm>

Updates on COVID-19 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>

Hong Kong Tourism Board foresees a new tourism landscape after the pandemic

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) organised a web conference on 24 April to provide the latest updates on tourism development and introduce the HKTB's strategic framework of recovery plan.

HKTB Chairman Dr YK Pang said that COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges to Hong Kong tourism and put global tourism to a halt. He remarked that the tourism landscape will be reshaped. In the post-pandemic world, people will see a shift in preference and behaviour among travellers. Wellness-themed trips will become a new trend. Together with the travel trade, the HKTB is going to map out the long-term development strategy for Hong Kong's tourism industry.

The web conference was attended by close to 1,500 representatives from travel agencies, attractions, hotels, airlines, the retail and dining industries, as well as Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions and cruise sectors. Representatives from the HKTB's worldwide offices also participated in the meeting to provide insights into the latest developments in various market regions.

The HKTB has announced earlier that it will be allocating HK\$400 million to support promotions by the trade. HKTB Executive Director Dane Cheng explained that the HKTB has devised a three-phase plan to reinvigorate Hong Kong tourism. The exact timeline will depend on the development of the pandemic.

Click the following link for details.

<https://partnernet.hktb.com/filemanager/intranet/pm/PressRelease/EnglishPress/Press%20Release%202020/04-Tourism%20Update-E-final.pdf>

Production line quota under Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme fully allocated

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) announced on April 24 that it has approved the remaining seven production lines (involving six applications) under the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme. Given the approval of 13 production lines earlier, the quota of 20 production lines under the Scheme has been fully allocated.

The HKSAR Government launched the Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund to facilitate local production of masks in order to stabilise supply and to build up stock to meet the needs of the Government and the community. The Scheme has reached a significant milestone, and CEDB has, through the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC), provided all approved applicants with a copy of the funding agreement and will sign the agreement with individual companies successively. Meanwhile, most of the approved applicants are obtaining certification for the masks produced in order to commence supply to the Government as soon as possible.

Among the approved applicants, the HKPC has confirmed that two companies have just obtained laboratory reports from accredited laboratories certifying that the masks they respectively produce comply with the ASTM F2100 Level 1 standard. Once the HKSAR Government signs the funding agreements with these companies and has confirmed that they meet other relevant requirements, they are expected to gradually supply masks to the Government from May.

The HKSAR Government estimates that, when all the 20 subsidised lines are in full production, every month they will collectively supply 33.85 million masks to the Government and supply a further 7.15 million to the local market.

Click the following links for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/24/P2020042400559.htm>

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202005/04/P2020050400663.htm>

LawTech Fund to open for applications

The HKSAR Government has established a LawTech Fund (the Fund) under the Anti-epidemic Fund to assist some small and medium-size law firms and barristers' chambers in procuring and upgrading information technology systems and arranging for their staff to attend LawTech training courses. The Fund will be open for application starting April 28. Eligible law firms and chambers can each be given a reimbursement amount of up to HK\$50,000.

The Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association will establish a Joint Committee to process and assess the applications for the Fund, as well as to arrange the disbursement of the funding. It is expected to benefit more than 60 per cent of law firms and more than 50 per cent of barristers' chambers (a total of about 700 firms/chambers) in Hong Kong.

The application form and the guidance notes are available at the homepages of the Law Society of Hong Kong (www.hklawsoc.org.hk) and the Hong Kong Bar Association (www.hkba.org/covid-19/lawtech-fund).

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/27/P2020042700514.htm>

Government announces appointment and removal of Principal Officials

The State Council, on the recommendation by the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, Mrs Carrie Lam, on April 22 approved the appointment of Mr Patrick Nip Tak-kuen as the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Caspar Tsui Ying-wai as the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai as the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Christopher Hui Ching-yu as the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury and Mr Alfred Sit Wing-hang as the Secretary for Innovation and Technology as well as the removal of Mr Joshua Law Chi-kong from the post of Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Lau Kong-wah from the post of Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Nip from the post of Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr James Henry Lau Jr from the post of Secretary for Financial Services and Treasury, Mr Nicholas W Yang from the post of Secretary for Innovation and Technology and Mr Tsang from the post of Director of Immigration.

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The Chief Executive extended her sincere thanks for the valuable contributions of Mr Law, Mr Lau Kong-wah, Mr James Lau and Mr Yang who have served Hong Kong and the HKSAR Government with integrity and dedication over the years.

On the appointment of Mr Nip, Mr Tsui, Mr Tsang, Mr Hui and Mr Sit, the Chief Executive noted that they are competent for their new posts and would lead their respective policy bureaux to rise to the challenges in serving the community.

Click the following link for details.

<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202004/22/P2020042200459.htm>

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