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中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

Our ref. FHB/F/7/5

Fax no.: 2136 3282

(Translation)

8 April 2015

Clerk to LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Ms Alice LEUNG
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
[Fax: 2509 9055]

Dear Ms Leung,

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Enhancing Training and Protection of Law Enforcement Officers of
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department**

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March 2015, referring to us the letter dated 18 March from Hon WONG Kwok-hing to the Chairman of the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene (the Panel). In that letter, Hon WONG suggested a Panel discussion about ways to enhance the training and protection of law enforcement officers of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). I am authorised to reply as follows.

(Translation)

The safety of frontline officers (including the staff of Hawker Control Teams (HCTs)) in performing their duties has always been a subject high on the management agenda of FEHD. Recognising the problems and difficulties that HCT staff may encounter in the course of delivering their responsibilities, FEHD has all along been providing them with guidelines on patrol, arrest and prosecution procedures. The guidelines state clearly that the safety of hawkers, passers-by and HCT officers is of utmost importance.

Hon WONG proposed that we should make it mandatory for patrols to be carried out by HCT staff in pairs. In fact, the existing guidelines already stipulate that each squad assigned to carrying out sector patrols be divided into sub-teams, each comprising two Assistant Hawker Control Officers, so that they could look after each other.

Hon WONG also suggested video-taping the hawking activities of unlicensed hawkers in order to reduce conflicts between law enforcement officers and hawkers. Under the existing guidelines, apart from putting the situation at the scene under observation, HCT officers are required to collect sufficient evidence and ascertain the identity of the suspects before taking arrest action. Besides, FEHD's hawker control work always permits a certain measure of allowance for hawkers. If the hawking activity does not involve the selling of prohibited or restricted food or cooked food and is not conducted in major thoroughfares or areas of high pedestrian flow, the hawkers involved would generally be given oral warnings and asked to disperse. Enforcement actions are taken only if the warnings are unheeded. In day-to-day operations, physical contacts between HCT officers and hawkers are difficult to avoid. Video-taping the hawking activities by FEHD unilaterally may only serve a supplementary purpose.

FEHD will actively study proposals to upgrade the equipment provided to frontline staff, and will maintain communication with and follow this up in consultation with the Hawker Control Officer grade. As for staff training, FEHD at present provides induction training for all newly-recruited Health Inspectors, Assistant Hawker Control Officers and Foremen. Assistant Hawker Control Officers are also required to take self-defence courses as well. To enable its staff to move with the times, FEHD also arranges suitable refresher courses regularly for staff members in need. Moreover, the Department holds experience-sharing sessions to provide a platform for its staff to exchange views and share

(Translation)

their knowledge and experience.

To strengthen the training provided to frontline officers on how to communicate with expatriates and ethnic minorities, FEHD is in the process of producing a self-learning video which is expected to be released within April. The Department will also engage voluntary agencies to conduct, before July, seminars that would help its staff to better understand the culture of (and hence better communicate with) expatriates and ethnic minorities.

We will later put a paper before the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene to brief Members on our hawker control and enforcement work.

Thank you once again for your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

(Vinci Chan)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
(Attn: Mr LAM Wing-hong) [Fax: 2530 1368]