

政府總部
民政事務局

香港添馬添美道二號
政府總部西翼十二樓



**GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT
HOME AFFAIRS BUREAU**

12TH FLOOR, WEST WING,
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES,
2 TIM MEI AVENUE,
TAMAR,
HONG KONG.

本函編號 OUR REF. : HAB/D3/21/6
電話 TEL NO. : 3509 8120
圖文傳真 FAXLINE : 2591 6002

12 January 2017

Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn:Ms Joanne Mak)

Dear Ms Mak,

Discussion on Reporting Arrangements for Online Media

Thank you for your letter dated 16 December 2016 to the Secretary for Home Affairs regarding the suggestion of the Hon Charles Peter MOK to discuss the reporting arrangements for online media in the Panel on Home Affairs. Our reply is set out below.

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region attaches great importance to the functions of the media. It strives to disseminate government information to the public through the mass media and facilitate media reporting work as far as possible.

Currently, subscribers of the Government News and Media Information System (GNMIS) of the Information Services Department (ISD) have to be registered or licensed mass news media organisations, including registered printed newspapers and periodicals, news agencies, licensed television stations and licensed radio stations. In general, registered subscribers of GNMIS can have access to Government press conferences or media events. However, in actual practice it may not be possible for all qualified mass news media organisations to enter into the reporting venues owing to venue

constraints and other limitations. The Government will, after taking account of the relevant factors and circumstances of individual cases, make appropriate reporting arrangements so as to meet the needs of the media as far as possible, and facilitate the public to learn and understand the work of the Government through the media.

There is no universally agreed and objective definition of “mass news media organisations”. In general they refer to those organisations whose principal business is the regular gathering and reporting for general dissemination of original news to the public. Such qualified mass news media organisations may receive government press releases and press invitations through the ISD’s GNMIS. Nevertheless, not every organisation which publishes information is entitled to subscription to GNMIS. For example, non-profit organisations, think tanks or interest groups which publish advocacy or publicity materials, instead of general news reports, would not be qualified.

The Ombudsman released in early December 2016 investigation reports on two complaints concerning the reporting of Government media events by online media. The ISD generally accepts the Ombudsman’s recommendations and is reviewing the arrangements for admission of the media and the criteria for registration as a GNMIS user. The ISD fully recognises the rapid development and growing popularity of online media in recent years, and is studying the feasibility of allowing admission of online media for reporting. The study includes comparative research into the practices and procedures of overseas jurisdictions and other organisations.

In fact, the rapid advance in information technology has brought about profound changes to the media. The prevalence of the Internet and social media has substantially lowered the threshold for information dissemination. In view of the vast number and diverse nature of online media platforms, we believe that the classification of these online platforms as “mass news media organisations” or otherwise would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the ISD will strive to complete the afore-mentioned study as soon as practicable and will communicate with the industry on the outcome of the study.

As the study is still in progress, we do not consider it appropriate to include this item on the agenda of the Panel on Home Affairs at this stage. The Government will report the outcome to the Panel as soon as possible after completion of the study.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Gloria LO', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

(Miss Gloria LO)

for Secretary for Home Affairs