



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.: FH CR 4/3231/96

Tel.: 3509 8955

Your Ref.: CB2/SS/2/19

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5 June 2020

Ms Maisie Lam
Clerk to Subcommittee
Council Business Division
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road, Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Lam,

**Subcommittee on Twelve Pieces of Subsidiary Legislation Relating to the
Prevention and Control of Disease and Gazetted Respectively on 27 March,
28 March, 1 April, 28 April, 5 May and 19 May 2020**

**Follow-up actions required of the Administration
arising from the discussion at the meeting on 1 June 2020**

Thank you for your letter of 1 June 2020 seeking information as requested at the meeting on 1 June 2020. In consultation with the Department of Health and other relevant bureaux/departments, our reply is set out below –

- (a) (i) According to section 4(1)(b) of the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) (“the Regulation”), the Chief Secretary for Administration (“CS”) may designate any person or category of persons for exemption from the compulsory quarantine requirement if he is satisfied that the person’s or persons’ travelling is necessary for purposes relating to manufacturing

operations, business activities or provision of professional services in the interest of Hong Kong's economic development.

Pursuant to section 4(1)(b) of the Regulation, the CS has designated among others the following categories of persons for exemption from the compulsory quarantine requirement:

- (1) directors of listed companies or listing applicants who need to attend shareholders' meetings or regulatory meetings to comply with the obligations under relevant Ordinances or other regulatory instruments (such as the Listing Rules);
- (2) certified public accountants (practising), partners, directors or employees of practice units registered with the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Account under the Professional Accountants Ordinance (Cap. 50) who need to travel to the Mainland to conduct audit work for Hong Kong listed companies with Mainland operations and hence assist those companies to fulfil their obligations under relevant Ordinances or other regulatory instruments.

Companies and personnel including those of financial institutions and securities companies which fulfil the above criteria are eligible for exemption application. In order to safeguard public health, the exempted persons will be subject to certain conditions, such as medical surveillance arranged by the Department of Health, and the total number of persons as exempted will be subject to quota.

We have conveyed Members' request to further expand the coverage of the exemption scheme to more companies and personnel of financial institutions and securities companies to the relevant bureau for consideration. The Government will continue to closely monitor the development of the epidemic, and review and potentially extend the relevant exemptions in due course.

- (ii) At present, there are two exemption schemes under Cap. 599C overseen by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau/ Trade and Industry Department ("TID") relating to manufacturing operations as listed below-
 - Personnel of companies engaged in manufacturing goods for supply to Hong Kong for its normal operation or for the daily needs of the people of Hong Kong:

- (a) either the owner of a company with factory/factories in the Mainland which are engaged in manufacturing goods for supply to Hong Kong for its normal operation or for the daily needs of the people of Hong Kong, and up to one personnel employed and so authorised by the company; or
 - (b) up to two personnel employed and so authorised by such a company as described in (a) above.
- Personnel of Hong Kong enterprises with manufacturing operations in the Mainland:
 - (a) either the owner of an 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 personnel employed and so authorised by the enterprise; or
 - (b) up to two personnel employed and so authorised by such an enterprise as described in (a) above.

Companies and personnel including those of the retail sector which fulfil the above criteria are eligible for exemption application. We have conveyed Members' request to further expand the coverage of the exemption scheme to more companies and personnel of the retail sector to the relevant bureau for consideration. The Government will continue to closely monitor the development of the epidemic and review and potentially extend the relevant exemptions in due course.

- (iii) The TID is responsible for processing applications for the two categories of exemption mentioned in Item (a)(iii) of your letter. Under these two categories, only up to two persons from each eligible company/enterprise will be granted exemption. The exempted persons have to comply with specified conditions to reduce the risk of infection whilst in the Mainland.

In general, a company/enterprise is not allowed to change the exempted persons after its application is approved. However, if the change of the exempted person(s) is necessary for sustaining the operation and business of the company/enterprise (e.g. when an exempted person has left the job), the company/enterprise can submit a written request to the TID with justifications for such change. The TID will consider whether to accept such requests having regard to the merits of

individual cases.

- (b) The main mode of transmission of the coronavirus disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) is through respiratory droplets, and the virus can also be transmitted through contact. Droplets carrying the virus can deposit on objects and surfaces surrounding infected persons. People could be infected if they touch contaminated objects or surfaces and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. According to information from the World Health Organization (“WHO”), the virus causing COVID-19 can survive on different objects for a few hours to several days. However, the virus cannot multiply in goods or food packaging, hence the risk of acquiring the virus through food packaging is considered to be very low in the real-life situation. The WHO also states that it is highly unlikely for people to contract COVID-19 from food or food packaging. To date, there is no scientific evidence indicating that human could contract COVID-19 via food.

In fact, contamination of hands is the main factor for contact transmission. The virus could pass from one surface to another via hands, and even enter the human body. As compared with food packaging, frequently touched objects (e.g. door handle, trolley handle and water tap) pose a higher risk of virus transmission. Thus, to prevent COVID-19, it is important to maintain personal and environmental hygiene, wash hands properly with liquid soap and water, especially before touching one's mouth, nose or eyes; before eating; after using the toilet; after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs; or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing. Moreover, people should always clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

The WHO states that as food has not been implicated in the transmission of COVID-19, testing of food or food surfaces for this virus is not recommended. Imported food should be subjected to the same import controls as before the pandemic (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/questions-relating-to-food-safety-authorities>). Against the above, the Centre for Food Safety would not conduct COVID-19 viral testing on food or food packaging at the present stage.

- (c) Under the Anti-epidemic Fund (the “Fund”) set up by the Government, a one-off ex-gratia allowance of \$6,000 per household has been granted to eligible applicants of public rental housing who have accepted the

advance allocation offer of Fai Ming Estate and Chun Yeung Estate, so as to help them tide over the problems and inconvenience caused by the deferred intake. The Government understands that the ex-gratia allowance under the Fund may not be able to resolve all the problems of the prospective tenants but hope that this could provide some relief to meet their pressing needs. Cheques for the payment of the ex-gratia allowance have been issued to all the affected prospective tenants. The Government has announced that additional quarantine facilities are being constructed at two sites in the Penny's Bay. They are expected to be completed by phases between July and September 2020. If the epidemic situation stabilizes and there is no local community outbreak with unknown sources by then, the Government will cease the use of Chun Yeung Estate as quarantine centre as soon as possible, and complete thorough disinfection and relevant repair works such that the prospective tenants can move in as soon as possible.

For enquiries, please contact me at 3509 8955.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ronald Ho', written over a horizontal line.

(Ronald Ho)
for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Director of Health (Attn.: Dr KH Wong)