

Clarification on implementation of inspection arrangements for Companies Register

In response to media enquiries on an online report alleging that the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (SFST) had provided "misleading" information regarding the implementation of inspection arrangements for Companies Register at the meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Financial Affairs last Friday, a spokesman for the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau today (April 12) described the allegation as groundless and responded as follows:

The SFST explained at the LegCo last week that the Companies Registry (CR), simulating the proposed new inspection arrangements, had conducted a stocktaking exercise on the Companies Register in April 2021 in regard to records of current individual directors of live companies holding Hong Kong Identity Card who may have identical full names (including Chinese and/or English) and partial numbers of the Hong Kong Identity Card (i.e. the alphabet and the first three numbers). Results showed that, amongst these some 588 000 current directors holding Hong Kong Identity Card, only eight pairs of them have identical Chinese and/or English full names, as well as the same alphabet and the first three numbers of the Hong Kong Identity Card, equivalent to a chance of 0.003%.

Some media today quoted an online report with information obtained from the Companies Register that entails comparison of partial identity card numbers in a way which is not the pattern to be adopted under the new inspection arrangements (i.e., alphabet and first three numbers), but any three out of the six numbers instead of the first three. The results therefore are not directly comparable. Meanwhile, some persons as quoted with identical particulars are from dissolved companies which are no longer live on the register. The results of the aforementioned CR's exercise could effectively demonstrate the level of reliability of the search services under the new inspection arrangements.

In the meantime, taking into account comments from members of the LegCo Panel on Financial Affairs, we will look into the possibility of providing additional information for searchers to identify directors concerned in the rare circumstances of different directors having identical partial identification number (IDN) as well as Chinese and/or English full name, without compromising the principle of protecting the full IDN of directors for the protection of personal privacy.