

Government further clarifies eligibility criteria of Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme

In response to news reports that many people visited the Business Registration Office of the Inland Revenue Department to apply for a new business registration certificate or to change the nature of business as stated in the business registration certificate to "retail", with a view to applying for the subsidy of the Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund, a Government spokesman today (April 2) made the following clarification again:

- The Scheme requires applicants to be conducting substantial and substantive retail business at a physical store. The Scheme does not require the nature of business on the applicants' business registration certificate to be "retail". Therefore, there is no need for retailers to change the nature of business on their business registration certificate to apply for the Scheme.
- In considering whether an applicant genuinely conducts substantial and substantive retail business at a physical store, the Government will examine all the supporting documents submitted by the applicants, such as a recent photograph of the shopfront, a Mandatory Provident Fund contributions statement, a rental receipt and a water or electricity bill, to determine whether an application is eligible in a holistic manner having regard to the circumstances of individual cases.
- All eligible retailers must have conducted substantial and substantive retail business before January 1, 2020. The Government will verify the business registration information submitted by all applicants with the administrative records from the Business Registration Office to ascertain whether the applicants have commenced their businesses before January 1, 2020. If the relevant business registration information was revised recently, the Government will request the applicants to submit additional information and documents, which might lengthen the processing time of such applications.
- The Government also cautions that if any person has purposely provided false or misleading information with an intention of obtaining the subsidy, the case will be referred to law enforcement agencies for investigation and follow-up.