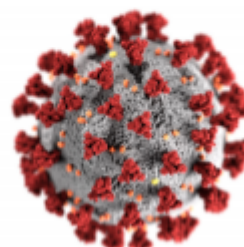




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COVID-19 Updates



COVID-19 - Updates

06/05/2020

During these complex times, Meitar | Law Offices continues to provide services to its clients in Israel and around the world.

As part of our firm's continuing commitment to provide outstanding service, each of our departments established a team of representatives to gather and analyze the recent legal implications arising from the spread of the Coronavirus. The team members whose details appear below will be glad to be at your service.

For your convenience, please find attached an update on the series of measures taken by the government authorities in the last few days together with a number of legal issues that have arisen due to this latest development.

For our previous update please click [here](#).

Emergency Regulations

On May 5, 2020, the government issued material amendments to the Restriction of Activity Regulations. The most significant amendment is the partial opening of the public domain, such as shopping centers, shopping malls, markets, national parks, gyms, zoos etc., under strict social-distancing requirements and other precautions. Restaurants may provide take-away meals only.

In addition, the home quarantine restrictions were eased further. Currently there are almost no restrictions on leaving home, subject to adherence to certain rules such as social distancing, maintaining hygiene, reduced public transportation, and wearing face-masks in the public domain.

The private-sector workplace regulations have not been materially amended, and the "Purple Standard" rules as set out in the attached document continue to apply. Most government and public workplaces have also reopened, and they are required to follow the "Purple Standard" too.

Schools are gradually beginning to open according to strict guidelines, and in “capsules” of a maximum of 17 children each. In the first stage pupils in grades 1-3 and 11-12 have been allowed to return to school. Nursery schools and day-care centers are expected to reopen on May 10.

Click [here](#) for the summary of the emergency regulations regarding workplaces .

Contact Information:

Yankie Pfeffer, Partner

+972-3-6103850

yankiep@meitar.com

Immigration Law

The Population, Immigration and Border Control Authority (“PIBA”) has announced that as of May 5th, most of the Population Administration offices (also known as the local PIBA offices) will be open to the public, subject to the Ministry of Health rules and guidelines. Please note that as part of the re-opening of the local PIBA offices, some visa matters will also be possible (mainly with respect to in-country actions).

As for the entrance into Israel temporarily restrictions, there are still entry-limitations related to the entrance of foreign nationals (who are neither citizens nor residents of Israel, or whom “center of life” is in Israel), and effective March 18th are barred from entry into Israel in most cases (subject to some exceptions). There is still no formal update concerning the expected plans of changing the above temporarily policy, nevertheless there are expectations that with the opening of more facilities and activities there may be a change in the coming future. Please feel free to be in contact with our Immigration, Corporate Global Mobility and Relocation practice team, for further updates regarding the said matter.

We wish to remind that PIBA has announced that B/1 (work) visas in several sectors, including Foreign Experts, which expire[d] between March 10th to May 10th 2020, will be automatically extended for a period of two months. For the sake of clarity please note that the work permits of the employers will also be extended accordingly, employers who holds an employment permits in the field of Foreign Experts, whose permit’s expires between March 10th to May 10th 2020, the permits will be extended automatically for two months. Please note that as of now we are not familiar with additional automatic extension by PIBA for B/1 visas, therefore B/1 visas which are about to be expired needs to be extended in accordance with the relevant procedures.

Contact Information:

Itay Krayden, Associate

+972-3-6103100

itayk@meitar.com

Ami H. Orkaby, Of Counsel

+972-3-6103100

amio@meitar.com

Privacy

On May 1, 2020, the Israeli Privacy Protection Authority (“PPA”) published guidelines

with recommendation regarding the manner workplaces and commerce should implement the requirements applicable to them, taking into consideration, privacy aspects. In this respect, when questioning those requesting to enter to a workplace or commerce as required under the Emergency Regulations, the PPA recommend to refrain from collecting identifying data and to refrain from requesting any additional health related information from such individuals. In addition, with respect to workplace and commerce obligation to document the number of questionings performed by it, the number of those entered and those that were not allowed to enter the workplace and commerce, a notice (pursuant to the Privacy Law) should be displayed to such individuals.

For the full update (in Hebrew) click [here](#).

Contact Information:

Tali Yavin- Surasky, Partner

+972-3-6103828

taliy@meitar.com

Alon Bachar, Partner

+972-3-6103157

alonb@meitar.com

Israel Innovation Authority

In response to the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19, the Israeli Innovation Authority ("IIA") and the Ministry of Finance have launched in late April a quick submission channel to support research and development grants for technology projects (the "Channel"). This Channel is aimed for innovative technology companies which encountered cash flow difficulties and are consequently in crisis, with high prospects for success in the long term, but with a short 'Runway' (i.e., limited financial ability for up to 12 months).

The Channel is aimed to help innovative technology companies in the early stages of growth, or to companies in the R&D phase which developed one or more products. Therefore, the eligibility for such grant is aimed for companies which have accumulated material assets such as intellectual property, raised funds or gained substantive value; companies which have a good chance of surviving this economic crisis, but are currently dealing with liquidity difficulties; and companies with a short 'Runway'. Under this Channel, applications can be submitted with an aggregate budget of up to NIS 15 million, and the IIA will examine these applications in an expedited manner. Additionally, a grant recipient is entitled for up to 50% of an advance payment. Note that the Channel is open for submissions until September 15, 2020. Additional information is available [here](#) (Hebrew).

Contact Information:

Dana Yagur, Partner

+972-3-6103152

yagurd@meitar.com

Hotels and Leisure

According to a government decision from the 27 April 2020, the first stage of re-opening of the tourism sector will be initiated on the 3 May 2020. The first stage will

allow open accommodation facilities, holiday villages rural bed & breakfasts and hotels with ground-floor rooms to open. The first stage re-opening is part of a 3-stage plan announced by the Ministry of Tourism on the 19 April 2020 (see update from 20 April). As part of the re-opening process, in the past week, various hotel chains have announced that they plan to open their hotels gradually, according to the emergency regulations and the instructions issued by the Ministry of Health, towards the end of May.

Today (6 May) the Israel Hotel Association issued its recommendations for opening and operating hotels following the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions. The detailed recommendations, that were prepared with the assistance of Professor Asher Barzilai, an expert in infectious diseases from Sheba Medical Center, cover a wide range of recommendations that deal with the preparation of the hotel for re-opening, the cleaning and purifying of water systems, implementation of social distancing and hygiene rules for both employees and guests, additional maintenance measures, housekeeping and disinfection of rooms, operation of kitchens and dining rooms, swimming pools and spa facilities. The recommendations were submitted to the Ministry of Tourism and are to be approved by the Ministry of Health.

Contact Information:

Carmit Bar-On, Partner
+972-3-6103998
carmitb@meitar.com

Antitrust

On April 30, the Israeli Competition Authority has announced that as of May 3 it is embracing the Purple Standard for the public sector and returning to work full time from its offices. In addition, the ICA has published statistical information concerning mergers submitted to its approval in the first months of 2020, according to which January and February 2020 represented a slightly lower rate of mergers being submitted compared to 2019, with March showing an additional moderate decline compared to previous months and the corresponding month last year. However, April showed a steep decline with only 6 merger transactions submitted to the ICA compared to 24 mergers in April 2019.

For the ICA announcement (in Hebrew), please click [here](#).

Contact Information:

Liat Hertzka, Partner
+972-3-6103190
liath@meitar.com

Energy and Infrastructure

On May 3, 2020, the Israeli Ministry of Energy published a plan to boost energy and infrastructure projects in order to encourage economic growth. The plan includes a total investment of 25 Billion NIS. A part of this budget is planned to be raised together with the private sector.

Among the potential projects mentioned in the plan: Renewable Energy projects in a scope of 2000 MW; Incentive for local Solar Energy projects through a loan fund; Promoting a list of Wind Energy projects; Boosting the development of the electricity transmission and distribution networks; Promotion of urban energy efficiency plans and clean transportation plans; Connecting the southern city of Eilat to the Natural-Gas network; The building of a new petroleum port in Haifa; and the development of a 500 MW solar energy project near Dimona.

For the publication (in Hebrew) click [here](#).

The above plan is in addition to the previous announcement of the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Finance regarding the promotion and acceleration of infrastructure projects with an initial budget of NIS 1.1 billion.

On May 4, 2020 The Electricity Authority (EA) announced its decision to grant a further one month postponement of the deadlines in the competitive procedures for the construction of Photo-Voltaic (PV) Facilities (following a previous postponement of 2 months). In addition, the EA announced a decrease in the interest on arrears in the electricity sector, that was set on 3.6% with a growth mechanism in correlation with the continuation of arrears, replacing the current fixed interest of 8.1%.

With respect to the ongoing tender process for the purchase of the 1,137MW Ramat Hovav Power-Station, The EA published a hearing for the amendment of the linkage mechanism of the availability tariff, in order to increase the certainty in the tender process vis a vis instabilities in the financial markets.

Contact Information:

Elad Sharabani, Partner

+972-3-6103970

elads@meitar.com

Telecom

For the updated memo on Corona related resolutions and events in the telecommunications sector, please click [here](#).

Contact Information:

Yossi Abadi, Partner

+972-3-6103901

yossia@meitar.com

Municipal Law

The State Economic Arrangements Regulations (Municipal Property Tax Discount), 2020 Set a 25% discount on annual property tax (Arnona) payments for the business sector.

The discount will be given to all business assets in Israel, except businesses operating in the following areas: banks, insurance companies, food sales businesses, hygiene and pharmaceutical products, optics store, communications and computer products repair laboratories, agriculture and solar systems.

The discount will also not apply to governmental companies and entities that are eligible for other discounts in municipal property tax payments.
Each local authority may decide whether to grant the discount as a 100% exemption for 3 months of billing (March 1st, 2020 to May 31st, 2020) or as a 25% discount of the total annual payment.

Contact Information:

Gidi Frishtik, Partner
+972-3-6103810
gidif@meitar.com



To join our newsletter click here

Meitar | Law offices
16 Abba Hillel Silver Road, Ramat Gan, 5250608, Israel | +972-3-6103100

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