

Law to tackle money laundering passed

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Dealers in precious stones and metals will have to register with the Law Ministry and carry out stricter checks on clients under new laws passed in Parliament yesterday.

Senior Minister of State for Law Edwin Tong said the ministry has streamlined the requirements in the Precious Stones and Precious Metals (Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing) Bill, based on industry feedback.

For instance, the registration process will go fully digital, thereby reducing the burden of compliance.

The law is part of efforts to boost Singapore's standards of anti-money laundering and countering the finance of terrorism.

Mr Tong said his ministry will continue to work with dealers of precious stones and metals to help them comply with the new rules.

Dealers had raised concerns during a month-long public consultation held in September last year.

Mr Tong said the authorities will also, where appropriate, provide materials in different languages, as well as issue templates and checklists, to help industry players better appreciate and implement the measures.

These will include details on how to perform proper customer due-diligence checks and risk assessments and implement internal policies, procedures and controls.

Regular seminars, outreach sessions and dialogues will also be held with jewellers, bullion traders, retailers and auctioneers.

Mr Christopher de Souza (Holland-Bukit Timah GRC) said "clarity is important for compliance and effective regulation, yet it is vital that these new regulations do not unduly curb businesses' creativity when designing products".

He also asked if the laws cover in-

dividuals who buy precious stones or precious minerals in one-off or resale transactions. Mr Tong said it does not target such individuals.

Mr Murali Pillai (Bukit Batok) had asked what expectations were being placed on dealers to uncover individuals who make multiple purchases without exceeding the existing \$20,000 threshold for filing cash transaction reports.

While noting that it may not be practical to require regulated dealers to share information on buyers' identities with rivals, Mr Pillai suggested "pooling information".

Mr Tong said Mr Pillai's suggestion "might be a better way to try to link the different transactions, should (they) occur".

The Law Ministry will issue guidance on how personal information should be obtained, handled and kept, he added.

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