

Analytical Accounts of Exchange Fund

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) released today (May 13) the key analytical accounts of the Exchange Fund at the end of April 2022.

Foreign assets, representing the external assets of the Exchange Fund, decreased during the month by HK\$119.6 billion to HK\$3,844.8 billion.

The Monetary Base, comprising Certificates of Indebtedness, Government-issued currency notes and coins in circulation, the balance of the banking system and Exchange Fund Bills and Notes issued, amounted to HK\$2,153.1 billion.

Claims on the private sector in Hong Kong amounted to HK\$307.7 billion.

The analytical accounts of the Exchange Fund are released in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and are referred to as the Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank under SDDS (Annex).

At present, four press releases relating to the Exchange Fund's data are issued by the HKMA each month. Three of these releases are issued to disseminate monetary data in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS). The fourth press release, on the Exchange Fund's Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account, is made in accordance with the HKMA's policy of maintaining a high level of transparency. For the month of May 2022, the scheduled dates for issuing the press releases are as follows:

May 6 (Issued)	SDDS International Reserves (Hong Kong's Latest Foreign Currency Reserve Assets Figures)
May 13	SDDS Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank (Analytical Accounts of the Exchange Fund)
May 31	SDDS Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity
May 31	Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account

Government follows up on positive results of sewage surveillance and appeals to residents to undergo virus testing

The Government announced today (May 13) that in order to fight the coronavirus epidemic, the Environmental Protection Department and the Drainage Services Department have been collecting sewage samples for virus testing in all districts, and had detected positive results in some areas, indicating that there may be hidden cases in the premises within these areas.

Rapid test

As regards positive sewage testing results with relatively high viral loads in the following areas, the Housing Department and the respective District Offices will commence distributing about 200 000 sets of the COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits to residents, cleaning workers and property management staff working in the following areas for them to take the test on their own, in order to help identify infected persons:

- Southern District – Baguio Villa, Residence Bel-Air, South Tower Residence Bel-Air, Bel-Air Rise, Bel-Air On The Peak, Villa Bel-Air and Bel-Air No. 8
- Kwun Tong District – Shun Chi Court, Kung Lok Building, Nam Hong Building, Hong Lee Court, Hamden Court, Connie Towers, King Hing Court, Woodview Court, Joyful Villas, The Verandah Garden, Bellevue Garden, Panorama Court, Cambria Court, Golden Dragon Garden, Louisa Tower, Lotus Tower of Kwun Tong Garden Estate, Shun Lee Estate and Shun On Estate
- Central and Western District – Residential premises around Sai Ning Street, Cadogan Street, Davis Street and Smithfield (see Annex)

Members of the public may refer to (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/rat/eng/rat.html) for enquiries relating to the use of the RAT kits.

When using an RAT kit, please pay attention to and follow the instructions from the manufacturer to perform the test and read the result properly. It is advisable to record the displayed result by taking a photo immediately after reading. Users should wash their hands before and after performing the tests, and avoid placing non-essential items within the specimen collection area. After completing the test, wrap and seal all components of the test kit carefully and dispose of them properly. If the household environment is contaminated during the specimen collecting process, disinfection should be conducted with 1 in 49 diluted bleach solution or 70 per cent alcohol.

People who obtained a positive result through an RAT for the first time can report via the online platform "Declaration System for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test" (www.chp.gov.hk/ratp). If individuals encounter difficulties using the online platform, they can call the automated system at 183 6119 to register their identification document and telephone number. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will contact the relevant person later to finish the report procedure.

Government gazettes relevant specifications for compulsory testing for persons clinically suspected to have contracted COVID-19

The Government exercises the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and publishes relevant specifications in the Gazette to continue to empower a registered medical practitioner to require any person whom he or she clinically suspects has contracted COVID-19 to undergo a test during a period of 14 days from May 14 to May 27, 2022.

According to expert advice, compulsory testing for symptomatic patients can effectively slow down the transmission of the virus by early identification, early isolation and early treatment. To keep the epidemic situation under control, the Government considers it necessary to continue to solicit help from medical practitioners in identifying possibly infected persons as soon as possible.

During the specified period, registered medical practitioners may, by a written direction, require a person whom the medical practitioner attends to in the course of professional practice and clinically suspects to have contracted COVID-19 to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test. Persons who receive the written direction (persons who are subject to testing under written directions) should undergo a test within two days after the issue date of the written direction (the testing deadline).

If Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or above, the Red or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal or the post-super typhoon "extreme conditions" announcement by the Government is in force at any time during the period for undergoing the compulsory testing, the testing deadline will be extended for one day.

Persons who are subject to testing under written directions may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

(1) To use the specimen bottle provided by the registered medical practitioner who issued the written direction to collect a deep throat saliva specimen and submit the specimen bottle to a designated specimen collection point by the testing deadline (see the specimen collection points and times at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html). Having reported the case to the Department of Health (DH), the registered medical practitioner who issued the written direction will be notified of the test result; or

(2) To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories recognised by the DH (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories_RTPCR.pdf) by the testing deadline and submit the test result to the medical practitioner who issued the written direction or his clinic staff by email, fax or hard copy within four days after the testing deadline.

For example, if the written direction is issued on a Monday, the person subject to testing under the written direction should undergo a test via one of the above options on or before Wednesday, the testing deadline.

"Persons who are subject to testing under written directions are suspected to be infected and should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or community testing centres for testing. To reduce transmission risk, relevant persons who underwent testing are advised to stay at home and avoid going out when waiting for test results," said a Government spokesman.

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The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to relevant premises, and seriously verify whether they had complied with the compulsory testing directions. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing directions commits an offence and the maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months. The fixed penalty for discharging the liability is \$10,000. The person may also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Any person in breach of the compulsory testing order would be liable to a fine at level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for six months.

Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request to provide information commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). Collection and use of any personal data for conducting COVID-19 tests must meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). Government departments or testing service providers which handle the relevant information may provide the data to the DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purposes as necessary. The workflow does not involve the provision of any personal data to organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

The spokesman said, "The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or contacted

confirmed cases), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons."

Nine persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations (with photo)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Lightshadow" and "Twilight" on May 10 and yesterday (May 12). A total of six suspected illegal workers, one suspected employer and two suspected aiders and abettors were arrested.

During the operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 19 target locations including a fish stall, food and beverage areas, restaurants, retail shops and a vegetable stall. A total of six suspected illegal workers, one suspected employer and two suspected aiders and abettors were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised two men and four women, aged 41 to 64. Among them, one woman was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. Furthermore, one man, aged 48, was suspected of employing the illegal workers. Meanwhile, two women, aged 18 and 41, suspected of aiding and abetting persons who breached their condition of stay in Hong Kong, were also arrested.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him or her shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties."

The spokesman warned, "As stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land is prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. Under the prevailing laws, it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$100,000 and up to 10 years' imprisonment."

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. Under the Immigration Ordinance, the maximum penalty for an employer employing a person who is not lawfully employable, i.e. an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to

land, has been significantly increased from a fine of \$350,000 and three years' imprisonment to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment to reflect the gravity of such offences. The director, manager, secretary, partner, etc, of the company concerned may also bear criminal liability. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence.

According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and to imprisonment for one year. In that connection, the spokesman would like to remind all employers not to defy the law by employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to take resolute enforcement action to combat such offences.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the ImmD officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter or temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



Rural Representative Election (Amendment) Bill 2022 gazetted today

â€‹The Government published the Rural Representative Election (Amendment) Bill 2022 (the Bill) in the Gazette today (May 13).

The Bill seeks to introduce the requirement for a person elected as a Rural Representative (RR) to sign a written oath to uphold the Basic Law and bear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China before holding office, and to provide for the consequences of declining or neglecting to take the oath or breaching the oath. The Bill also includes technical amendments relating to the inspection of omissions list and interpretation of election advertisement to align with the arrangements for other public elections.

A government spokesman said, "The legislative exercise seeks to refine the arrangements for the RR election in the run-up to the next Rural Ordinary Election in early 2023. The refinements being proposed, including the oath-taking requirement, are similar to those adopted for other public elections overseen by the Electoral Affairs Commission."

The Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council (LegCo) for first reading and second reading on May 18. The Government will fully complement the work of LegCo in scrutinising the Bill with a view to securing its early passage.