

## CS visits Community Testing Centre at City Hall (with video)

To cut the transmission chain of COVID-19 in the community and to curtail the epidemic situation so that Hong Kong's economy and society as well as people's lives can return to normal as soon as possible, the Government will launch the Universal Community Testing Programme (UCTP) tomorrow (September 1) to provide a one-off free testing service for the public at 141 community testing centres. The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, accompanied by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, and the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, visited the Community Testing Centre at Hong Kong City Hall today (August 31) to inspect the readiness of the centre for the UCTP.

Mr Cheung was briefed by Mr Nip about the arrangements at the testing centre such as manpower allocation, the centre design which comprises the registration area, waiting area and specimen collection area, as well as the workflow at the testing center. Mr Cheung said he was pleased to learn that the entire workflow design was formulated in accordance with the social distancing principle. Mr Cheung was also briefed by Professor Chan about the implementation of infection control measures based on the recommendations of the Department of Health at the community testing centre, as well as the provision of protective equipment to personnel manning the centre. Mr Cheung was then briefed by staff members of the centre about the workflow of transporting the specimens from the community testing centres to the laboratory as well as the design of collection boxes installed with an electronic tracking device.

Currently, over 6 000 healthcare personnel have enrolled to participate in the UCTP. Some 4 000 government staff members from 75 bureaux and departments will also take up administrative support and management duties at the community testing centres.

Mr Cheung thanked the serving and retired civil servant colleagues as well as the healthcare personnel for their active participation in the preparation and management so that the community testing centres in various districts can be put into operation in the shortest amount of time.

"The preparations for the UCTP are now completed. Members of the public who have registered online can take the tests at the community testing centres starting from tomorrow. The design of the centres has ensured that the testing will be safe, convenient and quick with full protection of personal privacy," Mr Cheung said.

"The third wave of the epidemic has lasted for eight weeks. Although the epidemic has subsided recently, the proportion of cases with unknown sources remains high."

As at 2pm today, more than 526 000 people have registered for the UCTP.

"I appeal to members of the public to actively participate in the UCTP. The more people that participate in the programme, the higher the chances of identifying asymptomatic COVID-19 patients in the community and achieving the target of early isolation and early treatment. It will help break the invisible transmission chain in the community and contain the spread of the third wave of the epidemic so that social and economic activities can resume gradually and people's daily lives can resume as normal.

"With regard to the scaremongering and fallacious messages deliberately made by certain people to smear the testing programme and mislead the public, to smear the Mainland's anti-epidemic assistance offered to Hong Kong, and even to incite the public to boycott the programme in order to deter them from taking part in the programme, such acts should be condemned as they disregard the health of the public and fall short of the expectations of a large number of frontline staff members who have been working hard to the fight the virus.

"Members of the public should take great care to thoughtfully consider the news on the UCTP and refer to the information disseminated by the Government if in doubt. They should discern facts and not believe in rumours to avoid advocating such improper culture," he said.

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## Financial results for the four months ended July 31, 2020

The Government announced today (August 31) its financial results for the four months ended July 31, 2020.

Expenditure for the period April to July 2020 amounted to HK\$289.8 billion and revenue HK\$106.1 billion, resulting in a cumulative year-to-date deficit of HK\$183.7 billion.

A government spokesperson said that the cumulative year-to-date deficit for the period was mainly due to the fact that some major types of revenue including salaries and profits taxes are mostly received towards the end of a financial year, and the payments in respect of the Cash Payout Scheme and various measures under the Anti-epidemic Fund.

The fiscal reserves stood at HK\$976.6 billion as at July 31, 2020.

Detailed figures are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1. CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT (Note 1)

|                            | Month ended<br>July 31, 2020<br>HK\$ million | Four months ended<br>July 31, 2020<br>HK\$ million |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Revenue                    | 38,239.1                                     | 106,076.6                                          |
| Expenditure                | (112,928.8)                                  | (289,766.1)                                        |
|                            |                                              |                                                    |
| Deficit                    | (74,689.7)                                   | (183,689.5)                                        |
|                            |                                              |                                                    |
| Financing                  |                                              |                                                    |
| Domestic                   |                                              |                                                    |
| Banking<br>Sector (Note 2) | 94,522.0                                     | 201,382.4                                          |
| Non-Banking<br>Sector      | (19,832.3)                                   | (17,692.9)                                         |
| External                   | —                                            | —                                                  |
|                            |                                              |                                                    |
| Total                      | 74,689.7                                     | 183,689.5                                          |

Government Debts as at July 31, 2020 (Note 3)

HK\$7,750 million

Debts Guaranteed by Government as at July 31, 2020 (Note 4)

HK\$53,093.8 million

TABLE 2. FISCAL RESERVES

|                                              | Month ended<br>July 31, 2020<br>HK\$ million | Four months ended<br>July 31, 2020<br>HK\$ million |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Fiscal Reserves at start<br>of period        | 1,051,308.0                                  | 1,160,307.8                                        |
| Consolidated Deficit                         | (74,689.7)                                   | (183,689.5)                                        |
|                                              |                                              |                                                    |
| Fiscal Reserves at end of<br>period (Note 5) | 976,618.3                                    | 976,618.3                                          |

Notes:

1. This Account consolidates the General Revenue Account and the following eight Funds: Capital Works Reserve Fund, Capital Investment Fund, Civil Service Pension Reserve Fund, Disaster Relief Fund, Innovation and Technology

Fund, Land Fund, Loan Fund and Lotteries Fund. It excludes the Bond Fund, the balance of which is not part of the fiscal reserves. The Bond Fund balance as at July 31, 2020, was HK\$118,573 million.

2. Includes transactions with the Exchange Fund and resident banks.

3. These were the green bonds of US\$1,000 million (equivalent to HK\$7,750 million as at July 31, 2020) which were denominated in US dollars with maturity in May 2024. They do not include the outstanding bonds with nominal value of HK\$88,534 million and alternative bonds with nominal value of US\$1,000 million (equivalent to HK\$7,750 million as at July 31, 2020) issued under the Government Bond Programme (with proceeds credited to the Bond Fund). Of these bonds under the Government Bond Programme (including Silver Bonds with nominal value of HK\$5,934 million, which may be redeemed before maturity upon request from bond holders), bonds with nominal value of HK\$9,500 million will mature within the period from August 2020 to July 2021 and the rest within the period from August 2021 to March 2034.

4. Includes guarantees provided under the SME Loan Guarantee Scheme launched in 2001, the Special Loan Guarantee Scheme launched in 2008, the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme launched in 2012 and a commercial loan of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation.

5. Includes HK\$219,730 million being the balance of the Land Fund held in the name of "Future Fund" as from January 1, 2016, for long-term investments initially up to December 31, 2025. As from July 1, 2016, the Future Fund also includes HK\$4,800 million, being one-third of the actual surplus in 2015-16 as top-up.

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## **Application forms for Primary One Admission available from Wednesday**

Parents who want to apply for a Primary One (P1) place in a government or aided school for their children in September next year under the Primary One Admission (POA) System can obtain the application form or download it from the Education Bureau (EDB) homepage from Wednesday (September 2) until September 25.

A spokesman for the EDB said today (August 31), "All Hong Kong children born on or before December 31, 2015, are eligible to join the POA System for admission to P1 in September 2021 provided they have not attended any primary schools and have never been allocated a P1 place.

"Parents of children who are attending kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-child care centres may obtain the application form, explanatory notes on how to complete the application form and a POA information leaflet from their

kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-child care centres. For parents of children not attending kindergartens or kindergarten-cum-child care centres, the documents can be obtained from District Offices (Home Affairs Enquiry Centres) and the EDB's Regional Education Offices and School Places Allocation Section."

In light of the latest developments of COVID-19, parents may also choose to download a web version from the POA webpage under the EDB homepage (path: EDB homepage ([www.edb.gov.hk](http://www.edb.gov.hk)) > Education System and Policy > Primary and Secondary Education > School Places Allocation Systems > Primary One Admission System). Please note that each applicant participating in POA may use one application form per child to apply for one government or aided primary school only. If parents have obtained the three-ply printed version of the application form, they need not download the application form online.

At the Discretionary Places Admission stage, the school chosen is not restricted to the school net in which the child resides. Parents wishing to apply for a POA discretionary place in a government or aided primary school should submit the completed application form together with all supporting documents directly to the school during school office hours between September 21 and 25. Parents who are unable to submit the application form in person may authorise in writing a representative to bring along the completed application form with originals and photocopies of supporting documents to the school on their behalf. Parents should note that, to avoid gatherings of people, schools may arrange for parents to put the original copy of the application form and the photocopies of the supporting documents in the drop-in box provided by the school to shorten parents' waiting time. In this situation, parents should note the corresponding arrangements on submitting original copies of the documents to schools for verification.

Parents who are unable to apply in person or authorise a representative may arrange to submit the application form with photocopies of supporting documents to the school by post between September 21 and 25 (the postmark date should not be later than the prescribed deadline). The school will arrange for parents to submit the original copies of the supporting documents to the school for verification on or before November 2, 2020. After verifying the corresponding documents, the school will return the copy of the application form with the school chop to parents for records.

"Only one application should be submitted for each child. If parents are found to have applied to more than one government or aided primary school, their application for a POA discretionary place will be rendered void," the spokesman said.

If parents are applying only for the POA Central Allocation, they may return the completed application forms with originals and copies of the supporting documents during the period from September 21, 2020, to January 29, 2021, to the EDB's School Places Allocation Section at Office 2, 2/F, Manulife Financial Centre, 223 Wai Yip Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon

"When completing the POA application form, parents should fill in the actual residential address of their child. If a false address is given by

parents to secure a P1 place for their child under the POA System, the application will be rendered void and the P1 place allocated will be withdrawn. The public are encouraged to report suspected cases of using a false address for POA applications to the School Places Allocation Section by calling its hotline at 2832 7700," the spokesman said.

The information leaflet for POA 2021 (including the revised arrangements for applicant children who intend to commute daily to schools in Hong Kong to participate in the Central Allocation stage) is now available on the EDB homepage for parents' reference. Other details of POA 2021 and the discretionary places quota of each school will be available from Wednesday on the EDB homepage and the EDB's 24-hour hotline at 2891 0088.

Parents who wish to enrol their children in Direct Subsidy Scheme primary schools, private primary schools or primary schools of the English Schools Foundation should apply directly to these schools as they are not included in the POA System. Parents should note that children who have accepted the offer of P1 places in Direct Subsidy Scheme primary schools will not be allocated P1 places in government or aided primary schools through the POA System.

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## **Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account**

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (August 31) that the total assets of the Exchange Fund amounted to HK\$4,156.1 billion as at July 31, 2020, HK\$39.1 billion lower than that at the end of June 2020. Hong Kong dollar assets decreased by HK\$70.0 billion while foreign currency assets increased by HK\$30.9 billion.

The decline in Hong Kong dollar assets was mainly due to a decrease in Exchange Fund Bills and Notes issued but not yet settled, which was partly offset by the mark-to-market revaluation of Hong Kong equities. The rise in foreign currency assets was mainly due to the income from foreign currency investments, which was partly offset by a decrease in unsettled purchase of securities.

The Currency Board Account shows that the Monetary Base at the end of July 2020 was HK\$1,801.4 billion, increased by HK\$52.5 billion, or 3.0 per cent, from the end of June 2020. The rise was mainly due to the sale of Hong Kong dollars under the Currency Board arrangements.

The amount of Backing Assets increased by HK\$54.0 billion, or 2.8 per

cent, to HK\$2,007.1 billion. The increase was mainly attributable to the purchase of US dollars under the Currency Board arrangements. The backing ratio decreased from 111.68 per cent at the end of June 2020 to 111.42 per cent at the end of July 2020.

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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 August 2020, the scheduled dates for issuing the press releases are as follows:

|                       |                                                                                                |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| August 7<br>(Issued)  | SDDS International Reserves<br>(Hong Kong's Latest Foreign Currency<br>Reserve Assets Figures) |
| August 14<br>(Issued) | SDDS Analytical Accounts of the<br>Central Bank (Analytical Accounts of<br>the Exchange Fund)  |
| August 31             | SDDS Template on International<br>Reserves and Foreign Currency<br>Liquidity                   |
| August 31             | Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet<br>and Currency Board Account                             |

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## [International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity](#)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) released today (August 31) the analytical data on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's foreign currency reserves and foreign currency liquidity as at the end of July 2020 (Annex). These data are published monthly in the Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard.

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