

## Police condemn netizens for spreading fake news

Police are aware that this afternoon (August 5), some netizens spread the fake news that the Commissioner of Police was infected with COVID-19. The Force sternly state that such a rumour is totally groundless and fictitious, and severely condemn the ill-intentioned parties who intend to cause chaos by spreading fake news. Resolute follow-up action will be taken.

---

## Repayment of trade facilities deferred by banking sector for another 90-day Period

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) together with the Banking Sector SME Lending Coordination Mechanism (Mechanism) today (August 5) announced a 90-day repayment deferment for trade facilities under the Pre-approved Principal Payment Holiday Scheme (Scheme). The HKMA has written to all authorised institutions (AIs) requesting them to implement the new arrangement.

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to affect economic activities, the HKMA and the Mechanism have been exploring ways to offer ongoing support to banks' corporate customers, including follow-up arrangements for the Scheme which will end in October. During such discussions, the banking sector pointed out that trade facilities which were granted a 90-day extension in May taking into account their short-term nature will start to fall due beginning in August. Although the global trading environment has improved slightly compared to April when the Scheme was announced, given the still fluctuating pandemic situation around the globe, the Mechanism has agreed to allow corporate customers, who still face cash-flow pressure, to further extend their trade facilities.

The Mechanism has also agreed that eligible corporate customers can apply for a 90-day extension of trade facilities drawn down between May and July. For facilities which are self-liquidating in nature, AIs may require the loan to be settled when the underlying payment has been received by the customer.

As only between 10 per cent to 20 per cent of eligible corporate customers have chosen to take up the Scheme and with banks adopting work-

from-home arrangements in response to the pandemic, banks will not issue individual notifications to customers regarding the deferment arrangement. Interested corporate customers are requested to contact their banks. Banks will handle principal deferment requests on a "pre-approved" basis. Banks may request customers to provide up-to-date operational information to better understand their needs when processing their requests.

The HKMA will continue to engage banks and the commercial sectors through the Mechanism and expects to arrive at a decision regarding follow-up arrangements for the Scheme, which will end in October, as soon as possible.

## Background

The Banking Sector SME Lending Coordination Mechanism was established by the HKMA in October 2019. Participating banks have expanded from the nine banks most active in SME lending at establishment to 11 banks at present. The Hong Kong Association of Banks and the HKMC Insurance Limited are represented in the Mechanism. Since its establishment, the Mechanism has rolled out four rounds of relief measures for corporate customers, including the Scheme, loan tenor extensions, and the conversion of trade financing lines into temporary overdraft facilities. At the end of June 2020, banks had approved over 42 000 applications for loan tenor extension and other forms of relief, involving an aggregate amount of over HK\$500 billion.

104 banks participate in the Scheme, which took effect in May. The Scheme covers 130 000 eligible corporate customers, with over 15 000 of them enrolled into the Scheme.

---

## [TMH announces passing away of COVID-19 patient](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Tuen Mun Hospital (TMH) announced today (August 5) that an 86-year-old male patient confirmed with COVID-19 (case no.: 3153) passed away today.

The patient with chronic disease was admitted to TMH on July 29 due to fever and shortness of breath. His condition continued to deteriorate and he eventually succumbed at 3.16pm today.

The Hospital was saddened about the passing away of the patient and would offer necessary assistance to his family.

Including the above case, 43 COVID-19 confirmed patients have passed away in public hospitals so far.

---

## Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, August 5, 2020 is 105.9 (down 0.3 against yesterday's index).

---

## FHB's Health and Medical Research Fund subsidises second batch of COVID-19 research

The Research Council chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health has approved a further \$59 million in funding today (August 5) to support local universities to conduct research studies on COVID-19 under the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF). Funding of \$111 million for 26 applications in an earlier batch was announced on April 27.

These newly approved studies will cover a wide range of topics including waste water and genomic surveillance to track SARS-CoV-2 transmission, identification of facilitators and barriers to public compliance with infection control measures, zoonotic risk in companion animals, the effect of smoking and pre-exposure of influenza viruses, screening of traditional Chinese medicine for antiviral compounds, rehabilitation management for COVID-19 survivors, and estimation of psychological burden.

These studies address important research areas in effective detection and surveillance of the disease and post-infection follow-up. Water waste surveillance from the local airport, inbound airplanes, sewage treatment facilities, quarantine centres and housing estates can provide a complementary system to monitor virus activity at the population level and to detect a resurgence of COVID-19 at an early stage. Genomic surveillance using whole virus sequence data linked to a geographic information system can help identify the source of infection and untangle silent virus transmission in the community when combined with epidemiological investigations. Programmes to evaluate physical fitness, cognitive status and psychological burden of COVID-19 survivors, healthcare workers and the general public can facilitate delivery of more effective rehabilitation management to improve quality of life and alleviate mental health issues. These studies will last from 12 months to 24 months.

"Together with the first batch of applications approved in April this year, the HMRF has provided total funding of \$170 million in supporting

COVID-19 research. The rapid spread of COVID-19 around the globe has created unprecedented challenges to public healthcare systems. The Food and Health Bureau expects the scientific evidence generated from these studies will help inform control measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and protect the health of the Hong Kong population," the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, said.

Professor Chan expressed her immense gratitude to members of the Research Council and the Assessment Panel for Commissioned Research on COVID-19 who have contributed their precious time, valuable advice and efforts to support the commissioning of these urgent research projects within a very tight timeline.

The HMRF supports studies and projects initiated by individual investigators as well as those commissioned by the Food and Health Bureau to build research capacity, fill knowledge gaps, support policy formulation, address specific issues, assess needs and threats, conduct health promotion, and more. For commissioned studies and projects, based on the research expertise, relevant institutions will be specially invited by the bureau to submit a portfolio of research/projects for consideration.

Details of the approved projects on COVID-19 are available at the website at [rfs.fhb.gov.hk/images/HMRF/COVID\\_19\\_List2.pdf](https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk/images/HMRF/COVID_19_List2.pdf).