

# HKMA and HKAB raise public awareness of phishing attacks

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) and the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) today (July 6) jointly launched a series of promotional messages via the Internet and social media platforms to raise public awareness of phishing attacks.

The HKMA started by uploading two social media posts (see Annex) with the theme "Protect your Personal Digital Keys; Beware of Fraudulent Links!" to inform the public that:

1. Internet banking login credentials, including usernames, login passwords and one-time passwords (OTPs), are as important in the digital world as the keys to their houses are in the physical one, and should be properly safeguarded; and
2. In accordance with the HKMA's supervisory requirements, banks will not send SMS or email messages with embedded hyperlinks directing customers to their websites or mobile applications to carry out transactions, nor will they ask customers to provide sensitive personal information, including login passwords and OTPs, via hyperlinks. So if members of the public receive SMS or email messages with embedded hyperlinks requesting them to input internet banking login credentials, these messages should not originate from banks. The public should think twice before clicking any hyperlinks purportedly sent by banks.

Phishing frauds have increased significantly recently. Based on statistics reported to the HKMA, banks detected 169 cases of suspicious websites, mobile applications, and phishing SMS and emails in the first six months of 2021, up 145 per cent from 69 in the first half of 2020. 111 bank customers were affected by phishing attacks in the first half of 2021, involving an aggregate amount of \$22 million, compared with no such reported cases in 2020.

With the number of phishing attacks continuing to rise, the HKMA will work closely with the banking industry to raise public awareness of phishing scams. The HKMA and the banks will adopt the slogan "Protect your Personal Digital Keys; Beware of Fraudulent Links!" and disseminate this important message to the public through mass media, the Internet, emails, social media platforms and other channels. The banking industry will also strengthen collaboration with the Police in combating phishing frauds.

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## Land Registry releases statistics for first half of 2021

The Land Registry today (July 6) released its statistics for the first half of 2021.

### Land registration

\* The number of sale and purchase agreements for all building units received for registration for the first half of 2021 was 50,336 (+24.1 per cent compared with the second half of 2020 and +53.7 per cent compared with the first half of 2020).

\* The total consideration for these agreements for the first half of 2021 was \$474.44 billion (+32.0 per cent compared with the second half of 2020 and +76.4 per cent compared with the first half of 2020).

\* The number of assignments of building units for the first half of 2021 was 53,498 (-0.9 per cent compared with the second half of 2020 but +52.7 per cent compared with the first half of 2020).

\* The total consideration for these assignments for the first half of 2021 was \$411.56 billion (+0.8 per cent compared with the second half of 2020 and +64.7 per cent compared with the first half of 2020).

### Land search

\* The number of searches of land registers made by the public for the first half of 2021 was 2,874,203 (+8.9 per cent compared with the second half of 2020 and +21.1 per cent compared with the first half of 2020).

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## CFS finds malachite green in goldfish sample

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (July 6) announced that malachite green was found in a goldfish sample. Follow-up is in progress.

A CFS spokesman said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned goldfish sample from a stall at Western Wholesale Food Market for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample

contained malachite green at a level of 1.72 parts per billion."

The spokesman said that the CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and instructed the vendor to stop sale of the affected product. The CFS is also tracing the source and distribution of the product concerned.

Malachite green is a type of industrial dye and has been used for treating infections in fish. Currently, malachite green has been prohibited for use in food-producing animals in many countries. According to the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF), no food sold in Hong Kong is allowed to contain malachite green. Offenders will be prosecuted and will be liable to a fine of \$50,000 and to imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.

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## **Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)**

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (July 6):

Reporter: Any update on the quarantine-free travel plan with Singapore, and are we planning to have that arrangement with any other cities like Macao or Shenzhen? Second question, Regina Ip said yesterday that offering flowers can be a form of venting and the Government needs to understand the deep-rooted issues in Hong Kong. What's your take on that? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Specifically on facilitating travel on a bilateral basis, that is, between Hong Kong and other places, I would say that Singapore is still our priority candidate for consideration. Now that Singapore's situation has stabilised, we certainly will revive the earlier scheme that we have devised. I understand that Edward Yau, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, has been discussing with his Singaporean counterpart recently on when and how we could commence the Air Travel Bubble arrangement with Singapore. But the fact is there are some new factors. One is we heard that Singapore is moving into a new strategy and so we need to understand more about that new strategy and whether it will have any impact on the arrangements that we have devised. Secondly, because both Singapore and Hong Kong are now pressing ahead with vaccination – you'll remember that when the scheme was first announced, it was a unilateral requirement on the part of Hong Kong people travelling to Singapore that they need to be vaccinated – now that Singapore also has a very high vaccination rate, another factor that

we need to consider on top of what we have agreed previously is whether both sides should require vaccination as a condition for participating in the Air Travel Bubble. I would say that we accord a lot of importance to having travel resumed with Singapore because we have a lot of contacts, the two governments are very friendly and the situation is very stable on both sides. This is something that we will be working very closely on.

As far as Macao and Shenzhen, they fall within the whole discussion within China, especially the Mainland and Macao. That has to be taken forward in the overall scheme that I am putting forward to the Central Government, having regard to, one is the latest pandemic situation in Hong Kong; second is the enhanced capacity of the Hong Kong SAR Government to tackle any outbreak, that we have proven that we do have this capability; and third is the continued problem of no travel on the local business. All these will be presented to the Central People's Government but at the moment we don't have a timetable. I hope you will appreciate that there are new variants emerging almost on a regular basis. Every government has to be very cautious in opening up their borders for other people to come in.

Whether a certain act in relation to a violent offence is itself a criminal offence has to be determined in the context of the law, and which piece of legislation we are using to judge that sort of behaviour or act. It has also to rely on the evidence and whether it has a motive to do a certain thing, for example, to continue to incite people to do that sort of violent acts or not. At the end of the day, it is based on the law, the evidence, and the independent prosecution decision to decide whether a certain act is an offence. But other than judging whether a certain act or behaviour commits a crime, there are things which are not just about crime. There are things about morals. If you look at the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, individual rights and freedoms could be restrained by law under certain circumstances, and the three sets of circumstances are national security, public health and morals. One has to ask yourself whether it fulfils that moral standard for somebody to mourn a person who deliberately attacked and wanted to kill a policeman on duty. I think that's very obvious. You don't need a lot of public education to come to a view. And if that is immoral, then certainly I would want to see Hong Kong people refraining from conducting that sort of immoral acts, which might intentionally or unintentionally have the undesirable impact of inciting more people to do that sort of acts or behaviours, or sending a very wrong message to the community at large that it is okay to attack a policeman, it is okay to behave in such an immoral way.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

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## CHP investigates one additional confirmed case of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, July 6, the CHP was investigating one additional confirmed case of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 945 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 944 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported case is an imported case.

Meanwhile, the CHP is investigating an overseas case with suspected re-positive testing result. The case involves a 25-year-old female patient, who arrived in Hong Kong in March this year and is a staff member of the US Consulate General in Hong Kong. Her specimen collected on July 4 tested positive for COVID-19 and she remains asymptomatic. After admission to hospital, the patient's test result was negative while her antibody against SARS-CoV-2 tested positive. The test result also revealed that the specimen did not carry the N501Y or L452R mutant strain. Initial investigations of the CHP revealed that the patient had been diagnosed of COVID-19 in the United States in January this year. After examining the epidemiological, clinical and laboratory findings, this case is compatible with a re-positive case. The CHP is following up the case with the US health authority. Epidemiological investigation is ongoing.

A total of 54 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (June 22 to July 5), including three import-related cases.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)).

Meanwhile, the CHP reminded those who had visited specified venues under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive COVID-19 nucleic acid testing according to compulsory testing notices (CTNs). The Regulation also requires all household members of close contacts of confirmed cases to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test within a specified period according to CTNs published in the Gazette. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop, and undergo testing as soon as possible.

The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website ([www.covidvaccine.gov.hk](http://www.covidvaccine.gov.hk)).

The CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having

social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. The CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases including mutant strains reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes. Moreover, vaccination may help keep people from getting seriously ill even if they do get COVID-19, and, generally speaking, vaccines can also reduce the chance of transmission by those who have been vaccinated. People vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine can also generate herd immunity. Members of the public are urged to get vaccinated as soon as possible and book their vaccination appointments at the website ([booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk/forms/index.jsp](https://booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk/forms/index.jsp)).

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps). After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link [wa.me/85296171823?text=hi](https://wa.me/85296171823?text=hi), they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;

- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.