

CHP investigates four additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, May 31, the CHP was investigating four additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 842 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 841 confirmed cases and one probable case).

All of the newly reported cases are imported cases.

A total of 13 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (May 17 to 30) and all of them are imported cases.

One of the newly reported cases (case number: 11842) involves a 40-year-old male patient who was a travel companion of imported case 11693 announced by the CHP on April 19. Upon arriving in Hong Kong from India on April 18, he underwent quarantine at Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre as a close contact of case 11693 from April 18 to May 9. After completion of quarantine, he stayed at his residence at Shing Fu House, Kwai Shing East Estate, Kwai Chung. The patient is unemployed. He underwent testing at a community testing centre on May 13 and the result was negative. He was admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital on May 29 for his underlying illness and tested indeterminate for COVID-19 on admission. Subsequently, the patient tested positive for immunoglobulin G (IgG). The CHP is conducting epidemiological investigations and contact tracing. As a prudent measure, Shing Fu House where the patient had resided was included in the Compulsory Testing Notice (CTN) yesterday (May 30). Relevant persons are required to undergo testing by June 2, 2021.

In addition, the CHP is investigating a preliminary positive case involving a 35-year-old male patient who resided at Wai Mei House, Yau Mei Court, Yau Tong. The patient developed sore throat, cough and runny nose on May 28 and attended a private medical practitioner on May 29. His deep throat saliva sample collected on May 30 tested positive. He is a police officer working at Wan Chai Police District Headquarters and Wan Chai Police Division at 1 Arsenal Street, Wan Chai. The CHP is conducting epidemiological investigations and contact tracing. The above two places will be included in the CTN today. Relevant persons are required to undergo testing by June 2, 2021.

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).

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 the 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).

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).

"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) 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, 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.

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Vaccination leave for government employees after COVID-19 vaccination

To further encourage government employees to receive COVID-19 vaccination as early as possible, government employees, from tomorrow (June 1) until August 31, will be entitled to a day of vaccination leave for each vaccination dose received so that they can have sufficient time to recuperate after getting vaccinated.

All government employees including civil servants, non-civil service contract staff and post-retirement service contract staff will benefit from the authorised absence arrangement, provided that the vaccination is taken on or before August 31, 2021.

"As the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government has earlier implemented various measures to drive vaccination at full throttle, such as allowing staff to receive vaccination during duty hours and favourably handling applications for sick leave or vacation leave when staff experience side effects arising from vaccination, and adopting a vaccination in lieu of regular testing approach for front-line employees. While introducing the vaccination leave arrangement, we also appeal to employers of other enterprises to join the 'Early Vaccination for All' campaign by providing facilitation, where practicable, to their staff to receive vaccination, such as introducing vaccination leave arrangements, so that we can work together to build a protective barrier in Hong Kong as soon as possible through mass vaccination at this critical juncture," a spokesman for the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) said.

Government employees who were vaccinated on or before May 31 this year, in recognition and appreciation of their support for the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, will also be allowed to apply for one day of authorised absence that may be taken by March 31, 2022, for each dose already received.

"The civil service plays an important role in the anti-epidemic effort. Whether in discharging their daily duties or in safeguarding the health of fellow colleagues or the people being served, it is the obligation of all civil servants to proactively receive vaccination unless there are medical reasons," the spokesman said.

The CSB has issued a guideline on the above arrangements to Heads of Departments. All departments will announce to their staff at the soonest opportunity details of the application procedures and relevant arrangements.

Meanwhile, starting from today, the vaccination in lieu of regular testing approach is being implemented for front-line government employees to safeguard their health. Front-line employees who have received the first dose of a vaccine and provided their vaccination record could be exempted from regular testing. Those who are not vaccinated are required to undergo COVID-19 testing using combined nasal and throat swabs on a biweekly basis.

Financial results for the month ended April 30, 2021

The Government announced today (May 31) its financial results for April 2021, the first month of the current financial year.

Expenditure for the first month amounted to HK\$48.6 billion and revenue HK\$38 billion, resulting in a deficit of HK\$10.6 billion.

A Government spokesperson said that the deficit in April 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.

The fiscal reserves stood at HK\$917.2 billion as at April 30, 2021.

Detailed figures are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1. CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT (Note 1)

	Month ended April 30, 2021 HK\$ million
Revenue	38,015.0
Expenditure	(48,616.9)
Deficit	(10,601.9)

Financing	
Domestic	
Banking Sector (Note 2)	10,076.6
Non-Banking Sector	525.3
External	–
Total	10,601.9

Government Debts as at April 30, 2021 (Note 3)

HK\$27,174 million

Debts Guaranteed by Government as at April 30, 2021 (Note 4)

HK\$85,565.9 million

TABLE 2. FISCAL RESERVES

	Month ended April 30, 2021 HK\$ million
Fiscal Reserves at start of period	927,776.2
Consolidated Deficit	(10,601.9)
Fiscal Reserves at end of period (Note 5)	917,174.3

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 April 30, 2021, was HK\$156,821 million.

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

3. These were the Green Bonds of US\$3,500 million (equivalent to HK\$27,174 million as at April 30, 2021) including US\$1,000 million and US\$2,500 million issued under the Government Green Bond Programme in May 2019 and February 2021 respectively, which were denominated in US dollars with maturity from May 2024 to February 2051. They do not include the outstanding bonds with nominal value of HK\$123,143 million and alternative bonds with nominal value of US\$1,000 million (equivalent to HK\$7,764 million as at April 30, 2021) 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\$20,843 million, which may be redeemed before maturity upon request from bond holders), bonds with nominal value of HK\$17,428 million will mature within the period from May 2021 to April 2022 and the rest within the period from May 2022 to March 2036.

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\$219,691 million being the balance of the Land Fund held in the name of "Future Fund", for long-term investments initially up to December 31, 2025. The Future Fund also includes HK\$4,800 million, being one-third of the actual surplus in 2015-16 as top-up.

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 (May 31) that the total assets of the Exchange Fund amounted to HK\$4,538.4 billion as at April 30, 2021, HK\$2.7 billion higher than that at the end of March 2021. Hong Kong dollar assets increased by HK\$3.0 billion while foreign currency assets decreased by HK\$0.3 billion.

The rise in Hong Kong dollar assets was mainly due to the mark-to-market revaluation on Hong Kong equities. The decline in foreign currency assets was mainly due to a decrease in the month-end balances of unsettled purchase of securities and reduction in Fiscal Reserves placements, which were partly offset by the mark-to-market revaluation on foreign currency investments.

The Currency Board Account shows that the Monetary Base at the end of April 2021 was HK\$2,111.7 billion, increased by HK\$3.8 billion, or 0.2 per cent, from the end of March 2021. The rise was mainly due to an increase in the outstanding amount of Certificates of Indebtedness.

The amount of Backing Assets increased by HK\$2.7 billion, or 0.1 per cent, to HK\$2,322.7 billion. The increase was mainly attributable to the issuance of Certificates of Indebtedness, which was partly offset by the translation effect of foreign currency investments into Hong Kong dollar. The backing ratio decreased from 110.06 per cent at the end of March 2021 to 109.99 per cent at the end of April 2021.

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 2021, the scheduled dates for issuing the press releases are as follows:

May 7 (Issued)	SDDS International Reserves (Hong Kong's Latest Foreign Currency Reserve Assets Figures)
May 14 (Issued)	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