

US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender notice

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

US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender notice:

Tender date	: March 3, 2021 (Wednesday)
Tender submission time	: 9am to noon
Settlement date	: March 4, 2021 (Thursday)
Repayment date	: March 11, 2021 (Thursday)
Tenor	: Seven Days
Amount on offer	: US\$10,000 Million

Note: Licensed Banks interested in participating in the tender for the first time are encouraged to provide US dollar settlement instructions by email (settlementsection@hkma.gov.hk) to the Hong Kong Monetary Authority's Settlement Team in advance, preferably two days prior to the tender. Required information includes name of corresponding bank, name of final beneficiary (must be the Licensed Bank participating in the tender), and account or CHIPS number of a US dollar bank account to be settled in the US. Such information needs to be provided once only, unless there is further change.

Appointment of self-recommended young members to Public Libraries Advisory Committee

The Government announced today (March 1) the appointment of two new young members to the Public Libraries Advisory Committee (PLAC) through the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth from today until April 30, 2022, i.e. the end date of the current term of existing members.

Chaired by Mr Sunny Lee Wai-kwong, the PLAC advises the Government on the development of public libraries in Hong Kong, including the formulation of strategies and measures for the development of library facilities and services; the role, functions and management of the Hong Kong Central Library; and the encouragement of community support and partnership with different sectors in promoting reading, lifelong learning and literary arts.

The membership list of the PLAC is as follows:

Chairman

Mr Sunny Lee Wai-kwong

Vice-chairperson

Ms Shirley Marie Therese Loo

Members

Mr Charles Chan Kin-hung

Ms Diana Chan Lai-ha

Ms Chan Yuk-yin

Mr Vincent Cheng Wing-shun

Ms Spring Cheung Sze-wing

Mr Felix Chow Bok-hin

Mr Chow Tsz-lit

Mr Choy Sai-hung

Ms Linda Choy Siu-min

Professor Chui Yat-hung

Ms Ho Ka-man* (appointed through the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth)

Ms Ho Lan-sang

Mr Hung Kam-in

Ms Karen Ip Kam-lin

Mr Brian Kwok Sze-hang

Ms Tandy Lam Pui-tung* (appointed through the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth)

Ms Irisa Lam Yan-tung

Representative of the Education Bureau

Representative of the Government Records Service

Representative of the Home Affairs Bureau

Representative of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

* Newly appointed Members

Extension of visa-free period for HKSAR passport holders to Uzbekistan

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has received notification from the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Uzbekistan) that the period of visa-free entry for HKSAR passport holders to Uzbekistan has been extended from up to seven days to 10 days with immediate effect. HKSAR passport holders may visit Uzbekistan visa-free for a stay of up to 10 days upon arrival with an air ticket to third countries or a return

air ticket.

An Immigration Department spokesman said, "Uzbekistan is along the Belt and Road. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, this visa-free arrangement will bring greater travel convenience to Hong Kong travellers after the epidemic and strengthen the tourism, cultural and economic ties between the two places."

As of today, 167 countries and territories have granted visa-free access or visa-on-arrival to HKSAR passport holders. Please visit the following website for details:

www.immd.gov.hk/eng/service/travel_document/visa_free_access.html

or scan the QR code in the attachment.

As the situation of COVID-19 around the world is evolving rapidly, the Red Outbound Travel Alert issued by the Government of the HKSAR on March 17, 2020, is currently in force for all overseas countries/territories. Members of the public are strongly urged to avoid any non-essential travel outside Hong Kong. Currently, most countries/territories have also implemented different entry requirements and preventive measures against the pandemic. For details, please refer to the announcements of local governments.

CHP investigates 14 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, March 1, the CHP was investigating 14 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 020 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 019 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, three are imported cases, five are local cases with unknown sources while the remaining six cases are epidemiologically linked with a local case.

The first case with unknown sources involves a 23-year-old man (case number: 11009) who developed sore throat, cough and headache on February 26. He attended Accident and Emergency Department of a public hospital on February 27 and tested positive. He is a cashier and he last went to work on February 26.

The second case with unknown sources involves a 54-year-old woman (case number: 11012) who developed cough and headache on February 23. She attended a private practitioner on February 24 and submitted a deep throat saliva

sample to a General Out-patient Clinic on the next day and was tested positive. The patient is a secretary and she last went to work on February 23.

The third case with unknown sources involves a 30-year-old man (case number: 11014) who developed headache, cough and loss of taste on February 23. He went to a community testing centre for testing on February 24 and tested positive. He is a part-time teacher. He did not go to work during the incubation period.

The fourth case with unknown sources involves a 41-year-old man (case number: 11016) who developed sore throat and cough on February 22. He attended a General Out-patient Clinic on February 24 and tested positive. He is a security guard and he last went to work on February 28.

The fifth case with unknown sources involves a 36-year-old man (case number: 11019) who developed loss of smell on February 27. He went to a community testing centre for testing on February 27 and tested positive. He is a camera repair technician and he last went to work on February 26.

A total of 226 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (February 15 to 28), including 189 local cases of which 66 are from unknown sources.

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 compulsory testing notice. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop.

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 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.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. 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;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- 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.

LegCo Secretariat releases Research Brief on “Socioeconomic implications of home ownership for Hong Kong”

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The Legislative Council Secretariat (the Secretariat) today (March 1) released a Research Brief on "Socioeconomic implications of home ownership for Hong Kong".

Home ownership has visible social benefits such as nurturing a sense of belonging to community and fostering socio-political stability. Yet, home ownership ratio in Hong Kong fell to a 20-year low of 49.8 per cent in 2019, after a nearly four-fold upsurge in flat prices in 15 years. In spite of a modest rebound to 51.2 per cent in late 2020, it is still far below the 60 per cent mark seen in affluent economies.

The share of younger persons aged below 35 heading home-owning families has plunged from 22.1 per cent in 1997 to 7.6 per cent in 2019, dampened by severe land shortage and worsening affordability. By contrast, the respective proportion for older heads aged 60 and above rose to 41 per cent in 2019, doubled the corresponding figure of 21 per cent in 1997. However, the latest Poverty Report shows that 112 000 of the asset-owning elderly families lived below the poverty line in 2019, equivalent to one-fifth of older household heads living in owner-occupied flats. While the Government sees this as a limitation of the "analytical framework of the poverty line", others take this as inadequate retirement protection.

Meanwhile, two-thirds of local home owners had fully repaid the mortgage loans in 2016 and they can afford acquiring additional flats either as second homes for their children or for investment purpose. This may have implications for wealth distribution across generations.

The landscape of accommodation tenure distribution of households has also changed significantly. Renters in either public or private housing accounted for the largest growth in households by tenure of accommodation during 2009-2019, contrasted against the period of 1997-2008 when owner-occupiers registered the largest corresponding growth. Net changes in the ownership titles of residential flats during 2009-2019 were mostly acquired by investors or landlords for leasing to tenants, not for owner-occupation. While the average tenant households may also save hard to buy flats, they could easily be priced out from the market with just working income. This has knock-on implications for social mobility.

Looking forward, it is still challenging to raise the local home ownership ratio in the medium to the longer term. Annual average completions

of private housing is targeted at only 12 900 units in the next decade, fewer than the actual outturn of 13 500 units during 2010-2019. Overall housing supply for sale is still considered to be too few, compared to the strong housing demand.

The subject of housing and land supply fall within the policy areas of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Housing and the LegCo Panel on Development.

The Research Brief is prepared by the Secretariat's Research Office of the Information Services Division with a view to enhancing information support for Members. It is a concise summary aiming at explaining a subject matter which may be of interest to Members and the general public.

The Research Brief is now available on the LegCo Website at www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/2021rb02-socioeconomic-implications-of-home-ownership-for-Hong-Kong-20210301-e.pdf.