

# US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender result

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

US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender result:

Tender date	:	February 3, 2021 (Wednesday)
Settlement date	:	February 4, 2021 (Thursday)
Repayment date	:	February 11, 2021 (Thursday)
Tenor	:	7 Days
Amount applied	:	Nil
Amount allotted	:	Nil
Lowest interest rate accepted	:	Nil
Highest interest rate accepted	:	Nil

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## Appointment of Law Officer (International Law) (with photo)

The Department of Justice (DoJ) announced today (February 3) the appointment of Principal Government Counsel Ms Linda Lam Mei-sau as Law Officer (International Law), with effect from February 3.

Welcoming the appointment, the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, said that with her in-depth legal knowledge, high professional competence and proven leadership skills, Ms Lam is well qualified to take forward the important work of the DoJ's International Law Division.

"Ms Lam is a lawyer of outstanding ability and integrity. I have every confidence that she will ably lead the International Law Division to meet the challenges ahead and will act in the best interest of Hong Kong," Ms Cheng said.

Ms Cheng again expressed her gratitude to Mr Paul Tsang Keung, who

completed his tenure as Law Officer (International Law) in July 2020, for his great and valuable contribution during his term of service.

Ranked at Law Officer (DL6) level, the post of Law Officer (International Law) is responsible for, amongst others, advising on the international law aspects of a wide range of complex issues of government policy and overseeing the implementation of bilateral and multilateral agreements, particularly on the surrender of fugitive offenders and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.

Brief biographical notes on Ms Lam are set out below:

Ms Linda Lam Mei-sau was called to the Bar in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong in 1991 and was admitted as a solicitor in Singapore in 1993. She was appointed as Crown Counsel in 1994 and promoted to Senior Crown Counsel in 1995, Deputy Principal Government Counsel in 2008, and Principal Government Counsel in 2018. Ms Lam has served in different divisions of the department for 26 years and has been a Deputy Law Officer in the International Law Division between 2017 and 2020.



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## **EPD convictions in December**

Fifty-nine convictions were recorded in December 2020 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Six of the convictions were under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, six were under the Noise Control Ordinance, 33 were under the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation, one was under the Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance, 11 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance and two were under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance.

A company was fined \$50,000, which was the heaviest fine in December, for failing to deliver chemical waste to a reception point or dispose of the waste at a licensed disposal site.

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## **New call-up programme for Hong Kong residents born in 1962 to 1963, 1973 to 1976, 2005 to 2007 and 2012 to 2018 to apply for new smart identity cards**

The Immigration Department (ImmD) announced today (February 3) that the Secretary for Security has made an Amendment Order to revise the call-up programme for persons born in 1962 to 1963 to apply for new smart Hong Kong identity cards (HKICs), and announce the call-up programme for persons born in 1973 to 1976, 2005 to 2007 and 2012 to 2018. The details are as follows:

Eligible persons	Application period
Holders of the old form of smart HKIC born in 1962 or 1963	July 28, 2020 – February 20, 2021 (Revised)
Holders of the old form of smart HKIC born in 1973, 1974, 1975 or 1976	February 22 – July 9, 2021
Holders of the old form of smart HKIC born in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 or 2018	May 3 – September 18, 2021

The Amendment Order will be tabled at the Legislative Council on February 24, 2021, for negative vetting.

To reduce the risk of the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as a result of the gathering of crowds, the ImmD again suspended the replacement of HKICs at nine Smart Identity Card Replacement Centres (SIDCCs) under the Territory-wide Identity Card Replacement Exercise from December 2, 2020, to January 31, 2021. The services of all SIDCCs have been resumed since February 1, 2021. Due to the service suspension of the SIDCCs, some persons born in 1962 or 1963 may have been unable to apply for new HKICs within the

application period previously announced.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Having regard to the epidemic situation and the progress of the Replacement Exercise, the Amendment Order extends the period for persons born in 1962 or 1963 to apply for new HKICs and announces the call-up programme for persons born in 1973 to 1976, 2005 to 2007 and 2012 to 2018. The call-up programme for persons born in 1970 to 1972 previously announced remains unchanged, and the application period will last until April 30, 2021."

To avoid the gathering of crowds, the ImmD appeals to applicants who have not previously made appointment bookings to do so via the Internet ([www.gov.hk/newicbooking](http://www.gov.hk/newicbooking)), the ImmD mobile application or the 24-hour telephone booking hotline 2121 1234. Applicants can also pre-fill the application form when making appointment bookings through the Internet or the mobile application to save waiting time.

For details of the Replacement Exercise, please visit the website [www.smartid.gov.hk](http://www.smartid.gov.hk) or call the ImmD's enquiry hotline at 2824 6111.

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## LCQ16: Specimen collection methods for virus testing

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (February 3):

Question:

Currently, one of the specimen collection methods for Coronavirus Disease 2019 testing is that the persons to be tested (subject persons) collect by themselves specimens of their deep-throat saliva (DTS). Some experts have pointed out that this specimen collection method has weaknesses, including that (i) the quality of the saliva specimens hinges on a number of factors (e.g. whether the subject persons have grasped the skill for spitting out saliva from their throats, and whether they have eaten/drunk anything or brushed their teeth or rinsed their mouths within two hours prior to the collection of DTS specimens), and (ii) the subject persons may have submitted fake specimens (as revealed earlier on by a member of an expert advisory panel that, among the DTS specimens submitted by members of high-risk groups for testing last year, about 3 per cent of the specimens were suspected to be tap water only as they did not contain any human DNA). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of suspected fake specimens received by the authorities so

far, with a breakdown by the category of testing groups (including targeted groups and groups subject to compulsory testing) that have submitted the specimens concerned;

(2) whether those persons who have submitted fake specimens will be legally liable; if so, of the details (including the maximum penalty), and whether any prosecutions have been instituted so far; if so, of the government departments responsible for such work and the number of prosecutions instituted; if no prosecution has been instituted, the reasons for that; and

(3) of the measures in place to prevent persons who are subject to compulsory testing and members of high-risk groups from submitting fake specimens; as there are weaknesses in the method for collecting DTS specimens, whether the authorities will switch to use other methods (e.g. entrusting professionals to collect combined throat and nasal swabs) to collect specimens from these types of persons; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Virus testing is an integral part of our anti-epidemic strategies. The Government's existing strategy aims to implement and expand the coverage of various testing measures, including requiring specified persons of high risk to undergo compulsory testing on a mandatory basis, arranging targeted groups to undergo testing on an obligatory basis, and encouraging more members of the public to undergo testing on a voluntary basis.

Regarding the method of specimen collection, the Government has been closely monitoring the latest developments of COVID-19 testing and making reference to scientific research, practical experience and expert opinions from various places and Hong Kong in selecting the appropriate specimen collection method for different testing schemes.

Deep throat saliva (DTS), nasopharyngeal swab (NPS) and combined nasal and throat swab (CNTS) are the most common specimen types used in Hong Kong for specimen collection. The three methods are generally on par in terms of accuracy and sensitivity, and have so far been effective in identifying COVID-19 cases. At present, the Government would select different specimen collection methods having regard to the actual situation, including factors such as testing purpose, site environment and convenience to the public, etc.

My reply to the questions raised by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin is as follows:

(1) and (3) To ensure specimen quality, currently, the majority of specimen collection for the purpose of compulsory testing under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) (the Regulation) has adopted professional swab sampling of CNTS, including:

(i) Setting up mobile specimen collection stations with professional swab

sampling (CNTS) for virus testing near residential buildings of persons subject to compulsory testing; and

(ii) Arranging professional swab sampling (CNTS) for compulsory testing for targeted groups such as staff of residential care homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities, as well as taxi drivers.

To further prevent importation of cases, the temporary specimen collection centre set up at the Hong Kong International Airport has already adopted the specimen collection method of professional swab sampling (CNTS) for people arriving Hong Kong. As for people arriving Hong Kong from places outside China who are subject to compulsory quarantine, the sampling and testing required at designated quarantine hotels (including two tests on the 12th and 19th or 20th day of arrival in Hong Kong) has also adopted professional swab sampling (CNTS).

For January 2021 (as of January 25), a total of about 360 000 tests have been carried out through the above-mentioned compulsory testing, with professional swab sampling (CNTS) accounting for close to 85 per cent of the specimens tested. During the same period, the community testing centres' fee-paying testing service and free tests provided to targeted groups, as well as other services provided at other mobile specimen collection stations, had provided professional swabbing service (CNTS) to about 300 000 persons, accounting for close to 60 per cent of the 1 million tests conducted in Hong Kong during that period.

Other community testing arrangement for surveillance purpose under "targeted testing" and "voluntary testing" for general public and targeted groups are conducted on voluntary basis. The Government would adopt different sampling methods, including distribution of DTS specimen bottles, having regard to the venue and other factors. In fact, through the 188 distribution points (including 47 designated general outpatient clinics under the Hospital Authority, 121 post offices or vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations) and 83 collection points for citizens to obtain free testing, it is indeed more convenient for citizens who feel that they are at a higher risk of infection or are mildly unwell to submit DTS samples. It would facilitate voluntary testing as recommended by overseas and local experts. From November 15 last year to January 25 this year, we have distributed close to 540 000 specimen bottles through these distribution points and collected about 480 000 samples for testing. Among them, 378 positive cases were detected (0.08 per cent). If the service providers for government testing services find that the DTS samples received for testing do not contain any human DNA, they will not provide any test results to those who submitted the DTS specimen.

(2) According to the compulsory testing notices issued under section 10 of the Regulation, specified person may be required to submit specimen in the way specified in the notice in undergoing a polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid test for COVID-19. If the person concerned fails to follow the specified way in submitting a specimen, the person cannot be deemed to have performed the relevant test in compliance with the compulsory testing notice. According to section 13 of the Regulation, such person, without lawful

authority or reasonable excuse, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine at level 3. Prescribed officers may also issue compulsory testing order to that person, requiring the person to undergo the specified test.