

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	: May 20, 2020 (Wednesday)
Settlement date	: May 21, 2020 (Thursday)
Repayment date	: May 28, 2020 (Thursday)
Tenor	: 7 days
Amount applied	: US\$200 million
Amount allotted	: US\$200 million
Lowest interest rate accepted	: 0.35 per cent
Highest interest rate accepted	: 0.35 per cent

Amendments to Dangerous Drugs Ordinance and Control of Chemicals Ordinance to be gazetted on May 22

A spokesperson for the Security Bureau said today (May 20) that the Government will publish the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 2020 (DDO Order) and the Control of Chemicals Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 2) Order 2020 (CCO Order) in the Gazette this Friday (May 22).

The two Orders will respectively add methoxyacetylfentanyl, FUB-AMB, ADB-FUBINACA, CUMYL-4CN-BINACA and ADB-CHMINACA to the First Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (DDO) (Cap. 134), and APAA, PMK glycidate and PMK glycidic acid to Schedule 2 to the Control of Chemicals Ordinance (CCO) (Cap. 145).

The spokesperson said, "The amendments aim to deter the trafficking and abuse of these dangerous drugs and substances. This will help to fortify Hong Kong's defence in the fight against drugs."

The spokesperson added, "Methoxyacetylfentanyl is a synthetic analogue of fentanyl. Similar to other opioids, overdose of methoxyacetylfentanyl can lead to respiratory arrest and death. FUB-AMB, ADB-FUBINACA, CUMYL-4CN-BINACA are potent synthetic cannabinoids which affect the central nervous system, and can result in severe reactions including death. ADB-CHMINACA is one of the most potent synthetic cannabinoids studied to date, of which the efficacy and potency are substantially greater than those of tetrahydrocannabinol. Signs and symptoms resulting from the abuse of ADB-CHMINACA include tachycardia, unresponsiveness, agitation, combativeness, seizures, hyperemesis, slurred speech, delirium and sudden death.

"The DDO Order will bring the above five substances into the same strict control as other dangerous drugs under the DDO. Those prosecuted of trafficking and illicit manufacture of these substances will be liable to a maximum penalty of a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment. Possession and consumption of the substances in contravention of the DDO will also constitute criminal offences.

"Meanwhile, APAA is an immediate precursor of 1-phenyl-2-propanone, a substance used in the illicit manufacture of amphetamine and methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice"), which are dangerous drugs controlled under the DDO. PMK glycidate and PMK glycidic acid are both precursors of 3,4-methylenedioxy-phenyl-2-propanone, a substance used in the illicit manufacture of MDMA, also a dangerous drug controlled under the DDO, and related substances. Both 1-phenyl-2-propanone and 3,4-methylenedioxy-phenyl-2-propanone are already controlled precursor chemicals included in Schedule 2 to the CCO. Taking into consideration the harms that the dangerous drugs manufactured from APAA, PMK glycidate and PMK glycidic acid may cause to abusers, we propose to place the three substances under legislative control.

"The CCO Order will bring APAA, PMK glycidate and PMK glycidic acid under the control of the CCO. It will be an offence to possess, manufacture, transport or distribute these substances for the unlawful production of dangerous drugs, or import or export these substances not under and in accordance with a licence issued by the Customs and Excise Department. The maximum penalty will be a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for 15 years."

The spokesperson said that the Government had consulted the Action Committee Against Narcotics and it supported the proposed amendments. The Government had also sought the views of the Panel on Security of the Legislative Council and the relevant trades and stakeholders. There was no adverse comment.

The two Orders will be tabled at the Legislative Council on May 27, 2020, and are expected to become effective on July 24, 2020.

LCQ13: Concentration of ozone in air

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 20):

Question:

For several consecutive days in April this year, the Air Quality Health Indexes recorded by the general and roadside air quality monitoring stations in various districts reached 8 or above (i.e. "Very High" or "Serious" health risk), with the 1-hour concentrations of ozone (O₃) in some districts even exceeding 200µg/m³. Under the prevailing Air Quality Objectives (AQOs), the 8-hour average concentration limit of O₃ in air is 160µg/m³, which is less stringent than that of 100µg/m³ as recommended by the World Health Organization. However, in the latest review of AQOs, the Government did not propose to tighten the AQO for O₃ on the grounds that the regional background O₃ level was relatively high and the various emission reduction measures would further reduce the emission of nitric oxide in the urban areas, thereby reducing the consumption of O₃ in the urban areas. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the measures in place at the present stage to lower the background O₃ level in Hong Kong, and reduce the O₃ produced locally and O₃ which originated from the Mainland; the effectiveness of such measures; and

(2) as the authorities indicated at the end of 2019 that the Guangdong and Hong Kong sides had jointly launched in 2018 the Study on Post-2020 Regional Air Pollutant Emission Reduction Targets and Concentration Levels, of the latest progress of the Study; whether it will formulate emission reduction targets for O₃ precursors; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(1) The overall air quality in Hong Kong has shown a discernible improvement in recent years. According to the data recorded at the air quality monitoring stations of the Environmental Protection Department, the annual average concentrations of respirable suspended particles (PM₁₀), fine suspended particles (PM_{2.5}), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) in the ambient air and at roadside have dropped by about 30 per cent to 60 per cent between 2013 and 2019 (relevant data is set out in Annex 1). The above monitoring results reflect the effectiveness of the emission reduction measures implemented by the Government in recent years. However, the ozone concentration in the ambient air is still on a rise.

Ozone is a complicated air pollution issue as well as a regional issue. It is not directly emitted from pollution sources but formed by the

photochemical reaction between nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the presence of sunlight.

As Tap Mun air quality monitoring station is distant from the local emission sources, its monitoring results can reflect the regional background air pollution level. Between 2013 and 2019, the annual average concentration of ozone recorded at Tap Mun station increased from 75µg/m³ in 2013 to 80µg/m³ in 2019, with a rise of 7 per cent (relevant data is set out in Annex 2). During the same period, the average annual ozone concentrations recorded at the general and roadside monitoring stations increased respectively from 43µg/m³ and 14µg/m³ in 2013 to 60µg/m³ and 32µg/m³ in 2019, with a rise of 40 per cent and 129 per cent respectively.

Ozone can be scavenged by some pollutants (such as nitric oxide (NO)) in the ambient air via chemical reactions. The main reason for the higher rise of ozone concentrations in Hong Kong than the background level is attributed to the reduction in local NO_x emissions from vehicles, resulting in less NO to react with and titrate ozone and hence more ozone remaining in the atmosphere and a larger increase in ozone concentrations measured. Nevertheless, since NO_x and VOCs are ozone precursors, reducing NO_x emissions will not only reduce the local NO₂ levels but also help reduce the overall ozone levels and its exceedances in the region and Hong Kong in the long run.

The Environment Bureau has implemented a wide range of control measures focusing on local NO_x and VOCs emission sources in recent years, including phasing out some 80 000 pre-Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles; strengthening the control of emissions of liquefied petroleum gas and petrol vehicles; tightening the vehicle emission standards and progressively tightening the emission caps of power plants, etc. Meanwhile, Guangdong and Hong Kong have been strengthening collaboration, including launching a number of emission reduction plans covering power plants, vehicles, vessels and industries under the framework of the Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Management Plan, to deal with regional air pollution. These measures to reduce NO_x and VOCs emissions will help improve the ozone problem in the region in the long run.

In addition to the above policies being implemented, the SAR Government will continue to launch a number of new measures in the short to medium term to further reduce the local NO_x and VOC emissions, including reducing vehicle emissions, promoting the use of electric vehicles and tightening the control of emissions from power plants (as detailed in Annex 3).

(2) In order to continuously improve the regional air quality, the Hong Kong and Guangdong Governments established a science team in 2018 to jointly conduct a study on post-2020 regional air pollutant emission reduction targets and concentration levels. The two Governments held a meeting every six months to discuss the compilation of emission inventories of air pollutants, formulate practical air quality improvement measures beyond 2020 for the two places, and conduct air quality modelling to predict the achievable air quality levels in the region.

The study will formulate the emission reduction targets for five major air pollutants up to 2030, including SO₂, NO_x, PM₁₀, PM_{2.5} and VOCs. Among

these pollutants, NO_x and VOCs are ozone precursors, hence reducing their emissions will help alleviate the ozone pollution problem. The two Governments are now taking forward the work in accordance with the timetable of the study agreed by both parties. The results of the study are expected to be announced in 2022.

In addition, the Governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will launch a three-year joint study from 2020 to 2023 on Characterization of photochemical ozone formation, regional and super-regional transportation in the Greater Bay Area, in order to better apprehend the origins of ozone precursors, the formation mechanism of ozone and characteristics of its regional and super-regional transportation in the Greater Bay Area. The Hong Kong and Guangdong Governments are also adding the real-time VOCs monitoring in the regional air quality monitoring network by stages. These studies and enhanced monitoring will strengthen the understanding of the formation mechanism and sources of ozone in the region, and help further devise policies to tackle ozone pollution.

CSSA caseload for April 2020

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in April showed a rise of 4 819 cases, representing an increase of 2.2 per cent compared with that of March, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics released by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) today (May 20).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of April stood at 227 510 (see attached table), with a total of 311 404 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, old age cases remained steady at 135 219 cases.

Unemployment cases rose by 24 per cent to 18 165 cases. Single parent cases increased by 2.4 per cent to 24 612 cases. Low-earnings cases increased by 2.2 per cent to 3 039 cases. Ill-health cases edged up by 1.8 per cent to 25 004 cases while permanent disability cases registered a slight increase of 0.5 per cent to 17 117 cases.

CHP announces no new local confirmed cases of COVID-19 today

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has

announced that as of 4pm today (May 20), no new local confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) had been recorded, and that the number of cases in Hong Kong remained at 1 056 so far (comprising 1 055 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The CHP again urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives to minimise the risk of infection. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

A spokesman for the CHP 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."

The CHP has set up hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate from 8am to midnight daily, for public enquiries. As at 3pm today, a total of 117 763 calls had been received.

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on the COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, 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.