

[Granting of virtual banking licences](#)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (March 27) that the Monetary Authority has granted banking licences under the Banking Ordinance to Livi VB Limited, SC Digital Solutions Limited and ZhongAn Virtual Finance Limited for them to operate in the form of a virtual bank. The granting of these banking licences takes effect today.

The Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Norman Chan said, "We are pleased to grant the three virtual banking licences today. The introduction of virtual banks in Hong Kong is a key pillar supporting Hong Kong's entry into the Smart Banking Era. It is a major milestone in reinforcing Hong Kong's position as a premier international financial centre. I believe that virtual banks will not only help drive FinTech and innovation, but also bring about brand new customer experiences and further promote financial inclusion in Hong Kong.

"As virtual banks will have no physical branches, they will rely on the internet for customer acquisition and for the delivery of banking services. I believe that virtual banks will have to offer innovative and customer-centric services in order to attract customers. Moreover, in targeting the retail public and SMEs as their main client base, virtual banks should help promote financial inclusion in Hong Kong."

According to their business plans, these three newly licenced virtual banks intend to launch their services within 6 to 9 months.

After the granting of the above banking licences, the number of licensed banks in Hong Kong will be increased to 155.

The HKMA is making good progress in the processing of the remaining 5 virtual bank applications.

[HKETONY promotes Hong Kong films in Chicago \(with photos\)](#)

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in New York (HKETONY) is partnering with Asian Pop-Up Cinema (APUC) again to promote Hong Kong cinema and showcase film talents in Chicago. APUC yesterday (March 26, Chicago time) presented a Career Achievement Award to veteran Hong Kong actress Nina Paw.

Speaking at the award ceremony, the Director of HKETONY, Ms Joanne Chu, paid tribute to Paw's distinguished television and film career, spanning more than five decades. Ms Chu said Hong Kong is one of the world's largest film and television content exporters, and underlined that the industry is blessed with a wealth of talent such as seasoned film veterans like Paw and at the same time rising young talent.

Ms Chu also highlighted the Government's support for local films, pointing out that in the 2019-20 Budget, an additional US\$128 million has been injected into the Film Development Fund to facilitate its long-term development. The number of winning teams for the next First Feature Film Initiative will also double from three to six, with a funding increase of about 50 per cent.

In addition to supporting the screening of "Show Me Your Love" starring Nina Paw, HKETONY will also be supporting the Chicago premieres of two other Hong Kong films, namely the Closing Night film "Tracey" on April 24 (Chicago time) and "Still Human", a winning project of the First Feature Film Initiative, on May 13 (Chicago time).

Aside from film events, HKETONY will bolster arts and culture ties and exchanges between Hong Kong and Chicago with the debut performance of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra in a summer outdoor concert at Millennium Park in Chicago on August 18 (Chicago time).



LCQ1: Defaults on payments owed to the Government and public organisations

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

Last year, a Mainland woman was sentenced to imprisonment and ordered to pay legal costs of almost \$200,000 for taking photos inside a courtroom, but the Government has so far not given an account of whether she has settled the payments. During the period from 2012 to 2014, while about 70 000 buyers were required to make statutory declarations retrospectively in relation to exemptions from the Buyer's Stamp Duty, quite a number of them, believing that the Inland Revenue Department would not seriously pursue their responsibilities, neither paid the stamp duty nor made the relevant declarations retrospectively. As a result, the Government has foregone a significant amount of stamp duty payments. In the past five years, the average number of cases in which the Hospital Authority failed to recover medical fees from non-eligible persons was 6 550 a year and the total amount of medical fees written off was more than \$200 million. In one of those cases, the amount of unpaid medical fees has accumulated to over \$6 million since 2015. As at December 2017, the rate of non-local smoking offenders defaulting on payment of fines was as high as 20%. As at July 2017, the total amount of defaults on student loan repayment by post-secondary graduates stood at \$170 million. Although I had relayed to the Chief Executive at the Chief Executive's Question Time held on June 13 last year that given the serious situation of defaults on payments for public services by service users, it was necessary to adopt measures to prevent Hong Kong from becoming "the capital of defaults on payments", the situation has not been improved so far. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total amounts of default payments owed to, the expenditures incurred in recovering the default payments by, and the total amounts of default payments written off by, the Government and various public organisations respectively in each of the past three years;

(2) of the policies and measures in place to plug the loopholes in defaults on payments by public service users; whether it will, by drawing reference to the practice adopted by the Singapore Government of prohibiting non-local registered vehicles with unsettled fines for traffic-related offences from entering Singapore, prohibit non-local residents defaulting payments from re-entering Hong Kong; and

(3) whether it will, when publishing the Budget for the coming year in future, set out information on the amount of fees written off in the last financial year that has ended, which may serve as one of the indicators of

whether the Government has effectively managed public money; if not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

With regard to the Hon Paul Tse's question raised by the Hon Starry Lee, our reply is as follows:

(1) The total amounts written off by the Government due to default payments of different persons in each of the past three years are as follows:

2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
(\$ million)	(\$ million)	(\$ million)
290	282	541

Revenue collection is a day-to-day activity of government departments. A breakdown in this respect is not available.

The Government does not have any information on the expenditures incurred by subvented organisations for the recovery of default payments, nor statistics on the total amounts written off by them. Generally speaking, same as government departments, subvented organisations should ensure the proper use of public funds. As such, the bureaux and departments concerned require subvented organisations to submit audited annual financial statements and put in place an appropriate financial control and monitoring system to ensure that public funds are used prudently by subvented organisations in the provision of public services, with a view to achieving cost-effectiveness.

(2) Regarding the handling of receivables, according to the existing internal guidelines of the Government, Controlling Officers (COs) are responsible for prompt collection and for taking timely and appropriate actions to recover arrears of revenue within their jurisdiction. They should satisfy themselves that appropriate arrangements are made and put in place in their bureaux/departments such that if payment is not received within a reasonable time, appropriate and timely follow up actions are taken to recover the arrears. Such actions include the issue of reminders and taking legal action as necessary. In addition, COs must regularly review the procedures and the activities within their purview which give rise to revenue due to the Government and, where necessary, issue departmental accounting instructions and procedures on the recovery of arrears of revenue as appropriate to meet the particular requirements and applications of their bureaux/departments. COs should consider writing off the receivables only after all exhaustive actions taken to recover the amounts have failed and upon seeking the necessary legal advice.

Government bureaux and departments will continue to strictly adhere to

the above guidelines and recover by different means the receivables from defaulters, including local and non-local residents. Regarding the individual measures as mentioned, such as those in relation to vehicles, the Government will review the mechanism with reference to the actual circumstances.

(3) According to the Public Finance Ordinance (Cap 2), the Financial Secretary shall cause to be prepared estimates of the revenue and expenditure of the Government for the next following financial year, and shall cause such estimates to be laid before the Legislative Council. Hence, the Budget covers mainly the estimates of the revenue and expenditure of the Government for the next financial year. The recognition of provision for doubtful debts and losses so arising is dealt with in the Consolidated Statement of Financial Performance of the Accrual-based consolidated financial statements of the relevant financial year, while it is not shown as a separate item in the statements.

Thank you, President.

LCQ19: Preventing wild animals from causing injuries and nuisances to residents

Following is a question by Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

It has been reported that nuisances have been caused to members of the public by wild animals from time to time, including monkeys trespassing on residential areas, and some passers-by being hit by wild pigs and sustaining injuries. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the respective numbers of (i) monkeys and (ii) wild pigs in each of the past five years;

(2) whether it knows the respective numbers of cases in each of the past five years of wild animals causing (i) injuries and (ii) nuisances to residents, with a breakdown by type of animals and district;

(3) whether it has assessed the effectiveness of the various neutering/contraceptive programmes for wild animals currently put in place in controlling the number of wild animals; if so, of the outcome; of the (i) amount of public money spent on and (ii) manpower deployed for the

implementation of such programmes by the Government in the past five years, with a breakdown by type of animals involved;

(4) given that a contractor will carry out on-site trials early this year to assess the effectiveness of the newly designed refuse collection facilities in preventing wild animals such as monkeys and wild pigs from foraging food from refuse, of the number of designs involved in the trials; if only one design is involved, the reasons for that, and whether trials will be conducted on more designs; if so, of the details and the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; of the time as planned by the Government when it will completely switch to using the newly designed refuse collection facilities; whether it will expedite the use of such facilities; if so, of the timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) as the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department is conducting a series of publicity and education programmes to publicise the negative impacts of feeding wild animals, whether the Government will step up the relevant publicity and education efforts as well as consider legislating against the feeding of wild animals; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been very concerned about the nuisance to the public caused by wildlife (especially wild pigs and monkeys). The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has recently reviewed the strategy on the management of wild pigs and briefed the relevant panel of the Legislative Council on the proposed measures to strengthen the management of wild pigs in this January. The AFCD will also review the management of monkeys and handling of its nuisance.

Our reply to the question raised by Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat is as follows:

(1) Based on the data collected from the territory-wide surveys on monkeys by the AFCD, the number of monkeys has remained at about 1 800 in the past five years, and they are mainly distributed in the Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks.

Since wild pigs are generally solitary or live in small groups, secretive in nature, widely distributed and have very extensive home range, the AFCD does not have the number of wild pigs in Hong Kong at present. Nevertheless, the AFCD is exploring other methods to estimate the number of the wild pigs in Hong Kong.

(2) Over the past five years, the number of sightings or nuisance complaints and injury cases related to monkeys and wild pigs received by the AFCD is tabulated as follows:

Calendar Year	Number of Sightings or Nuisance Complaints / (Injury Cases) (Note 1)						
	Monkeys (Note 2)			Wild Pigs			
	Kowloon	New Territories	Total	Hong Kong Island	Kowloon	New Territories	Total
2014	82	355	437	125	18	193	336(0)
2015	148	402	550	223	33	262	518(0)
2016	104	343	447	219(2)	52	312	583(2)
2017	86	267	353	324	32	382(3)	738(3)
2018	59	271	330	482(3)	35(1)	412(3)	929(7)

Note 1: Figures in brackets denote the number of reports on injury

Note 2: There were no sightings or nuisance related to monkeys on the Hong Kong Island.

(3) Since 2007, the AFCD has regularly arranged contraceptive and sterilisation operations for monkeys in Kam Shan, Lion Rock and Shing Mun Country Parks, and monitored the changes in monkey populations so as to control their number in the long run and abate the nuisance they created. In 2009, the contractor introduced a new technique for permanent sterilisation of suitable female monkeys by endoscopic micro-tubectomy for more effective control on their number. In 2014, the contractor also started performing endoscopic micro-vasectomy on suitable male monkeys. The surgical procedure only takes four to seven minutes to complete, and the monkeys which undergone operations will be released on site together with other monkeys captured on the same day. Since 2018, the AFCD has extended the sterilisation operations to the monkey populations causing nuisance to residential areas near the fringe of country parks. As of February 2019, more than 2 200 monkeys had received contraception and/or sterilisation. Since the implementation of the programme, the number of complaints on nuisance drastically decreased from some 1 400 cases in 2006 to about 330 cases in 2018. The AFCD will soon review the management of monkey nuisance, with a view to developing a more comprehensive management plan for monkey nuisance.

Since 2017, the AFCD has introduced the Capture and Contraception/Relocation Programme (CCRP) as a pilot scheme to address persistent wild pig nuisance in urban areas. The pilot CCRP involves capturing the nuisance-causing wild pigs for relocation to remote countryside areas to alleviate the nuisance with immediate effect. To control the number of wild pigs causing nuisance in the long run, the AFCD is evaluating the effectiveness of a contraceptive vaccine, GonaCon™, in controlling the fertility of mature female wild pigs. GonaCon™ has been found to be effective for at least four to six years on captive wild pigs in an overseas study and is safe to pregnant animals. In addition, the AFCD has been studying the feasibility of conducting on-site surgical sterilisation on wild pigs. As of February 2019, the AFCD has vaccinated 55 wild pigs and sterilised 15 wild pigs, and relocated 111 wild pigs to the remote countryside. The AFCD will work closely with local and overseas experts to improve the procedures for

the pilot CCRP and will assess the effectiveness of contraceptive treatment.

Over the past five years, the expenditure and staffing involved in the Capture, Contraception, and Release/Relocation Programme for monkeys and the pilot CCRP for wild pigs are tabulated below:

Financial Year	Monkeys		Wild Pigs	
	Expenditure (\$ million)	Manpower (number of staff)*	Expenditure # (\$ million)	Manpower # (number of staff)
2014-15	1.4	2	—	—
2015-16	1.4	2	—	—
2016-17	1.4	2	—	—
2017-18	1.4	2	3.8	6
2018-19 (Revised estimate)	1.4	2	6.4	14

*10 staff of the contractor participated/will participate in each operation
#Prior to 2017-18, there was no manpower dedicated for wild pig management

(4) In collaboration with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Environmental Protection Department, the AFCD is conducting a consultancy study to improve the design of the refuse bins, with a view to reducing nuisance caused by wild animals such as monkeys and wild pigs scavenging from outdoor refuse. The consultant provided three improved designs, which will be deployed for field trials in the first half of 2019 in areas of wildlife nuisance black spots, and further improvements will be made based on the trial results this year. The FEHD will keep in view the trial results and usage of the new designs. If the new designs can effectively minimise the scavenging for food from refuse bins by wild pigs and monkeys, the FEHD will deploy the newly designed bins to suitable sites to improve environmental hygiene as and when appropriate.

(5) The most effective way to minimise wildlife such as monkeys and wild pigs raiding residential areas is to stop feeding them. To this end, the AFCD is conducting a series of publicity and education programmes to intensify its efforts to educate the public on the negative impact of feeding on wildlife with a view to discouraging such feeding behavior. These programmes include promotion in the media and social platforms, organisation of colouring competition, fun day, roving exhibitions, lectures, wildlife education tours, as well as hanging banners and posters at areas frequented by monkeys and wild pigs.

As we have to make careful consideration of complicated technical issues involving law enforcement and the manpower required, the Government does not have any plan to completely ban the feeding of wild animals by legislative measures at the moment. To facilitate the management of wild pigs, the Government will set up an advisory group comprising local and overseas

experts in the fields of ecology, wildlife management and veterinary medicine, etc. to advise on the implementation and review of management measures and public education.

“Music and Humanities in Bach’s Passion” appreciation talks to be held in May

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department will organise "Music and Humanities in Bach's Passion" appreciation talks in May. This lecture series consists of three sessions featuring broadcaster Calvin Lai and vocal professor Stephen Ng as speakers. A glossary of Bach's passions will be presented, and the multiple layers of musical meanings in both "St. John Passion" and "St. Matthew Passion" will be described to the audience. Members of the SingFest Choral Academy will perform for the live demonstration.

Details of the talk series are as follows:

First session: A Glossary

May 3 (Friday), 7.30pm; Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum

Speaker: Calvin Lai

Content: From the musical terms to understanding the basic structure of Bach's passions with live demonstration by vocalists.

Ticket price: \$50 (free seating)

Second session: The Story and the Characters

May 10 (Friday), 7.30pm; Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum

Speaker: Calvin Lai

Content: Providing an understanding of Bach's intriguing way of telling Biblical story, as well as how characters were developed by giving them singing passages uniquely their own. The programme includes demonstration by soloists and a vocal ensemble.

Ticket price: \$50 (free seating)

Third session: Dramatic Choral Scenes

May 16 (Thursday), 8pm; Studio Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Speaker: Stephen Ng

Content: The dramatic choir scenes in the two passions will be the highlight of the evening. These include the impactful "Yelling of Crucifying Jesus" choruses, and the earthquake following Jesus's death. The programme includes demonstration by soloists, a choir and an orchestra to be conducted by Dominic Lam.

Ticket price: \$80

Tickets are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone credit card bookings, please call 2111 5999. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7321 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/music/programs_782.html.