

Environment and Conservation Fund 30th anniversary “Let’s Grow for Green” launching ceremony held (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Environment and Conservation Fund Committee:

The Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) 30th anniversary "Let's Grow for Green" launching ceremony was held today (June 3) at the Hong Kong Productivity Council Building in Kowloon. As officiating guests, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki; the Chairman of the ECF Committee, Dr Eric Cheng; and the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, witnessed the important milestone of the 30th anniversary of the ECF.

Officiating at the ceremony, Mr Chan said that the Government had been formulating, implementing and enhancing various environmental protection-related policy initiatives to reduce the city's total carbon emissions by half before 2035 from the 2005 level and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The ECF plays a constructive role in bringing together the wisdom and strength of all sectors of society to support the Government's implementation of environment protection-related policies and encourage the public to practise low-carbon living.

Mr Chan added that he looked forward to the ECF continuing to discharge its mission steadfastly, jointly with various stakeholders in society, to co-operate with the Government in such key tasks as strengthening public education and expanding recycling facilities in an all-round manner. The overall objective is to cultivate and practise green culture in the whole community and build Hong Kong into a sustainable and beautiful city.

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Cheng expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Government for its generous injection of funds and its long-term commitment to protecting the environment and nature conservation in Hong Kong. He also anticipated that eligible organisations in Hong Kong would continue to make good use of the ECF to organise various environmental protection and nature conservation projects, with effective utilisation of innovative solutions and environmental protection technologies, to achieve goals such as "cherishing resources", "conserving environment", and "achieving carbon neutrality".

Other officiating guests of the launching ceremony included the Permanent Secretary for Environment and Ecology (Environment), Miss Janice Tse, and the Director of Environmental Protection, Dr Samuel Chui. About 200 guests, including Legislative Council Members, district council members, social elites, and representatives of the recipient organisations, community organisations and green groups, attended the ceremony.

Both online and offline promotional activities with the theme of "Let's Grow for Green" will be kicked off in June this year to encourage all sectors of society and the general public to have a deeper understanding and make good use of the ECF through application for organising and participation in environmental protection and nature conservation projects and activities, with the objective of promoting emission reduction and carbon reduction in the community, thereby facilitating Hong Kong's attainment of carbon neutrality by 2050.

The ECF is a statutory trust fund established in June 1994 under the ECF Ordinance (Cap. 450). From its establishment to 2012, the ECF received six government injections totalling about \$1.7 billion to support local eligible organisations in implementing various environmental protection and nature conservation projects and activities. Later in 2013, the Government injected an additional \$5 billion into the ECF as its long-term commitment, which serves as seed money to generate an investment return for sustained support for environmental protection and nature conservation projects in the community.



[Four persons arrested during anti-](#)

illegal worker operation (with photo)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted an anti-illegal worker operation codenamed "Netstrike" today (June 3) by deploying officers-in-disguise to contact a Mainland cleaning service company, which arranged for illegal workers to work in Hong Kong. During the operation, one person-in-charge of the Mainland cleaning service company and three Mainland illegal workers were arrested.

Recently, social media platforms have been utilised by Mainland companies to advertise cleaning services in Hong Kong. After in-depth investigation and intelligence analysis, the Special Investigation Section of the ImmD identified a Mainland company arranging for illegal workers to perform domestic and office cleaning work in Hong Kong. During the operation, officers disguised themselves as customers to enquire about the cleaning services with the Mainland company. The person-in-charge of the Mainland cleaning company aged 28 and three Mainland illegal workers aged from 19 to 30 were arrested while they were performing cleaning work in Hong Kong.

"The ImmD will continue to strengthen enforcement actions against illegal employment and seek various means to publicise the serious consequences of employing illegal workers in order to raise public awareness of the issue. The ImmD will conduct target-oriented cyber patrols and take prompt enforcement actions if any person is found organising, arranging or instigating others to commit serious crimes such as employing illegal workers," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him/her shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties. As stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land is prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment."

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. Under the Immigration Ordinance, the maximum penalty for an employer employing a person who is not lawfully employable, i.e. an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land, has been significantly increased from a fine of \$350,000 and three years' imprisonment to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment to reflect the gravity of such offences. The director, manager, secretary, partner, etc, of the company concerned may also bear criminal liability. The

High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and to imprisonment for one year. In that connection, the spokesman would like to remind all employers not to defy the law by employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to take resolute enforcement action to combat such offences.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



[Update on cases of Legionnaires'](#)

disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (June 3) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From May 26 to June 1, the CHP recorded one community-acquired LD case and one imported LD case:

1. A male patient, aged 71 with underlying illnesses, who lived on the Mainland during the incubation period and was classified as an imported case; and
2. A female patient, aged 74 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Kowloon City District.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of June 1, 37 LD cases had been recorded this year. In 2023 and 2022, there were 121 and 80 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain

humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

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â€‹The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
 2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
 5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

â€‹â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

Mainland male jailed for making false representation and other offences

A Mainland male was charged at the Sha Tin Magistrates' Courts with making false representation to an Immigration Department (ImmD) staff member, breaching the condition of stay and failing to register and apply for an identity card, and was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and fined \$800 on May 31.

The 39-year-old defendant was granted entry to work in Hong Kong as an imported worker. Subsequently, the contract was prematurely terminated but the defendant did not depart Hong Kong within 14 days after the contract was terminated. The defendant was intercepted when he presented himself for departure clearance at a control point on May 26, during which the defendant claimed to the ImmD staff that he had no idea about the termination of his contract. The ImmD staff cast doubt on his explanation and thus began an investigation against the defendant.

In the course of the investigation, the defendant admitted under caution that he was well aware of the termination of his contract and he was required to leave Hong Kong within 14 days after the termination, but he did not depart before the limitation of stay expired because he wished to sightsee in Hong Kong. Moreover, records revealed that the defendant failed to register and apply for an identity card. The defendant was subsequently charged with the offences of making false representation to ImmD staff, breaching the condition of stay and failing to register and apply for an identity card. The defendant pleaded guilty to the charges and was sentenced to a total of four months' imprisonment and fined \$800 by the Sha Tin Magistrates' Courts on May 31.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Under the laws of Hong Kong, any person who makes false representation to an Immigration officer commits an offence. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to the maximum penalty of a fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years."

The spokesman warned, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties."

Under the Registration of Persons Ordinance, all Hong Kong residents aged 11 or over (including those who have been permitted to stay in Hong Kong for more than 180 days) are required to register for an identity card within 30 days of his entering Hong Kong, except those who are exempted or excluded. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to the

maximum penalty of a fine at level 3 and imprisonment for one year.

HKMC's Financial Results Highlights for 2023

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

The Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Limited (HKMC) today (June 3) announced the highlights of its audited consolidated financial results (Note 1) for 2023 noted below.

2023 Financial Results Highlights

The audited loss after tax of the HKMC for 2023 was HK\$260 million (2022: profit after tax of HK\$2,163 million). The accounting loss was primarily attributable to (a) the increase in insurance contract liabilities for the annuity business driven by the reduced discount rates (Note 2) reflecting the relatively lower market interest rates at the end of the year as compared to that of the previous year; and (b) the negative impact of property price drop on the reverse mortgage insurance business. These were partly mitigated by the favourable return from the placements with the Exchange Fund and the increase in amortisation of unearned profits from the accumulative mortgage insurance business.

After excluding the accounting results of HKMC Annuity Limited (HKMCA), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the HKMC operating annuity business, the impact of property price changes on the reverse mortgage insurance business, and the effect of valuation and corresponding adjustments as required by HKFRS 17 at consolidation level in respect of certain loan portfolios with insurance cover provided by HKMC Insurance Limited (HKMCI), another wholly-owned subsidiary of the HKMC operating general insurance business, the HKMC's adjusted profit after tax, return on equity and cost-to-income ratio for 2023 would be HK\$724 million, 5.3 per cent and 28.1 per cent respectively (2022: HK\$445 million, 3.2 per cent and 34.5 per cent respectively).

Having included the capital injection of HK\$2.5 billion during the year, the embedded value of the annuity business as at December 31, 2023, was about HK\$13.9 billion on the basis of the Insurance Ordinance, which comprised HK\$11.4 billion of total equity and HK\$2.5 billion of present value of future profits. This indicates a sound financial position of the HKMCA to develop its business in the long term.

The Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of the HKMC remained solid at 21.6 per cent as at December 31, 2023, well above the minimum ratio of 8 per cent stipulated by the Financial Secretary. The solvency ratios of the HKMCI

and the HKMCA were about 13 times and 18 times respectively as at December 31, 2023, well above the respective 200 per cent and 150 per cent minimum regulatory requirements stipulated by the Insurance Authority.

Amid uncertain market conditions, the HKMC adopted prudent prefunding strategy and proactively communicated with local and international investment communities for debt issuance to support its sizable loan purchase and fulfil its refinancing needs. With strong financing capability and liquidity position, the HKMC's core operations remain resilient and stand ready to cope with any financial turbulence ahead in performing its strategic policy roles and attaining its social objectives.

2023 Business Performance Highlights

Asset Purchase and Securitisation

- Acquired HK\$2.8 billion of loan assets (2022: HK\$4.3 billion)
- Purchased HK\$24.5 billion of loans (2022: HK\$33.4 billion) from the Special 100% Loan Guarantee under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme (SFGS) and HK\$0.2 billion of loans from the Dedicated 100% Loan Guarantee Schemes (DLGS) which was launched on April 29, 2023
- Completed the first issuance of infrastructure loan-backed securities under its pilot scheme on infrastructure financing securitisation. The issuance consists of multiple classes of US dollar-denominated secured notes backed by the cash flows from a diversified portfolio of project and infrastructure loans across various regions and sectors, with a total size of US\$404.8 million
- Outstanding balance of loan portfolio was HK\$109.5 billion as at December 31, 2023 (December 31, 2022: HK\$102.2 billion)

Debt Issuance

- Issued corporate debts totalling HK\$98.3 billion for 2023, of which HK\$89.9 billion with tenor of one year or above (2022: totalling HK\$97.6 billion, of which HK\$71.8 billion with a tenor of one year or above), being the most active issuer in the domestic market of Hong Kong dollar corporate bonds and one of the top offshore Renminbi corporate bond issuers in 2023
- It included the second social bond issuance of close to HK\$20 billion equivalent, being the largest social bond issuance in Asia and was the first time for a Hong Kong bond issuer to launch Hong Kong dollar, Renminbi and US dollar tranches in one transaction. The issuance was well recognised by market participants and has earned the HKMC a number of outstanding awards
- Outstanding balance of debt securities issued was HK\$161.7 billion as at December 31, 2023 (December 31, 2022: HK\$131.1 billion)
- Credit ratings of AA+ from S&P Global Ratings and Aa3 from Moody's, same as those of the HKSAR Government

Mortgage Insurance Programme (MIP)

- New MIP loans drawn down amounted to HK\$83.1 billion (2022: HK\$107.2 billion)
- 71 per cent of loans drawn down (in terms of loan amount) were secured on properties in the secondary market, demonstrating the importance of the MIP to homebuyers in the secondary market

SME Financing Guarantee Scheme

- In respect of the 80% Guarantee Product, as at the end of 2023, more than 25 400 applications were approved with a total loan amount of HK\$111.1 billion since its launch in May 2012
- In respect of the 90% Guarantee Product, as at the end of 2023, more than 10 800 applications were approved with a total loan amount of HK\$20.3 billion since its launch in December 2019
- In respect of the Special 100% Loan Guarantee, as at the end of 2023, more than 65 600 applications were approved with a total loan amount of HK\$139.1 billion since its launch in April 2020, of which HK\$138.5 billion of loan assets were purchased by the HKMC
- As at the end of 2023, the 80% and 90% Guarantee Products and the Special 100% Loan Guarantee had benefitted more than 60 600 local small and medium-sized enterprises and approximately 772 000 related employees since their inception

Dedicated 100% Loan Guarantee Schemes

- The DLGS for Travel Sector and the DLGS for Cross-boundary Passenger Transport Trade were launched on April 29, 2023. As at the end of 2023, 204 applications for a total loan amount of approximately HK\$0.2 billion were approved
- Promoting the use of e-Taxis is one of the Government's measures to develop green transport, the DLGS for Battery Electric Taxis was launched on 4 September 2023 to provide loans for eligible taxi owners to purchase e-Taxis to replace their liquefied petroleum gas, petrol or hybrid taxis. As at the end of 2023, two applications were approved for a total loan amount of approximately HK\$0.7 million

Reverse Mortgage Programme (RMP)

- 797 applications were approved (2022: 938 applications), with an average property value of HK\$5.4 million and an average monthly payout of HK\$14,900

Annuity Business

- Taking a total of 2 205 policies (2022: 3 254 policies), with total

premiums of HK\$1.6 billion (2022: HK\$2.5 billion)

100% Personal Loan Guarantee Scheme (PLGS)

- With the local economic recovery and decreased unemployment rate, the application period of the PLGS expired at the end of April 2023
- Around 67,000 applications were approved with a total loan amount of approximately HK\$4.7 billion since its launch in April 2021

Further details of the HKMC's consolidated financial results and financial review for 2023 are set out at Annex.

Note 1: From 1 January 2023, the HKMC has adopted Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standard 17 "Insurance Contracts" (HKFRS 17). As required by the accounting standard, the HKMC applied the requirements retrospectively with comparative figures previously published under Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standard 4 "Insurance Contracts" (HKFRS 4) restated from January 1, 2022, the transition date. Further information on the impact of this change is set out in the Financial Review section of this announcement.

Note 2: Discount rates for calculating insurance contract liabilities are derived from the risk-free yield curve and a premium adjusting for the liquidity characteristics of insurance contracts. As at December 31, 2023, the risk-free yield curve was generally lower than that as at December 31, 2022, due to a decline in the yield curve in the fourth quarter of 2023 on expectation of aggressive US interest rate cuts in 2024.