

# IMF acknowledges Hong Kong's robust policy frameworks and ample buffers for addressing economic challenges and safeguarding financial stability

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) released a Staff Report today (December 30) which, substantiated by a more detailed analysis, reinforces its assessment of Hong Kong's economic and financial positions published on December 4, 2019, following the conclusion of the annual Article IV consultation.

Affirming Hong Kong's position as a global financial centre and a regional trading hub with one of the most open economies in the world, the IMF recognises that Hong Kong continues to maintain its competitiveness in the financial sector which is marked by the free movement of capital and information, a simple tax system, a sound regulatory system, the rule of law and quality professional services. The IMF notes that Hong Kong is well placed to address both cyclical and structural challenges given its significant buffers, despite weakened economic activity and mounting headwinds on the growth outlook. The IMF welcomes the Government's recent introduction of fiscal stimuli to support the economy. It also supports the Government's three-pronged approach to containing housing market risks and increasing housing affordability. The IMF commends Hong Kong for its strong regulatory framework and prudential supervision, which helps ensure the resilience of the financial sector and safeguard financial stability. The IMF also reaffirms its long-standing support for the Linked Exchange Rate System (LERS) as an anchor of financial stability for Hong Kong.

The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, said, "We welcome the IMF's recognition of the robust policy frameworks and ample buffers we have built over the past years, which stand us in good stead to weather the challenges ahead. The Government stands ready to make use of our fiscal buffers to support the economy as and when needed."

The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Mr Eddie Yue, said, "The IMF's assessment once again confirms the robustness of our financial system and its resilience to potential shocks. We also welcome the IMF's unequivocal endorsement of the LERS and its smooth functioning."

The IMF Mission visited Hong Kong from October 23 to November 4, 2019, to conduct the annual IMF Article IV consultation. The Concluding Statement of the Mission's assessment was published on December 4, 2019. The Staff Report was considered and endorsed by the IMF Executive Board on December 13, 2019.

The IMF's press release on the Staff Report is attached in the Annex.

The Staff Report can be accessed from the websites of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau ([www.fstb.gov.hk](http://www.fstb.gov.hk)) and the IMF ([www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org)).

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## Holiday clinic service on New Year holiday

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) spokesperson reminds members of the public today (December 30) that 13 general out-patient clinics (see table below) under the HA will continue to provide services on the New Year holiday this Wednesday (January 1). Members of the public requiring medical consultation may make advance bookings for an appointment through the telephone appointment system as usual.

The Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments in public hospitals will also operate as usual during the holiday to serve patients with urgent medical needs. Amid the winter service surge at public hospitals and the expected increase in A&E attendance on the first working day following the holiday, A&E departments will accord priority treatment to patients with critical and emergency conditions as assessed under the established triage system, while semi-urgent and non-urgent patients might have to wait longer for consultation.

HA appeals to the public for their understanding and co-operation while waiting for consultations. Non-urgent patients are advised to consider seeking consultations at general out-patient clinics, private doctors or the 24-hour clinics of private hospitals. To help find the appropriate family medicine doctor and related clinic service of their choice, the public are welcome to browse the Primary Care Directory of the Food and Health Bureau at [www.pcdirectory.gov.hk](http://www.pcdirectory.gov.hk) .

To facilitate public understanding of public hospital services during the winter surge, HA has launched a designated page on its website ([www.ha.org.hk/goto/wintersurge/en](http://www.ha.org.hk/goto/wintersurge/en)) and also the mobile app "HA Touch" to provide some key information including A&E waiting times, A&E attendances, medical in-patient bed occupancy rates and a hyperlink to the websites of private healthcare services.

Public holiday clinics

District	Name of Clinic	Telephone number for booking	General enquiry
Hong Kong Island	Shau Kei Wan Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0077	2560 0211
	Violet Peel General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0000	3553 3116
	Aberdeen Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3543 5011	2555 0381
Kowloon	Kwun Tong Community Health Centre	3157 0687	2389 0331
	Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital Family Medicine Clinic	3157 0118	2354 2267
	Robert Black General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0113	2383 3311
	Yau Ma Tei Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0880	2272 2400
New Territories	Lady Trench General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0107	2614 4789
	Lek Yuen General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0972	2692 8730
	Shek Wu Hui Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0965	2670 0211
	Tai Po Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0906	2664 2039
	Tuen Mun Clinic	3543 0886	2452 9111
	Yuen Long Jockey Club Health Centre	3543 5007	2443 8511

Consultation hours:  
9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm

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## [Services of Leisure Link counter booking and self-service kiosks resume normal](#)

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (December 30) that the Leisure Link counter booking and self-service kiosks services have resumed as normal. The booking services had been suspended for system enhancement works.

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## Temporary suspension of Mobile Library 5 and 8 services

Mobile Libraries 5 and 8 will suspend services during designated periods in January next year for routine maintenance, a spokesman for the Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (December 30).

Mobile Library 5 will suspend services from January 13 to 18. The affected service points are Hin Keng Estate, Kam Tai Court, Mei Tin Estate and Yan On Estate in Sha Tin; Kin Ming Estate, Yee Ming Estate and Mang Kung Uk Road in Sai Kung; and Fu Shin Estate and Fu Heng Estate in Tai Po. For enquiries about Mobile Library 5 services, please call 2696 5842.

Mobile Library 8 will suspend services from January 17 to 23. The affected service points are Choi Ying Estate in Kowloon Bay, Laguna City in Lam Tin, Po Tat Estate in Sau Mau Ping, Tai Hang Tung Estate on Tai Hang Tung Road and Laguna Verde in Hung Hom. For enquiries about Mobile Library 8 services, please call 2926 3055.

Readers are welcome to use other public libraries during the service suspension periods. They may also renew library materials by telephoning 2698 0002 or 2827 2833, or via [www.hkpl.gov.hk](http://www.hkpl.gov.hk).

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## Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (December 30) 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 December 22 to 28, one community-acquired LD case was reported, involving a male patient, aged 60 with good past health, who lives in Block 29, City One Shatin, Sha Tin 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 December 28 this year, 103 LD cases had been reported. In 2018 and 2017, there were 105 and 72 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 leading to stagnant water; 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 which 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. A shower may also generate small aerosols; 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.

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 ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) 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.

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.