

HKMA alerts public to bogus messages and documents

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) has received enquiries from members of the public regarding messages received on the instant messaging application WhatsApp or documents purportedly issued in the name of the HKMA. These messages and documents demand money transfers to pay charges or taxes in order to recover frozen assets or payments made to fraudsters. Some cases involved claims that the refund or unfreezing arrangement will be carried out through an overseas institution, and the name of the institution is similar to the name of a local representative office established in Hong Kong by an overseas bank.

The HKMA wishes to reiterate that it will not contact the public regarding personal financial matters, nor will it communicate with the public by forming groups on instant messaging applications.

Regarding the local representative offices of overseas banks, according to the Banking Ordinance, their role is primarily limited to liaison work with their customers in Hong Kong and they are not permitted to engage in any banking and deposit-taking business. A list of authorized institutions is available on the HKMA's website (www.hkma.gov.hk). Members of the public may also verify the status of an entity by emailing the HKMA's public enquiry service (publicenquiry@hkma.gov.hk).

The HKMA has reported the cases to the Hong Kong Police Force. Members of the public who suspect that they have become victims of fraudulent acts should contact the Commercial and Technology Crime Hotline of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012 for further action and investigation by the police.