

[Phishing emails related to DBS Bank \(Hong Kong\) Limited](#)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited relating to phishing emails, which have been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the emails concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

[CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (February 5) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection and reminded the community to heighten vigilance against influenza. The 2023/24 seasonal influenza vaccination programmes [have started](#) and the CHP appealed to members of the public to receive free seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) to better protect themselves in the coming influenza season.

The case involves a 3-year-old girl with good past health. She developed a fever and cough since January 29 and consulted a private doctor on February 1. She sought medical attention at North Lantau Hospital due to worsened symptoms yesterday (February 4) and was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit of Princess Margaret Hospital for management on the same day. Her respiratory specimen was positive for influenza A (H3) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with pneumonia. Her condition improved after treatment and she is now in stable condition.

Initial enquiries by the CHP revealed that the patient had not received seasonal influenza vaccination for this season and visited Macao during the incubation period. Her home contacts are currently asymptomatic. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. SIV is one of the most effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as reducing influenza-related hospitalisation and death. SIV is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications. Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive SIV early. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, members of the public are advised to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the [CHP's website](#)."

A person who gets influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill and would have a higher risk of death. It is important to receive both SIV and COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible, in particular for children and elderly persons residing in the community or residential care homes. The public should also maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against influenza and other respiratory illnesses and note the following:

- Surgical masks can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- For high-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised), wear a surgical mask when visiting public places. The public should also 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;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub;
- Cover the mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, perform physical activity regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

The public may visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#) for more information.

CS chairs co-ordination meeting on cross-boundary transport arrangements for large-scale events to discuss special boundary-crossing and relevant transport arrangements during Lunar New Year holidays (with photo)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, today (February 5) chaired a co-ordination meeting on cross-boundary transport arrangements for large-scale events to holistically review and co-ordinate the work of relevant bureaux and departments on special boundary-crossing and relevant transport arrangements during the Lunar New Year holidays, with a view to ensuring adequate preparation for and orderly implementation of different measures. The Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing; the Deputy Financial Secretary, Mr Michael Wong; the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, and representatives of the Security Bureau, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the Transport Department (TD), the Customs and Excise Department (Customs), the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), the Immigration Department (ImmD), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, and the Information Services Department attended the meeting.

Mr Chan said, "A series of events will be held in Hong Kong during the Lunar New Year holidays and is expected to attract a large number of citizens and tourists from the Mainland, as well as from around the world at large, to join. Relevant bureaux and departments, together with stakeholders of transport, tourism and other sectors, have been engaging in close communication and co-ordination. They have steadfastly made comprehensive planning and mobilisation arrangements to ensure the orderly implementation of special boundary-crossing and relevant transport arrangements, especially the diversion of people and vehicular movements after large-scale events, during the Lunar New Year holidays, thereby providing citizens and tourists with a pleasantly festive experience."

At the meeting, Mr Chan instructed relevant departments to enhance the dissemination of information on special boundary-crossing and relevant transport arrangements to the public and visitors by various online and offline means, including social media platforms, press releases and a press conference. In particular, the HKPF, the TD and the Marine Department will hold a joint press conference on February 7 to explain the details of the special boundary-crossing and transport arrangements regarding celebration activities during the Lunar New Year. The Government encourages visitors to

carefully plan their itinerary, which includes considering an overnight stay in Hong Kong and avoiding departure via land boundary control points in the small hours, to enjoy a more diversified travel experience in Hong Kong.

Mr Chan also instructed all relevant bureaux and departments to adopt bottom-line thinking and make adequate preparation, with prompt actions taken, in response to different emergency situations. The Security Bureau will activate the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre in a timely manner to closely monitor and co-ordinate the public order situation at various boundary control points, and facilitate interdepartmental follow-up actions when necessary. At the departmental level, Customs, the HKPF, the ImmD and other departments will set up an Inter-departmental Joint Command Centre to monitor the situation at each land boundary control point, maintain close liaison with Mainland counterparts, and take contingency actions where necessary. The TD's Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre will operate 24 hours as usual to monitor the traffic conditions across districts, especially at the ports and major stations, and implement contingency measures when necessary. The latest traffic information will also be disseminated through various channels. Moreover, the TD will maintain close communication with public transport operators, including those of franchised buses and cross-boundary coaches, to enhance services during the Lunar New Year holidays to meet the demand.

The Government has earlier announced that in order to effectively facilitate the diversion of cross-boundary passenger and vehicular movements during the Lunar New Year holidays, a consensus was reached with the Governments of Guangdong Province and Shenzhen Municipality to make special boundary-crossing arrangements in two key areas:

(1) Passenger and passenger vehicle clearance services at the Shenzhen Bay Port, which usually close at midnight, will operate overnight to provide round-the-clock services from February 9 to 13. For more effective diversion of cross-boundary private cars during the five-day implementation of round-the-clock clearance at the Shenzhen Bay Port, only cross-boundary private cars issued with a permit for the Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang (LMC/HG) Control Point are allowed to cross the LMC/HG Control Point during the early-morning hours. For cross-boundary private cars issued with a permit for the ports at LMC/HG, Shenzhen Bay, Man Kam To and Sha Tau Kok, they can use the Shenzhen Bay Port during the early-morning hours; and

(2) Passenger clearance service at the Lo Wu Control Point, which usually closes at midnight, will be extended to 2am the next day on February 9 and 11. The operating hours of the MTR East Rail Line will be extended accordingly.



[Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices at medicine shop](#)

Hong Kong Customs today (February 5) arrested a salesman of a medicine shop suspected of having applied a false trade description in the course of selling a Chinese herbal medicine, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received information alleging that a salesman of a medicine shop in Tsim Sha Tsui claimed that the total price of a Chinese herbal medicine amounted to a certain price. However, after the Chinese herbal medicine was ground, the salesman revealed that the total price was another price, which was 80 times higher than what was expected.

After an in-depth investigation, Customs officers today arrested a 54-year-old salesman of the medicine shop concerned.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs has all along been concerned about visitors being misled to make purchases by unfair trade practices and has established a Quick Response Team to handle urgent complaints lodged by short-haul visitors. The complaints will be promptly referred to investigators to handle with priority.

With the Lunar New Year approaching, Customs will continue to step up inspection and enforcement to vigorously combat unfair trade practices.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to purchase products from reputable shops. Consumers should also be cautious about the unit price and ask for more information, including the total price of the goods selected, before making a purchase decision.

Under the TDO, any person who in the course of any trade or business applies a false trade description to any goods commits an offence. The

maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TD0 to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

[Survey on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises' Credit Conditions for Fourth Quarter 2023](#)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) published today (5 February) the results of Survey on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)' Credit Conditions for the fourth quarter of 2023. According to the survey, SMEs' credit conditions continued to face headwinds from the high interest rate environment.

Regarding SMEs' perception of banks' credit approval stance relative to six months ago, excluding respondents who answered "no idea / don't know", 69 per cent perceived a "similar" or "easier" credit approval stance in the fourth quarter of 2023, down from 72 per cent in the previous quarter (Chart 1 in the Annex). 31 per cent perceived a "more difficult" credit approval stance, up from 28 per cent in the previous quarter. That said, the proportion still remained within the normal range observed. The perception of a more difficult credit approval stance may not necessarily reflect actual difficulties faced by SMEs in obtaining bank credit as the perception could be affected by a number of factors, such as media/news reports, business conditions and opinions of relatives and friends.

Of respondents with existing credit lines, 24 per cent reported a "tighter" banks' stance, down from 34 per cent in the previous quarter (Chart 2 in the Annex). In this survey, a tighter stance on existing credit lines denotes a range of possible measures or arrangements, such as reducing unused and used credit lines, raising the interest rate, imposing additional collateral requirements, or shortening loan tenor. Therefore, respondents' indication of banks' stance on existing credit lines may not directly reflect banks' supply of credit to SMEs.

The survey also gauged the results of new credit applications from SMEs. 3 per cent of the respondents reported that they had applied for new bank credit during the fourth quarter of 2023. Among the respondents who had

already known their application outcomes, 80 per cent reported fully or partially successful applications, compared with 82 per cent in the previous quarter (Chart 3 in the Annex). 20 per cent reported unsuccessful applications, compared with 18 per cent in the previous quarter.

Owing to small sample sizes of SMEs with existing credit lines (20 per cent of surveyed SMEs) and with new credit applications (3 per cent of surveyed SMEs) during the quarter, the results could be prone to large fluctuations, and hence should be interpreted with care.

About Survey on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)' Credit Conditions

In light of the importance of SMEs to the Hong Kong economy and concerns about potential funding difficulties facing SMEs over the past few years, the HKMA has appointed the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) to carry out this survey, starting from the third quarter of 2016. This survey is conducted on a quarterly basis, covering about 2 500 SMEs from different economic sectors each time. The results of this survey can help monitor the development of SMEs' access to bank credit from a demand-side perspective.

The results of this survey should be interpreted with caution. Similar to other opinion surveys, views collected in this survey may be affected by changes in sentiment due to idiosyncratic events that occurred over the survey period, which can make the results prone to fluctuations. Readers are advised to interpret the results together with other economic and financial information. In addition, views collected are limited to the expected direction of inter-quarter changes (e.g. "tighter", "no change" or "easier") without providing information about the magnitude of these changes.

Detailed tables and technical information of this survey are published on the website of the HKPC (smecc.hkpc.org).