

Government responds to media report

Regarding a press article which claimed that the Central Military Dock (CMD) would affect spectators watching the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival, a Government spokesman provided the following response today (June 22):

The Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival, organised by the Hong Kong Tourism Board with the Hong Kong China Dragon Boat Association as a co-organiser, is being staged at the Central Harbourfront for the third consecutive year from June 22 to 24, 2018. The event organiser provides around 700 seats at the Central Harbourfront Event Space for spectators to watch the dragon boat races. Members of the public may also watch the races from the Central and Western District Promenade (Central Section) and Tamar Park.

Regarding the CMD, it has been the plan of the Government to hand it over to the Garrison upon completion of the construction works and other relevant procedures. The construction of the CMD has already been completed earlier on. However, in 2014 Designing Hong Kong Limited applied for a judicial review against the Town Planning Board's statutory planning procedures for re-zoning the CMD site to "Other Specified Uses" annotated "Military Use (1)", and sought a Protective Costs Order for the relevant legal proceedings. As a result, the concerned statutory planning procedures have since been put on hold. Until now, the Government has yet been able to take forward the follow-up actions required for handing the CMD over to the Garrison. The Government expresses its regret that the persons and organisations concerned have ignored the background and actual circumstances of the CMD and made unfounded criticisms.

In May 2018, the Court of Final Appeal dismissed Designing Hong Kong Limited's appeal and re-instated the judgment of the Court of First Instance on dismissing the Protective Costs Order application of the company. The Government will continue to closely monitor the development of the relevant judicial review and complete the required procedures and work as soon as practicable.

The CMD is one of the military buildings and fixed facilities required to be reprovisioned for the Garrison according to the 1994 Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Arrangements for the Future Use of the Military Sites in Hong Kong (the Defence Land Agreement). The Government has explained the situation to the Legislative Council and the general public on different occasions. As the CMD is a military facility, it is not appropriate to open it up for public use before it is handed over to the Garrison.

Import of poultry meat and products from Da Qaidam Administrative Region in Qinghai Province suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (June 22) that in view of a notification from the Ministry of Agriculture about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 sub-type avian influenza in Da Qaidam Administrative Region, Qinghai Province, it has followed the existing approach for control of highly pathogenic avian influenza and taken recommendations from the World Organisation for Animal Health into account to suspend the import of poultry and poultry products, including poultry eggs, from an area within a radius of 3 kilometres from the said place for a period of 90 days, and from an area within a radius of 13km for 21 days, with immediate effect for the protection of public health in Hong Kong.

A spokesman for the CFS said that according to information from the General Administration of Customs, the outbreak does not affect any registered Mainland poultry farms for export to Hong Kong. No registered poultry meat or poultry egg processing plants are currently situated within the import restriction zone concerned.

The Centre will closely monitor the latest developments of the avian influenza case in the province and take appropriate follow-up action as necessary.

Statistics of Stored Value Facilities (SVF) Schemes Issued by SVF Licensees

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) published today (June 22) statistics on SVF schemes issued by SVF licensees for the first quarter of 2018.

The SVF scheme statistics (see Annex) include quarterly data on SVF schemes issued by the sixteen SVF licensees (Note 1). The HKMA began to publish the SVF scheme statistics on a quarterly basis in March 2017 to enhance transparency of the SVF industry in Hong Kong.

According to the quarterly statistics, the total number of SVF accounts

in use (Note 2) was 49.01 million by the end of Q1/2018, representing a 4.9 per cent increase from the previous quarter. The total number of SVF transactions (Note 3) was around 1.4 billion for Q1/2018, representing a 4.4 per cent drop from the previous quarter. The total value of SVF transactions was HK\$39.0 billion for Q1/2018, slightly up 0.9 per cent from the previous quarter. Of the total transaction value, HK\$20.4 billion was related to point-of-sale spending payment, HK\$16.1 billion in online spending payment and HK\$2.5 billion in P2P funds transfer. The total float and SVF deposit (Note 4) was HK\$8.4 billion for Q1/2018, 5.9 per cent higher than the previous quarter. The quarter-to-quarter drops in payment transaction volume and amount in Q1/2018 are likely due to seasonal factors as a similar pattern was observed in the previous year.

As compared with the end of Q1/2017, the total number of SVF accounts in use at the end of Q1/2018 was up by 16.6 per cent, and the total float and SVF deposit was up by 21.9 per cent. The total number and value of SVF transactions during Q1/2018 were up by 5.2 per cent and 30.2 per cent respectively year-on-year.

Notes:

1. The SVF scheme statistics are compiled from data on SVF schemes issued by the sixteen SVF licensees. The SVF licensees, in alphabetical order, are 33 Financial Services Limited, Alipay Financial Services (HK) Limited, Autotoll Limited, Bank of Communications Co., Ltd., Dah Sing Bank, Limited, ePaylinks Technology Co., Limited, HKT Payment Limited, Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (The), K & R International Limited, Octopus Cards Limited, Optal Asia Limited, PayPal Hong Kong Limited, TNG (Asia) Limited, Transforex (Hong Kong) Investment Consulting Co., Limited, UniCard Solution Limited and WeChat Pay Hong Kong Limited.
2. "Total number of SVF accounts in use" refers to the total number of SVF accounts that can be used as at the end of the reporting period.
3. SVF transactions include point-of-sale spending payment, online spending payment and P2P funds transfer.
4. The following terms follow their definitions in the Payment Systems and Stored Value Facilities Ordinance:
 - "Float" means the stored value remaining on the facility but does not include any SVF deposit;
 - "SVF deposit" means a deposit placed with the licensee, or another person on behalf of the licensee, for enabling the facility to be used.

[Statistics of payment cards issued in](#)

Hong Kong for first quarter 2018

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) today (June 22) published today statistics of payment cards issued in Hong Kong for the first quarter of 2018.

The payment card statistics (see Annex) include quarterly data on credit and debit cards issued in Hong Kong under the credit and/or debit card schemes of the eight payment card scheme operators (Note 1). The HKMA began to publish the payment card statistics on a quarterly basis in June 2010 to enhance transparency of the payment card industry in Hong Kong, in line with international practice.

According to the quarterly statistics, the total number of credit cards in circulation (Note 2) was 19.89 million by the end of Q1/2018. The figure represents a 1.1% increase from the previous quarter and a 3.3% increase from the previous year. The number and value of credit card transactions (including retail sales and cash advances) (Note 3) are susceptible to seasonal factors and the general economic environment, making the trends more prone to fluctuation. The total number of credit card transactions was 167.01 million for Q1/2018, representing a 0.1% increase from the previous quarter and a 14.5% increase from the same period in 2017. The total value of credit card transactions was HK\$182.6 billion for Q1/2018, representing a 0.1% decrease from the previous quarter and a 13.9% increase from the same period in 2017. Of the total transaction value, HK\$142.5 billion (78%) was related to retail spending in Hong Kong, HK\$28.3 billion (15%) in retail spending overseas and HK\$11.8 billion (7%) in cash advances.

The total number of debit cards in circulation is not available due to overlapping of debit card brands in a single card. Like the number and value of credit card transactions, the number and value of debit card transactions in relation to retail sales and bills payments (Note 4) are also affected by seasonal factors. On a quarterly basis, the total number of debit card transactions in relation to retail sales and bills payments decreased 1.6% to 34.65 million while the total value increased by 8.2% to HK\$87.9 billion in Q1/2018. When compared to the same period in 2017, the total number increased by 1.9% and the total value rose by 12.0% in Q1/2018.

Notes:

1. The payment card statistics are compiled from data on credit and debit cards issued in Hong Kong by both authorised institutions (AIs) and non-authorised institutions (non-AIs) under the credit and/or debit card schemes of the eight payment card scheme operators (the card operators). The card operators, in alphabetical order, are American Express International, Inc., Discover Financial Services (Hong Kong) Limited, EPS Company (Hong Kong) Limited (EPSCO), JCB International (Asia) Ltd, Joint Electronic Teller Services Ltd. (JETCO), MasterCard

Asia/Pacific Pte. Ltd., UnionPay International Co. Ltd and Visa Worldwide Pte. Limited.

2. A credit card issued in Hong Kong only carries one credit card brand. The total number of credit cards in circulation refers to the total number of credit cards (i.e. cards with a credit function) issued in Hong Kong under the credit card schemes of card operators (but excluding EPSCO and JETCO, which do not operate a credit card scheme). Some of these credit cards carry debit card functions, i.e. the credit card can be used for making purchases/payments or cash withdrawal at ATMs through directly debiting cardholders' bank accounts.
3. The total number/value of credit card transactions refer to the total number/value of transactions made via credit card accounts of credit cards issued in Hong Kong under the credit card schemes of card operators (excluding EPSCO and JETCO). Starting from March 2015, a Hong Kong/overseas spending breakdown of credit card retail sales transactions is provided.
4. The total number/value of debit card transactions in relation to retail sales/bill payments refers to the total number/value of those transactions made via debiting cardholders' bank accounts. Some of the eight card operators do not operate a debit card scheme. Care should be exercised in combining the credit card retail sales figures and the debit card retail sales/bills payment figures because of the possibility of double counting.

Seventeen immigration offenders arrested

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations, including operations codenamed "Twilight" and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Labour Department codenamed "Champion", from June 19 to 21. A total of 11 illegal workers and six suspected employers were arrested.

During operation "Twilight", ImmD Task Force officers raided 17 target locations including restaurants, warehouses, a recycling yard, a massage parlour, a fish market and residential buildings. A total of three illegal workers and two employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised two men and a woman, aged 21 to 49. Among them, a man was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits him from taking any employment. Meanwhile, a man and a woman, aged 53 and 45, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

Furthermore, during operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 124 target locations in Central, Sham Shui Po and Mong Kok including restaurants, salons, retail shops, massage parlours and residential flats.

Eight illegal workers and four employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised six men and two women, aged 25 to 53. Among them, two men were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. Meanwhile, a man and three women, aged 44 to 58, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

"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," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are 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 Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases. It is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to 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. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct 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 threat 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 interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.