

People's Bank of China to issue Renminbi Bills through Central Moneymarkets Unit of Hong Kong Monetary Authority

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

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) will issue Renminbi Bills through the Central Moneymarkets Unit of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA). Please find attached the tender notice and the tender information memorandum of the Renminbi Bills to be issued by the PBOC. Please also find attached the tender-related information provided by the Issuing and Lodging Agent through the HKMA.

LCQ6: Enhancing the attractiveness of bazaars

Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (March 13):

Question:

There are views pointing out that there are still a number of areas in which the competitiveness of bazaars organised under the "Night Vibes Hong Kong" and the "Day x Night Vibes @ 18 Districts" can be strengthened. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that at present, many bazaar stalls only sell pre-cooked dishes or simple food, and there are stringent restrictions in respect of the thresholds for selling food cooked on-site as well as the types of food served, which compare unfavourably to bazaars in the neighbouring regions, whether the Government will study providing stalls with more support for their applications for temporary food factory licences or liquor licences, or adjusting the overly stringent licence requirements, so that the stalls can offer more variety of food and beverages, thereby strengthening the bazaar economy;

(2) whether it will integrate the characteristics of districts as well as local culture and creativity into bazaars, conduct a territory-wide review

for areas with potentials for bazaar development, and consider a crossover of the local culture with international cultures or the cultures of other cities in our country, and assign a dedicated department to co-ordinate the relevant matters, so as to establish bazaars and night markets with characteristics and appeal; and

(3) of the attendances, revenue and the numbers of various types of stalls (including stalls involving the heating up of pre-cooked food, stalls involving the cooking of pre-prepared and ready-to-cook food, and stalls selling dry goods) in respect of the bazaars under the Day x Night Vibes@18 Districts; how it assesses the economic benefits of such bazaars, and whether it has reviewed the areas that need further enhancement and improvement?

Reply:

President,

The Government has launched the "Night Vibes Hong Kong" in September 2023. Various departments have collaborated with different organisations to organise a wealth of night-time events showcasing local characteristics and attractions. In the first half of this year, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) has organised a series of diverse leisure and cultural activities under "Day x Night Vibes @ 18 Districts". The various activities involved bazaars, such as "Temple Street – Endless Authentic Encounters" and "Celebrating the Year of Dragon – Tsuen Wan Lantern Festival Bazaar", reflecting that bazaars can have flexible positioning and content to suit different objectives and themes. Aside from the above, various organisations in the community also organise different types of bazaars from time to time.

In response to the question raised by Hon Ho, after consulting the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB), the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau, and the Security Bureau, my reply is as follows:

(1) The Government have all along been providing facilitation to the organisation of bazaar activities and offering necessary assistance to applicants. At present, stalls in a bazaar only need to fulfill some basic requirements for safeguarding food safety and public health (such as whether the venue has electricity supply and suitable food storage and washing facilities) to obtain a temporary food factory licence from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) for cooking food from raw ingredients, and selling of food and beverages. Depending on the specific venue facilities, a vast diversity of food and beverages can be sold. For example, there were soufflé pancakes, oyster omelet, and grilled oysters sold at the "Kwun Tong Night Market in the Year of Dragon". The FEHD also provides one-stop service to assist applicants to refer application materials to relevant departments for processing in parallel, so as to facilitate and expedite the application process.

Regarding temporary liquor licences, the Police will proactively contact the applicants to explain the application procedures and the required documents for the licence, and provide professional opinions on venue safety

and crowd control. This is to ensure public safety and order meanwhile facilitate the organisation of different activities by the organiser. There are already stalls providing alcoholic beverages in bazaar. The sale of craft beer at the "Waterfront Carnival" in Wan Chai is an example.

(2) In terms of infusing district characteristics and local culture and creativity into bazaars, the "Day x Night Vibes @ 18 Districts" activities organised by the HAD, mainly aim to provide the public with a wide range of cultural and leisure events, and to showcase local diversity or traditional cultural connotations in various districts, so as to promote a vibrant atmosphere in the community. These activities take various forms, including bazaar carnivals, artwork exhibitions, musical performances, and sports experiences.

According to the CSTB, if bazaar organisers are interested in inviting local arts groups to perform at bazaars, they may reach out to the latter through the CSTB and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Arts groups and artists can also apply for subsidy from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council to perform at different venues (including bazaars). Whether bazaars would be infused with local culture and creativity depends on the preference, management arrangements and interest of the bazaar organisers. It also depends on whether the performances/shows of the arts groups and artists are suitable for the relevant bazaar venues.

As for bazaars organised by different organisations in the community from time to time, the Environment and Ecology Bureau co-ordinated the updated version of the "Resource Handbook for Bazaar Application" that was issued in January this year, covering how to identify suitable venues and apply for hiring government venues (including those under the Housing Authority/Housing Department, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, and the Lands Department), to facilitate interested organisations/persons to have an easier grasp of the relevant application procedures and information.

(3) Under the "Day x Night Vibes @ 18 Districts" organised by the HAD, a series of activities have been rolled out progressively since late January this year. The activities are in diverse forms and context and bazaars is only one of the forms. As of March 6, 2024, there were eight activities with bazaar elements. The activities have successfully boosted the atmosphere in the community, and attracted many citizens to visit, take photos and enjoy the festive atmosphere. General feedback from the stalls has been positive, indicating a high patronage. For example, the bazaar in Kwun Tong recorded 800 000 visitors in 23 days, the one in Wong Tai Sin had 114 000 visitors in three days, and the one in Yuen Long had 120 000 visitors in three days. Stall operators of the bazaars generally expressed satisfaction with their sales, but had not disclosed actual profits due to commercial considerations.

The themes, scale and duration of the bazaars vary, with the number of stalls ranging from more than 20 to about 120. Most of the stalls sell dry goods, and there are also stalls selling cooked food. As of March 3, 2024, the FEHD has issued a total of 111 temporary food factory licences to such

bazaar stalls for the sale of food and beverages, including food cooked on site from raw ingredients and pre-prepared food.

Thank you, President.

LCQ7: Improving community facilities in Kowloon City District

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (March 13):

Question:

It has been reported that the Kowloon City District (including Ho Man Tin and Hung Hom) is a relatively old community with inadequate ancillary community facilities as well as ageing cultural and leisure facilities, and for a number of recreation and sports (R&S) facilities (including sports centres, basketball courts and tennis courts) in the district, their numbers do not meet the standards provided in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government announced in the 2018-2019 Budget that it would expedite the implementation of projects to construct some new facilities for which the community had been longing in various districts, and the selected project in the Kowloon City District is the construction of the Ho Man Tin Government Complex with facilities including a community hall, a multi-purpose conference room, a residential care home for the elderly cum day care unit for the elderly, an Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness, an integrated family service centre and a district R&S centre, of the latest development timetable for the Complex (including the time of applying for funding, and commencing and completing works), as well as the expected commissioning time of the various related facilities, the numbers of their beneficiaries and their service details;

(2) as it has been reported that with redevelopment projects in Hung Hom commencing one after another in recent years, the population will significantly increase in the future, whether the authorities will, in order to cater for the needs of the population in the district, consider adopting the "single site, multiple use" model to develop the Wuhu Street Temporary Playground in Hung Hom into a government complex, so as to provide cultural and sports facilities, a public clinic, an elderly service centre, a day child care centre, etc; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as the scope of the open space project at Hung Hom Waterfront includes the construction of a children's playground with diversified inclusive play equipment, as well as the provision of a viewing deck whose design will imitate a ship under construction to resemble the shipbuilding scene in the Whampoa Dock in the old days, of the latest progress of the project?

Reply:

President:

Various parts of the question involve individual district facilities and projects in Kowloon City District under different bureaux/departments (B/Ds). Having consulted relevant B/Ds, my reply is as follows:

(1) Regarding the proposed development of a joint-user complex in Ho Man Tin, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and relevant departments are currently conducting studies on the planning and facilities of the complex to ensure that the relevant facilities (e.g. community hall and residential care home for the elderly with a day care unit) and services will meet the needs of the local community. Upon completion of preparatory work, the HAD will co-ordinate and take forward the project in accordance with the established practice, including consulting the relevant panel of the Legislative Council (LegCo) and submitting the funding proposal to the Finance Committee (FC) for approval.

(2) At present, under the management of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), the site of Wuhu Street Temporary Playground in Hung Hom provides an outdoor basketball court for public use free of charge, which has all along been well-received. The LCSD currently has no plan to develop the site at this stage. Should there be any plan for development in the future, the Government will for sure consider the "single site, multiple use" model, so as to re-provision the existing basketball court and provide more community facilities.

(3) The project scope of Open Space at Hung Hom Waterfront includes upgrading the existing waterfront promenade and developing an open space at Kin Wan Street. The project was commenced by the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) under the policy supervision of the then Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) (now the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau upon restructuring) upon funding approval obtained by the then HAB from the FC of LegCo in July 2021.

â€‹The upgrading works of the Hung Hom Promenade are carried out in phases with a pedestrian link retained, allowing the promenade to be partially opened for public use during construction. The first phase of the upgrading works has been completed and reopened in the first half of 2023. The second phase of the works is currently in progress.

As for the open space at Kin Wan Street, which is under construction, both active leisure facilities (including a basketball court, fitness stations and a children's playground) and passive leisure facilities (including a viewing deck, landscaped area and seating area) will be provided. The children's playground will be integrated with both the

waterfront environment and landscape design, and provide inclusive play equipment suitable for children of different ages. As for the viewing deck, its design imitates a ship in the course of construction, which is reminiscent of the shipbuilding history of the Whampoa Dock in the old days.

According to the ArchSD, it is expected that the whole project will be completed by the end of 2024.

Approval letters to be issued to successful applicants under White Form Secondary Market Scheme 2023

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

Issuance of approval letters for WSM 2023

Following the ballot for the White Form Secondary Market Scheme 2023 (WSM 2023) drawn on October 5, 2023, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has completed detailed vetting of the eligibility of applicants. Approval and confirmation letters for the 4 500 successful applicants (4 050 family applicants and 450 one-person applicants) will be issued tomorrow (March 14).

"Each successful applicant will be issued with one Approval Letter and two Confirmation Letters. One Confirmation Letter is applicable to the HA's Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) Secondary Market while the other is applicable to the Hong Kong Housing Society (HS)'s Flat-for-Sale Scheme (FFSS) Secondary Market. Within six weeks from the date of issuance, holders of the Approval Letters may submit the Confirmation Letters to the HA and/or the HS for application for the Certificate of Eligibility to Purchase (CEP) to purchase a flat with premium not yet paid in the HA's HOS Secondary Market or the HS's FFSS Secondary Market," a spokesman for the HA said today (March 13).

"The CEP is valid for 12 months from the date of issuance and no extension will be granted upon its expiry. To complete the transaction, holders of the CEP need to apply for a Letter of Nomination from the HA or the HS after they have entered into a Provisional Agreement for Sale and Purchase (PASP). The applicant and the family member(s) named in the application form must meet the eligibility criteria of the WSM 2023 from submission of the application form up to the date of signing the PASP. Moreover, Subsidised Sale Flats (SSFs) shall be occupied by the owner and all members of the family named in the Application Form for the purchase of the flat," the spokesman said.

The list of successful applications will be uploaded tomorrow to the

website for the WSM 2023 (www.housingauthority.gov.hk/wsm/2023).

Mortgage arrangements

The HA Subsidised Housing Committee earlier endorsed the relaxation of the mortgage arrangements for SSFs. The relevant relaxation of arrangements in respect of the primary market has been implemented earlier. The relaxation in respect of the secondary market has been implemented on March 1, 2024 (the launch date), and will be applicable to all successful applicants under the WSM 2023 for new mortgage loans drawn down to finance the purchase of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS)/Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH)/Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) flats transacted in the HOS Secondary Market Scheme (SMS).

In respect of the mortgage arrangements for the SMS, starting from March 1, the maximum mortgage default guarantee period has been extended from 30 years to 50 years for HOS/GSH flats; and from 25 years to 50 years for TPS flats. For the first 40 years, the HA will provide a mortgage default guarantee to banks and authorised financial institutions participating in the provision of mortgage loan for such flats (participating financial institutions) for a mortgage loan up to 95 per cent and 90 per cent of the assessed value or purchase price of the flat (whichever is the lower) respectively for Green Form (GF) and White Form (WF) applicants. From 40 years onwards to 50 years, the mortgage default guarantee provided to participating financial institutions for mortgage loans will be up to 80 per cent of the assessed value or purchase price of the flat (whichever is the lower). In case the loan-to-value (LTV) ratio required is above 80 per cent, the purchaser of an SSF could check with the participating financial institutions whether he/she needs to apply for a mortgage loan under the Mortgage Insurance Programme (MIP) of the HKMC Insurance Limited (HKMCI). To this end, the HA has reached an agreement with the HKMCI that the latter will allow SSF purchasers in the SMS to apply for a mortgage loan under the MIP to obtain mortgage loans up to an LTV ratio of 95 per cent for GF applicants and 90 per cent for WF applicants. Meanwhile, the maximum mortgage repayment period for HOS/GSH/TPS flats sold under the SMS has been extended from 25 years to 30 years.

If purchasers of SSFs would like to apply for a mortgage loan under the MIP of the HKMCI, they may submit applications to participating financial institutions. Highlights of the MIP are set out in the Annex. Details of the MIP are available on the HKMCI website (www.hkmc.com.hk/eng/our_business/mortgage_insurance_programme.html). For further queries, please contact any participating financial institutions or call the HKMCI at 2536 0136.

LCQ10: Manpower of Lifeguards

Following is a question by the Hon Chau Siu-chung and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau, in the Legislative Council today (March 13):

Question:

It is learnt that in recent years, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)'s recruitment exercises for lifeguards have failed to attain its recruitment targets. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on civil service lifeguards (including senior lifeguards and lifeguards) in each of the past five years: (i) the target number of recruits, (ii) the number of applications received, (iii) the number of applicants invited to attend the recruitment interview, (iv) the number of applicants who passed the trade test, (v) the number of applicants who passed the recruitment interview, (vi) the number of applicants who passed the medical examination and other procedures, (vii) the number of appointment letters issued, (viii) the number of applicants who declined the offer of appointment, (ix) the number of applicants who reported for duty, and (x) the total recruitment expenses incurred in each recruitment exercise, with a breakdown by type of post;

(2) of the following information on non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards (seasonal lifeguards) in each of the past five years: (i) the target number of recruits, (ii) the number of applications received, (iii) the number of applicants invited to attend the recruitment interview, (iv) the number of applicants who passed the trade test, (v) the number of applicants who passed the recruitment interview, (vi) the number of applicants who passed the medical examination and other procedures, (vii) the number of appointment letters issued, (viii) the number of applicants who declined the offer of appointment, (ix) the number of applicants who reported for duty, and (x) the total recruitment expenses incurred in each recruitment exercise, with a breakdown by type of employment contract terms;

(3) of (i) the estimated expenditure on the employment of seasonal lifeguards by the Government, and (ii) the actual expenditure on the salaries and benefits of such lifeguards in each of the past eight years;

(4) in respect of each aquatic venue under the LCSD in each of the past eight years, of (i) the number of scheduled opening hours of each of its facilities, and (ii) the number of hours during which each of its facilities was closed due to insufficient manpower of lifeguards, with a breakdown by District Council district; and

(5) as the Government indicated at the meeting of the Panel on Public Service of this Council on May 15 last year that it would explore ways to reduce the

reliance on seasonal lifeguards with a view to tackling the problem of shortage of core lifeguards, of the progress and details of the relevant work at present?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the questions raised by the Hon Chau Siu-chung is as follows:

(1) Details of the recruitment exercises of civil service lifeguards (including senior lifeguards and lifeguards) in the past five years are set out at Annex 1.

(2) Details of the recruitment exercises of seasonal lifeguards in the past five years are set out at Annex 2.

(3) The actual expenditure on the recruitment of seasonal lifeguards by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) in the past eight years is set out at Annex 3. As the budget for the recruitment of seasonal lifeguards is subsumed under the overall budget for non-civil service contract staff, the LCSD is unable to provide separate figures for seasonal lifeguards.

(4) With respect of its aquatic venues, the LCSD does not maintain (i) the number of scheduled opening hours of each of its facilities; and (ii) the number of hours during which each of its facilities was closed due to insufficient manpower of lifeguards.

That said, the number of scheduled opening days of LCSD's aquatic venues in the past eight years broken down by District Council district are set out at Annexes 4, 5 and 6 respectively. The number of days of full or partial closure of public swimming pools due to inadequate lifeguards in the past eight years broken down by District Council district are set out in Annex 7, and the number of days of full closure of gazetted beaches are set out in Annex 8. No water sports centres have been closed due to inadequate lifeguards in the past eight years.

(5) Owing to the insufficient supply of lifeguards in the labour market, it has been difficult for the Government to employ adequate seasonal lifeguards in recent years to provide lifesaving services during the swimming season. In order to tackle the manpower shortage, the LCSD has rolled out a series of measures to increase and stabilise the supply of lifeguards. Details of the measures are as follows:

To ensure sufficient manpower at aquatic venues to maintain lifesaving services, in addition to employing full-time seasonal lifeguards, part-time hourly-rated seasonal lifeguards and Post-retirement Service Contract (PRSC) full-time seasonal lifeguards, the LCSD created the post of full-year full-time lifeguard on one-year contract from 2019 to 2022. In 2023, full-year full-time lifeguards were employed on two-year contract and 110 qualified lifeguards reported duty eventually. The LCSD will further employ 70

additional full-year full-time lifeguards on two-year contract in 2024. This will provide more stable working conditions, attracting more qualified persons to become lifeguards.

Moreover, to expedite the recruitment process, the LCSD will invite full-time seasonal lifeguards who have completed their contracts to continue to serve on a part-time basis, and extend the contract period of existing PRSC seasonal lifeguards. Recruitment of PRSC seasonal lifeguards will also continue for the 2024 swimming season to ensure a steady manpower supply.

In order to increase the attractiveness of becoming seasonal lifeguards, the LCSD has enhanced the remuneration package of seasonal lifeguards with reference to those offered by the local private sector, while taking into consideration the services and unique operational needs of public swimming pools and beaches, in order to attract more qualified persons to apply for the post of LCSD seasonal lifeguards. In addition, the LCSD has, having regard to market trends, further enhanced the remuneration package of seasonal lifeguards. Depending on the position as well as the types of lifeguard awards and first-aid certificate held, the salary of a seasonal lifeguard with end-of-contract gratuities may range from \$24,500 to \$26,000 per month. The LCSD has also stepped up its publicity efforts by placing recruitment advertisements on public transport, popular newspapers, social media websites, etc. and displaying recruitment posters at swimming pools and beaches with higher usage rates across the 18 districts. Meanwhile, the LCSD will send letters and distribute recruitment posters to secondary schools/post-secondary institutions/relevant organisations to strengthen its publicity efforts.

In addition, the LCSD launched the "Combined Seasonal Lifeguard Training Scheme" in 2023 to offer full-time training and practice in respect of swimming pool and/or beach lifeguards in a "hire and train" mode, so as to help trainees acquire pool and/or beach lifesaving awards before serving as seasonal lifeguards at LCSD swimming pools or beaches during swimming seasons. While those who already possessed a valid Pool Lifeguard Award can further acquire the Beach Lifeguard Award through the scheme, people with no lifesaving qualifications can also join the scheme. Currently, the monthly training allowance is either \$14,640 or \$16,400, depending on the type of award to be obtained.

The LCSD is actively negotiating with the Hong Kong China Life Saving Society and the Employees Retraining Board and planning to co-organise tailor-made lifesaving training programmes and provide employment services with a view to increasing the supply of lifeguards. Moreover, the LCSD will continue to support the Home Affairs Department in organising lifesaving career talks and training programmes for ethnic minorities (EM) so that the latter can receive formal training to become qualified lifeguards with a view to opening up new labour market. In 2023, the LCSD liaised with EM-serving groups to gauge the interest of EM communities in the aforementioned scheme and actively planned relevant lifesaving training programmes. In 2024, the LCSD will continue to get in touch with relevant EM supporting organisations to promote the lifesaving training programmes to EM.

At the same time, the LCSD is actively planning the preparatory work for outsourcing lifesaving services at designated public swimming pools, and will continue to study the feasibility of importing qualified lifeguards from the Mainland/overseas in consultation with different bureaux/departments (the Civil Service Bureau/the Labour Department) and relevant organisations.