

Public service on Registration Cards for People with Disabilities

The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) today (February 28) announced that applicants for Registration Cards for People with Disabilities can continue to download the application forms from the LWB's website (www.lwb.gov.hk/en/servicedesk/forms). Duly completed application forms with the required documents can be submitted via the same LWB website by e-submission, or posted to the Central Registry for Rehabilitation, Labour and Welfare Bureau, 11/F, West Wing, Central Government Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar.

Approved Registration Cards will be sent to the applicants by post. In the whole process of the application for, processing and issuance of the Registration Cards, applicants do not need to attend any procedures at the LWB in person. This is in line with the Government's measures to reduce social contact and control infection in fighting the epidemic.

Enquiries can be sent by email to the LWB (enquiry@lwb.gov.hk), or made by telephone on 2810 3859, 2810 3861, 2810 3879 or 3655 4777 during office hours.

Monetary Statistics for January 2020

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

According to statistics published today (February 28) by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, total deposits with authorized institutions remained virtually unchanged in January 2020. Among the total, Hong Kong dollar deposits grew by 1.1 per cent, while overall foreign-currency deposits declined by 1.2 per cent. Renminbi deposits in Hong Kong decreased by 3.1 per cent to RMB612.5 billion at the end of January. The total remittance of renminbi for cross-border trade settlement amounted to RMB404.7 billion in January, compared with RMB541.1 billion in December 2019.

Total loans and advances increased by 0.7 per cent in January. Among the total, loans for use in Hong Kong (including trade finance) went up by 0.8 per cent and loans for use outside Hong Kong increased by 0.3 per cent from a month ago. The Hong Kong-dollar loan-to-deposit ratio decreased to 89.4% at the end of January from 90.3 per cent at the end of December 2019, as Hong Kong-dollar deposits increased while Hong Kong-dollar loans stayed virtually unchanged.

Hong Kong dollar M2 and M3 both increased by 1.3 per cent in January, and rose by 2.5 per cent and 2.4 per cent respectively compared to a year ago. The seasonally-adjusted Hong Kong dollar M1 increased by 4.1 per cent in January, and increased by 0.6 per cent compared to a year ago, reflecting in part investment-related activities. Total M2 and M3 both increased by 0.2 per cent in January, and expanded by 2.3 per cent and 2.2 per cent respectively from a year earlier.

As monthly monetary statistics are subject to volatilities due to a wide range of transient factors, such as seasonal and IPO-related funding demand as well as business and investment-related activities, caution is required when interpreting the statistics.

Gradual resumption of public services of Office of the Ombudsman

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

To continue to help reduce social contacts and the risk of the spread of COVID-19 in the community, the Office of The Ombudsman today (February 28) announced that the Office will implement targeted measures and gradually resume more public services from March 2 in an orderly manner.

The Office will have the following updated special work arrangements from March 2:

- The Reception Counter will be open from 10am to 4pm from Monday to Friday. Members of the public who wish to lodge complaints or make enquiries are encouraged to contact the Office through email, fax, hotline, voice message or online form. Face-to-face meetings with the Duty Officer or case officers have to be made by prior appointment; and
- All visitors with a prior appointment are required to wear surgical masks and have their body temperature checked before entering the Office. Those with symptoms such as fever or cough will be advised to seek medical assistance and not to enter the Office.

The Office will review the situation regularly and prepare for full resumption of normal services when conditions permit.

Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (February 28) that the total assets of the Exchange Fund amounted to HK\$4,194.0 billion as at January 31, 2020, HK\$65.1 billion lower than that at the end of December 2019. Hong Kong dollar assets decreased by HK\$46.9 billion and foreign currency assets decreased by HK\$18.2 billion.

The decline in Hong Kong dollar assets was mainly due to a reduction in Exchange Fund Bills and Notes issued but not yet settled and a decrease in bank borrowings, which were partly offset by additional placements from Fiscal Reserves. The decline in foreign currency assets was mainly due to a reduction in unsettled purchases of securities, which was partly offset by the issuance of Certificates of Indebtedness.

The Currency Board Account shows that the Monetary Base at the end of January 2020 was HK\$1,688.7 billion, increased by HK\$26.3 billion, or 1.6 per cent, from the end of December 2019. The rise was mainly due to an increase in the outstanding amount of Certificates of Indebtedness, which reflected the seasonal demand for banknotes around Lunar New Year.

The amount of Backing Assets increased by HK\$25.1 billion, or 1.4 per cent, to HK\$1,873.7 billion. The increase was mainly attributable to the issuance of Certificates of Indebtedness. The backing ratio decreased from 111.21 per cent at the end of December 2019 to 110.96 per cent at the end of January 2020.

At present, four press releases relating to the Exchange Fund's data are issued by the HKMA each month. Three of these releases are issued to disseminate monetary data in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS). The fourth press release, on the Exchange Fund's Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account, is made in accordance with the HKMA's policy of maintaining a high level of transparency. For the month of February 2020, the scheduled dates for issuing the press releases are as follows:

February 7 (Issued)	SDDS International Reserves (Hong Kong's Latest Foreign Currency Reserve Assets Figures)
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February 14 (Issued)	SDDS Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank (Analytical Accounts of the Exchange Fund)
February 28	SDDS Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity
February 28	Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account

International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) released today (February 28) the analytical data on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's foreign currency reserves and foreign currency liquidity as at the end of January 2020 (Annex). These data are published monthly in the Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard.

At present, four press releases relating to the Exchange Fund's data are issued by the HKMA each month. Three of these releases are issued to disseminate monetary data in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS). The fourth press release, on the Exchange Fund's Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account, is made in accordance with the HKMA's policy of maintaining a high level of transparency. For the month of February 2020, the scheduled dates for issuing the press releases are as follows:

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February 28 SDDS Template on International
Reserves and Foreign Currency
Liquidity

February 28 Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet
and Currency Board Account