

Credit card lending survey results for fourth quarter 2019

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority published today (February 21) the credit card lending survey results for the fourth quarter of 2019.

Total card receivables increased by 4.0 per cent in the fourth quarter to HK\$137.7 billion at end-December 2019, after edging up by 0.2 per cent in the previous quarter. The increase was mainly driven by festive spending and salaries tax payment.

The combined delinquent and rescheduled ratio stood at 0.33 per cent at end-December 2019, little changed from the previous quarter-end.

The charge-off amount decreased by HK\$26 million during the fourth quarter to HK\$555 million. Correspondingly, the quarterly charge-off ratio decreased to 0.41 per cent from 0.44 per cent in the previous quarter.

Survey of Innovation Activities for 2019 starts

The Census and Statistics Department announced today (February 21) the commencement of the Survey of Innovation Activities for the reference year of 2019. The survey aims to collect information on innovation activities in the business sector. The survey results are useful to both the Government and the private sector in formulating policies and making decisions.

About 6 000 establishments in various economic sectors are sampled to participate in the survey. Questionnaires have been sent to sampled establishments individually together with the notification letters. To assist these establishments in providing the required information, an electronic template of the questionnaire will also be available upon request.

The statistical survey is a mandatory one conducted under Part III of the Census and Statistics Ordinance (Chapter 316). According to section 13(1) of the Ordinance, any person to whom a questionnaire relating to a statistical survey is delivered shall complete the questionnaire or cause it to be completed by other persons to the best of his/her knowledge and belief, and in the manner specified in the questionnaire, and then return the

questionnaire on or before the date specified in the questionnaire. The Ordinance also stipulates that all collected information which may enable identification of individual establishments should be kept in strict confidence. Only aggregate information, which does not reveal details of individual establishments, will be released.

The department would like to thank those establishments which had participated in previous rounds of the survey, and appeal for the support and co-operation of the management of all sampled establishments in the current survey round by returning the completed questionnaires to the department on or before April 29, 2020.

If necessary, census officers of the department may contact individual establishments to offer assistance in completing the questionnaire. Enquiries regarding the survey may be directed to the Science and Technology Statistics Section of the department (Tel: 3903 7316 or email: sia@censtatd.gov.hk).

Public service on Registration Cards for People with Disabilities

The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) today (February 21) announced that, in light of the extended special work arrangements for government employees up to March 1, persons intending to apply 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 LWB's 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.

Enquiries can be sent by email to the LWB (enquiry@lwb.gov.hk).

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (February 21) released the latest grading of water quality for four gazetted beaches that are open all year round for swimming (see Note).

Four beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Deep Water Bay Beach

Golden Beach

Silverstrand Beach

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades, namely Good (Grade 1), Fair (Grade 2), Poor (Grade 3) and Very Poor (Grade 4), according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the EPD's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

Note: To tie in with the response level under the "Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance" having been raised to the Emergency Response Level and to encourage people to avoid gathering, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced that all beaches will continue to be temporarily closed until further notice.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, February 21, 2020 is 107.7 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).