

Land Registry releases Trading Fund Annual Report

The Land Registry (LR) released the Land Registry Trading Fund (LRTF) Annual Report 2017/18 today (October 31).

"For the financial year ending March 31, 2018, the LRTF posted a profit of \$131.8 million and achieved a 38.1 per cent financial return on fixed assets, mainly due to an increase in business volume," the Land Registrar, Ms Doris Cheung, said.

According to the report, the total number of documents registered and searches of land registers increased by 12.8 per cent and 6.1 per cent respectively when compared to the financial year of 2016/17.

Ms Cheung said that the LR exceeded all targets set in its performance pledges and implemented various enhancements to the Integrated Registration Information System Online Services. The LR also launched the e-Alert Service for authorised institutions (AIs) under the Banking Ordinance (i.e. licensed banks, restricted licence banks and deposit-taking companies) to help them better manage credit risks in mortgage lending with effect from February 2017. With the consent of the relevant property owners, the AIs subscribing to the Service will receive electronic notifications from the LR when further charges or mortgage documents in respect of the properties mortgaged to the AIs concerned are lodged for registration in the LR. In order to provide greater security and convenience to the AIs for submission of applications for the Service as well as to increase the operational efficiency of both the AIs and the LR, the LR plans to introduce an e-channel for the Service in 2019.

The LR has also been making continuous efforts in engaging the key stakeholders for the early implementation of a title registration system in Hong Kong. During the past year, the LR continued to discuss and exchange views with the key stakeholders on the proposal of introducing title registration on new land first (the "new land first" proposal) and the outstanding issues concerning conversion under the proposed Two-Stage Conversion Mechanism. In addition, the LR shared with them its interim findings of the study of the latest developments regarding title registration legislations and good practices adopted in some overseas common law jurisdictions. While continuing the efforts to resolve the outstanding issues on conversion with the key stakeholders and build consensus on the "new land first" proposal, the LR will complete the overseas jurisdiction study with a view to enhancing the proposals on amendments to the Land Titles Ordinance.

Ms Cheung concluded that although the LR's business performance is susceptible to the volatility of the property market, the LR will keep in view its financial position, take measures to contain expenditures and explore new business opportunities to meet customers' needs.

The report was tabled in the Legislative Council today. It can also be viewed or downloaded from the LR's website (www.landreg.gov.hk).

Inland Revenue (Amendment) (No. 7) Bill 2018 to be gazetted

The Inland Revenue (Amendment) (No. 7) Bill 2018 (Amendment Bill) will be gazetted on November 2. It seeks to:

- (a) align the tax treatment of financial instruments with their accounting treatment;
- (b) allow the deduction of interest expenses payable to overseas export credit agencies;
- (c) refine the provisions that implement the arrangement for automatic exchange of financial account information in tax matters (AEOI);
- (d) avoid potential double non-taxation of income of visiting teachers and researchers; and
- (e) revise the meaning of the sibling relationship.

"The current accounting standard requires certain entities to account for financial instruments on a fair value basis. The provision of an option for profits tax payers to elect to have financial instruments taxed on the same basis will facilitate their efforts in preparing the necessary tax returns. Separately, the proposal of allowing deduction of the interest expenses payable to overseas export credit agencies should help foster trading activities between Hong Kong and other places," a Government spokesman said.

The Amendment Bill also includes refinements to the AEOI regime implemented since 2017, so as to closely follow the requirements promulgated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. "The amendments related to AEOI are particularly crucial for Hong Kong to preserve its competitiveness and reputation as an international financial and business centre," the spokesman added.

The Government has also proposed amendments to the Inland Revenue Ordinance (IRO) to avoid potential double non-taxation of income of visiting teachers and researchers arising from the introduction of tax exemption for teachers and researchers in comprehensive avoidance of double taxation agreements/arrangements (CDTAs) signed by Hong Kong. Such an exemption arrangement has already been included in the CDTA signed with Saudi Arabia, and the Government plans to include an exemption in the one with the Mainland

so as to relieve tax burden for Hong Kong teachers and researchers working in the Mainland.

Moreover, to promote family support, the Amendment Bill proposes expansion of the meaning of "brother and sister" under the IRO to cover some cases related to adopted persons in determining the eligibility for dependent brother or dependent sister allowance.

The Amendment Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on November 14.

Space Museum launches new sky show "Norman the Snowman – On a Night of Shooting Stars" (with photos)

The Hong Kong Space Museum's new sky show, "Norman the Snowman – On a Night of Shooting Stars", will be launched tomorrow (November 1). Using stop motion animation and adorable puppets, the show takes audiences on a virtual journey to the stars under the dome of the Space Museum.

In the small hours of November 13, 1833, a huge number of shooting stars, also known as meteors, were witnessed in North America. As many as 20 shooting stars per second were said to have appeared, to the astonishment of the people who saw them, and it is still regarded today as the largest meteor shower in modern history. Unfortunately, photography had not been formally invented back then so the accuracy of the records of that meteor shower cannot be assured.

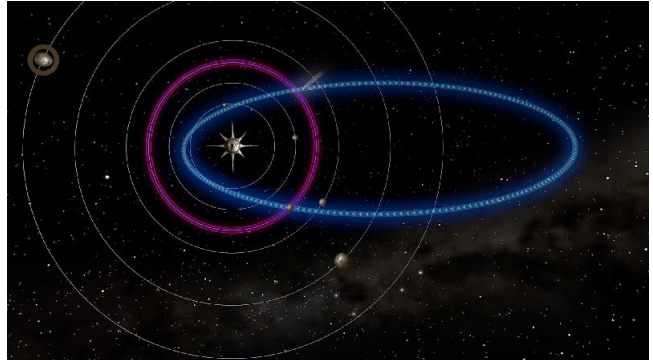
In the show, a boy who is fascinated by meteors longs to see a meteor shower, and his friend Norman the snowman tells him one will occur the following night. However, it has been snowing in town and the chance of seeing meteors is slim. Leaving the thick cloud cover and the ridicule of others behind, the boy decides to go on a quest with his snowman friend Norman in search of somewhere with clear skies. But who and what will they run into on the way?

The 32-minute show, of which the first five minutes is an introduction to the Chinese skies, will be screened until April 29 next year at the museum's Stanley Ho Space Theatre. It will be screened daily at 3.50pm and 7.20pm. An additional show at 12.20pm will be available on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

Tickets priced at \$24 (front stalls) and \$32 (stalls) are available at the Hong Kong Space Museum Box Office and URBIX (www.urbtix.hk). The museum

is closed on Tuesdays (except public holidays).

The Hong Kong Space Museum is located at 10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon. For further information, please call 2721 0226 or visit the website at hk.space.museum.



[Auctions for Lunar New Year fair stalls of Hong Kong Island, Islands District and Kowloon to start next Monday](#)

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (October 31) invited interested parties to join auctions for stalls at the 2019 Lunar New Year (LNY) fairs on Hong Kong Island, in Islands District and in Kowloon. The auctions will start next Monday (November 5).

The Victoria Park LNY Fair in Causeway Bay, Hong Kong Island, accommodates 180 wet goods stalls, 284 dry goods stalls, eight thematic stalls and three fast food stalls for bidding.

The LNY fair in Islands District will be held at Tat Tung Road Garden in Tung Chung with eight wet goods stalls and 34 dry goods stalls.

The four Kowloon LNY fairs will be held at Fa Hui Park and Cheung Sha

Wan Playground in Sham Shui Po, Morse Park in Wong Tai Sin and Kwun Tong Recreation Ground, with a total of 314 wet goods stalls, 243 dry goods stalls and eight fast food stalls.

Unlike last year with the auctions held in Queen Elizabeth Stadium in Wan Chai, the auctions for stalls of the LNY fair in Victoria Park this year will be held for four days from November 5 to 8 (Monday to Thursday) at the Assembly Hall, Lai Chi Kok Government Offices, 19 Lai Wan Road, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon. The auctions for stalls of the Sham Shui Po, Wong Tai Sin and Kwun Tong fairs will also be held at the Assembly Hall, Lai Chi Kok Government Offices, from November 13 to 16. The auction sessions are scheduled from 9am to 12.30pm (AM session) and 2pm until completion of the auction (PM session).

The auction for stalls of Tat Tung Road Garden LNY Fair in Tung Chung will be held at Rooms 1413 and 1414, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central, on November 9 (Friday). The auction session is scheduled from 9.30am until completion of the auction.

Details of the auctions and opening prices are as follows:

Victoria Park (Causeway Bay)

Auction date: November 5 (Monday)

AM session: Fast food and wet goods (Stall Nos. 301 to 372)

PM session: Wet goods (Stall Nos. 373 to 480)

Opening prices:

Fast food: \$374,850 (Stall size: 7.6 metres x 4.8m)

Fast food: \$200,780 (Stall size: 5m x 4m)

Wet goods: \$10,880

Auction date: November 6 (Tuesday)

AM session: Thematic goods and dry goods (Stall Nos. 1 to 40)

PM session: Dry goods (Stall Nos. 41 to 88)

Opening prices:

Thematic goods: \$41,650 (Stall size: 6m x 1.5m)

Dry goods: \$14,230

Auction date: November 7 (Wednesday)

AM session: Dry goods (Stall Nos. 93 to 140)

PM session: Dry goods (Stall Nos. 141 to 148 and 153 to 192)

Opening price:

Dry goods: \$14,230

Auction date: November 8 (Thursday)

AM session: Dry goods (Stall Nos. 193 to 208 and 213 to 246)

PM session: Dry goods (Stall Nos. 247 to 268 and 273 to 300)

Opening price:

Dry goods: \$14,230

* Due to the limited number of seats at the auction venue, those who are interested in bidding for the specific types of stalls at the Victoria Park

LNy fair are requested to participate in the auction on the designated auction date.

Tat Tung Road Garden (Tung Chung)

Auction date: November 9 (Friday)
Stall types: Wet goods and dry goods
Opening prices:
Wet goods: \$630
Dry goods: \$750

Fa Hui Park (Sham Shui Po)

Auction date: November 13 (Tuesday)
AM session: Wet goods
PM session: Fast food and dry goods
Opening prices:
Wet goods: \$5,900
Fast food: \$67,440 (Stall size: 7.6m x 4.8m)
Fast food: \$29,140 (Stall size: 5m x 3m)
Dry goods: \$13,000

Morse Park (Wong Tai Sin)

Auction date: November 14 (Wednesday)
AM session: Wet goods
PM session: Fast food and dry goods
Opening prices:
Wet goods: \$2,500
Fast food: \$16,670 (Stall size: 7.6m x 4.8m)
Dry goods: \$2,290

Kwun Tong Recreation Ground (Kwun Tong)

Auction date: November 15 (Thursday)
AM session: Wet goods
PM session: Fast food and dry goods
Opening prices:
Wet goods: \$3,640
Fast food: \$10,100 (Stall size: 7.6m x 4.8m)
Dry goods: \$3,550

Cheung Sha Wan Playground (Sham Shui Po)

Auction date: November 16 (Friday)
AM session: Wet goods
PM session: Fast food and dry goods
Opening prices:
Wet goods: \$830
Fast food: \$7,610 (Stall size: 7.6m x 4.8m)
Dry goods: \$920

Bidders for LNY fair stalls must be at least 18 years old and ordinarily resident in Hong Kong.

Anyone can bid for more than one stall. A bidder must pay the bid price and register in person with his or her own name as the licensee of the stall immediately after successfully bidding for a stall. The bidder is also required to sign at once a licence agreement with the FEHD, or will forfeit the rights to operate the stall.

An FEHD spokesman said, "Successful bidders shall comply with all the stipulations and provisions as set out in the licence agreement. Otherwise, the department is entitled to terminate the agreement and the licensee shall immediately vacate the stall."

Details of the 2019 LNY fairs such as the public notice, the locations and layouts of the fair venues, commodities allowed for sale at the fair stalls, open auction arrangements and related rules, and a sample of the licence agreement are available at the FEHD website (www.fehd.gov.hk). For enquiries, please call the FEHD hotline 2868 0000.

LCQ20: Retirement protection for employees

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-kin and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (October 31):

Question:

According to the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance (Cap 485), employees/self-employed persons whose monthly relevant income is less than \$7,100 are not required to make contributions to their accounts under mandatory provident fund (MPF) schemes. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of employees who had joined MPF schemes and (ii) the total amount of contributions made to the relevant MPF accounts, in each year from 2015 to 2017 (set out in Table 1 of the Annex 1);

(2) of (i) the number of employees who had joined other recognised retirement schemes and (ii) the total amount of contributions made to the relevant accounts under such retirement schemes, in each year from 2015 to 2017 (set out in Table 2 of the Annex 1);

(3) of the number of employees who were exempted from joining any local retirement scheme, in each year from 2015 to 2017 (set out in Table 3 of the Annex 1);

(4) of the number of employees who were required to join but had not yet joined any MPF scheme, in each year from 2015 to 2017 (set out in Table 4 of the Annex 1); and

(5) whether it will consider making contributions to the employees' MPF accounts for those months in which the relevant income of such employees is less than \$7,100, so as to enhance the retirement protection for such employees; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

According to the information provided by the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority (MPFA), the replies to parts (1) to (4) of the question are as follows:

(1) The estimated numbers (Note 1) of participating relevant employees and participating self-employed persons (SEPs) who have joined Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) schemes and the total contribution amounts (Note 2) of their MPF accounts as at December 31 for the years from 2015 to 2017 are set out in Table 1 of the Annex 2.

The Government and MPFA do not have further breakdown of the information by mode of employment or period for which such persons were not required to make MPF contributions.

(2) The estimated numbers of employed population who have joined other retirement schemes as at December 31 for the years from 2015 to 2017 are set out in Table 2 of the Annex 2.

(3) The estimated numbers of employed population who are not required to join/exempted from joining any local retirement schemes as at December 31 for the years from 2015 to 2017 are set out in Table 3 of the Annex 2.

The Government and MPFA do not have the information of employees of the European Union Office of the European Commission in Hong Kong.

(4) The estimated numbers of employed persons who should join but have not yet joined any MPF schemes as at December 31 for the years from 2015 to 2017 are set out in Table 4 of the Annex 2.

The Government and MPFA do not have further breakdown of the information by mode of employment.

As for part (5) of the question, according to section 7A of the

Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance (Cap 485), under the MPF System, unless exempted, an employer and employee must each contribute 5 per cent of the employee's relevant income to an MPF scheme as mandatory contributions. The mandatory contributions are subject to the minimum and maximum levels of relevant income. The minimum and maximum levels of relevant income as currently prescribed in Schedules 2 and 3 to Cap 485 are HK\$7,100 per month (or HK\$85,200 per annum) and HK\$30,000 per month (or HK\$360,000 per annum) respectively. The policy intent of setting a minimum level of relevant income is to balance the need for retirement protection and imminent daily-life financial burden of certain employees or SEPs with lower income by exempting them from making monthly MPF contributions.

The Government has no plan at present to make contributions to the employees' MPF accounts in the months that their relevant income is lower than the minimum level of relevant income. According to the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Government will continue to provide appropriate assistance to elderly persons in need through the existing retirement protection system (including social security and public services).

Notes:

1. As the MPF System is employment-based, some members may be participating in more than one scheme in more than one capacity. Hence, the numbers are estimated figures.
2. The figures include mandatory contributions and voluntary contributions but exclude special voluntary contributions.