

Senior Counsel appointed

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Andrew Cheung Kuing, is pleased to announce today (March 30) the appointment of four Senior Counsel of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. They are:

Mr Philip Chau Ka-chun
Mr Law Man-chung
Mr Norman Nip Sum-ping
Ms Vinci Lam Wing-sai

The appointments are made by the Chief Justice under section 31A of the Legal Practitioners Ordinance.

The appointments will take effect from the date of the Instrument of Appointment, which will be executed on May 29, 2021, when the ceremonial proceedings are to take place at 10am in the Court of Final Appeal.

Special seating arrangements will be made for ceremonial proceedings having regard to the limited capacity of the venue and the need for social distancing.

The biographical notes of the newly appointed Senior Counsel are as follows:

Mr Philip Chau Ka-chun

Mr Philip Chau Ka-chun, aged 50, obtained a Bachelor of Laws degree at the Bristol Polytechnic. He was admitted to the Bar of England and Wales (Inner Temple) and to the Hong Kong Bar in 1995. He specialises in criminal trial work.

Mr Law Man-chung

Mr Law Man-chung, aged 46, obtained a Bachelor of Arts (Jurisprudence) degree at the University of Oxford. He was admitted to the Hong Kong Bar in 1997. He has a general civil and commercial practice, focusing on cross-border disputes, company and other general civil matters.

Mr Norman Nip Sum-ping

Mr Norman Nip Sum-ping, aged 48, obtained a Bachelor of Economics degree and a Bachelor of Laws degree at the University of Adelaide. He was admitted to the Bar of South Australia in 1997 and to the Hong Kong Bar in 2006. His practice focuses on securities and regulatory, banking, commercial, company and insurance litigation.

Ms Vinci Lam Wing-sai

Ms Vinci Lam Wing-sai, aged 47, obtained a Bachelor of Laws degree at the University of Hong Kong. She was admitted to the Hong Kong Bar in 2020. She is a Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions at the Department of Justice, specialising in criminal appellate work.

HKMA Quarterly Bulletin and Half-Yearly Monetary and Financial Stability Report (March 2021 Issue)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) today (March 30) published the March 2021 issue of its Quarterly Bulletin and Half-Yearly Monetary and Financial Stability Report.

The Quarterly Bulletin carries a feature article, entitled "The Hong Kong Debt Market in 2020". The Half-Yearly Report provides detailed analyses of the global and local economy, as well as the monetary and financial conditions in Hong Kong. It also examines the recent performance and risks of the local banking sector.

The Quarterly Bulletin and the Half-Yearly Report can be viewed on and downloaded from the [HKMA website](#). A separate, printed version of the Half-Yearly Report (English version only) may be ordered at \$60 a copy. The publication order form can be downloaded from the HKMA website.

Tentative issuance schedule for HKSAR Government Bonds under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), as representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, published today (March 30) a tentative issuance schedule for Government Bonds (GBs) offered under the Institutional Bond Issuance Programme for the next six-month period from April to September 2021 (Annex). The schedule contains information on, among

others, the tentative tenors, tender dates, issuance sizes, issue dates and method of issuance of individual GB issues. Further details on the methods of issuance are set out in the Information Memorandum available on the Government Bond Programme's website, www.hkgb.gov.hk.

The issuance schedule is normally published on a half-yearly basis. It should be noted that the tenors, tender dates, issuance sizes, issue dates and methods of issuance in the issuance schedule are tentative. The HKMA may make adjustments in the light of prevailing market conditions. A revised issuance schedule may be issued where appropriate. Other details of individual issues are to be confirmed and announced at least four business days prior to the scheduled tender dates.

Auction to be held for 325 MHz of spectrum in various frequency bands

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED) and the Communications Authority (CA) announced today (March 30) their decisions, made after carrying out public consultations, that a total of 325 MHz of spectrum in various frequency bands will be auctioned in the fourth quarter of this year. Interested parties may apply to participate in the auction.

A spokesman for the CA said that among the 325 MHz of spectrum, there is 220 MHz of new spectrum in the 600 MHz, 700 MHz and 4.9 GHz bands, and 105 MHz of re-assigned spectrum in the 850 MHz and 2.5/2.6 GHz bands. The available spectrum will meet the needs of various innovative applications, in particular those for the fifth generation mobile (5G) services, in terms of speed, capacity and coverage. The arrangements for the above spectrum are summarised in the table in the Annex. The CA will provide details nearer the time of auction.

The spectrum utilisation fee (SUF) will be determined by auction. The auction reserve prices will be set by the SCED nearer the time. To enable greater financial flexibility for spectrum assignees, the assignees are allowed to choose to pay the SUF either by lump sum payment up front or by annual instalments.

For details about the decisions made by the SCED and the CA on individual frequency bands, please refer to the four joint statements issued today:

For the 600/700 MHz bands:

www.cedb.gov.hk/ccib/en/consultations-and-publications/consultation-papers/joint_statement_600_700MHz_2021.pdf

www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/statement/en/upload/558/600_700_mhz_statement.pdf

For the 850 MHz band:

www.cedb.gov.hk/ccib/en/consultations-and-publications/consultation-papers/joint_statement_850MHz_2021.pdf

www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/statement/en/upload/557/850_mhz_statement.pdf

For the 2.5/2.6 GHz band:

www.cedb.gov.hk/ccib/en/consultations-and-publications/consultation-papers/joint_statement_2.5_2.6GHz_2021.pdf

www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/statement/en/upload/556/2_5_2_6_ghz_statement.pdf

For the 4.9 GHz band:

www.cedb.gov.hk/ccib/en/consultations-and-publications/consultation-papers/joint_statement_4.9GHz_2021.pdf

www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/statement/en/upload/555/4_9_ghz_statement.pdf

Provisional statistics of retail sales for February 2021

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released the latest figures on retail sales today (March 30).

The value of total retail sales in February 2021, provisionally estimated at \$29.5 billion, increased by 30.0% compared with the same month in 2020. The revised estimate of the value of total retail sales in January 2021 decreased by 13.7% compared with a year earlier. For the first two months of 2021 taken together, it was provisionally estimated that the value of total retail sales increased by 2.7% compared with the same period in 2020.

Of the total retail sales value in February 2021, online sales accounted for 6.1%. The value of online retail sales in that month, provisionally estimated at \$1.8 billion, increased by 56.5% compared with the same month in 2020. The revised estimate of online retail sales in January 2021 increased by 91.3% compared with a year earlier. For the first two months of 2021 taken together, it was provisionally estimated that the value of online retail sales increased by 74.5% compared with the same period in 2020.

After netting out the effect of price changes over the same period, the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales in February 2021 increased by 31.7% compared with a year earlier. The revised estimate of the volume of total retail sales in January 2021 decreased by 14.6% compared with a year earlier. For the first two months of 2021 taken together, the provisional estimate of the total retail sales increased by 2.5% in volume compared with the same period in 2020.

In interpreting these figures, it should be noted that retail sales tend to show greater volatility in the first two months of a year due to the timing of the Lunar New Year. Consumer spending in the local market normally attains a seasonal high before the Festival. As the Lunar New Year fell on February 12 this year but on January 25 last year, it is more appropriate to analyse the retail sales figures for January and February taken together in making year-on-year comparison.

Analysed by broad type of retail outlet in descending order of the provisional estimate of the value of sales and comparing the combined total sales for January and February 2021 with the same period a year earlier, the value of sales of electrical goods and other consumer durable goods, not elsewhere classified increased by 34.3%. This was followed by sales of other consumer goods, not elsewhere classified (+15.4% in value); jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts (+3.2%); wearing apparel (+10.6%); commodities in department stores (+4.1%); motor vehicles and parts (+14.4%); and furniture and fixtures (+25.2%).

On the other hand, the value of sales of commodities in supermarkets decreased by 8.6% in the first two months of 2021 over the same period a year earlier. This was followed by sales of food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (-5.6% in value); medicines and cosmetics (-23.1%); fuels (-1.2%); footwear, allied products and other clothing accessories (-6.1%); Chinese drugs and herbs (-11.8%); books, newspapers, stationery and gifts (-6.7%); and optical shops (-11.2%).

Based on the seasonally adjusted series, the provisional estimate of the value of total retail sales decreased by 2.8% in the three months ending February 2021 compared with the preceding three-month period, while the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales decreased by 2.5%.

These retail sales statistics measure the sales receipts in respect of goods sold by local retail establishments and are primarily intended for gauging the short-term business performance of the local retail sector. Data on retail sales are collected from local retail establishments through the Monthly Survey of Retail Sales (MRS). Local retail establishments with and without physical shops are covered in MRS and their sales, both through conventional shops and online channels, are included in the retail sales statistics. Starting from January 2020, data on online retail sales have been collected in MRS. The relevant results were first published in the January 2021 issue of the "Report on Monthly Survey of Retail Sales".

The retail sales statistics cover consumer spending on goods but not on services (such as those on housing, catering, medical care and health services, transport and communication, financial services, education and entertainment) which account for over 50% of the overall consumer spending. Moreover, they include spending on goods in Hong Kong by visitors but exclude spending outside Hong Kong by Hong Kong residents. Hence they should not be regarded as indicators for measuring overall consumer spending.

Users interested in the trend of overall consumer spending should refer to the data series of private consumption expenditure (PCE), which is a major

component of the Gross Domestic Product published at quarterly intervals. Compiled from a wide range of data sources, PCE covers consumer spending on both goods (including goods purchased from all channels) and services by Hong Kong residents whether locally or abroad. Please refer to the C&SD publication "Gross Domestic Product (Quarterly)" for more details.

Commentary

A government spokesman said that retail sales increased sharply year-on-year in February, reflecting the distortion caused by the difference in timing of the Lunar New Year as well as an exceptionally low base of comparison early last year due to the COVID-19 outbreak. For the first two months of 2021 combined, retail sales volume registered a slight increase over a year earlier.

Looking ahead, the spokesman pointed out that the retail trade will continue to face a difficult business environment in the near term as inbound tourism remains frozen. It is thus pivotal to put the epidemic under control at the soonest possible, so as to create a favourable environment for the revival of cross-boundary tourism activities.

Further information

Table 1 presents the revised figures on value index and value of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for January 2021 as well as the provisional figures for February 2021. The provisional figures on the value of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet as well as the corresponding year-on-year changes for the first two months of 2021 taken together are also shown.

Table 2 presents the revised figures on value of online retail sales for January 2021 as well as the provisional figures for February 2021. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the first two months of 2021 taken together are also shown.

Table 3 presents the revised figures on volume index of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for January 2021 as well as the provisional figures for February 2021. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the first two months of 2021 taken together are also shown.

Table 4 shows the movements of the value and volume of total retail sales in terms of the year-on-year rate of change for a month compared with the same month in the preceding year based on the original series, and in terms of the rate of change for a three-month period compared with the preceding three-month period based on the seasonally adjusted series.

The classification of retail establishments follows the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification (HSIC) Version 2.0, which is used in various economic surveys for classifying economic units into different industry classes.

More detailed statistics are given in the "Report on Monthly Survey of

Retail Sales". Users can download this publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp320.jsp?productCode=B1080003). Alternatively, the historical series of retail sales statistics can be downloaded in the form of a statistical table at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp320.jsp?productCode=D5600089).

Users who have enquiries about the survey results may contact the Distribution Services Statistics Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7400; email : mrs@censtatd.gov.hk).