

KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

(March to May 2003)

27 March 2003	The monthly survey of residential mortgage lending indicates that during February both new loans drawn down and new approvals decreased by about 45% and 33% to HK\$4.0 billion and HK\$4.2 billion respectively.
28 March 2003	The HKMA issues a statutory guideline on its approach to supervising the regulated activities of authorized institutions that are registered with the Securities and Futures Commission under the Securities and Futures Ordinance (SFO). The guideline upholds one of the primary objectives of the SFO of maintaining a level playing field for all securities intermediaries.
1 April 2003	The HKMA launches a new public register containing specified particulars of the staff of authorized institutions engaging in securities business, following the commencement of the Securities and Futures Ordinance and Banking (Amendment) Ordinance 2002.
10 April 2003	The HKMA and Hong Kong Association of Banks jointly announce that the new Cheque Imaging and Truncation System (CITS) will commence operation on 21 June 2003. With the CITS, the new image-based cheque clearing method will transform the current clearing process driven by physical exchange of cheques.
16 April 2003	The Chief Executive-in-Council has approved the Deposit Protection Scheme Bill for introduction into the Legislative Council on 30 April 2003. The Bill contains the HKMA's proposals on how the deposit protection scheme (DPS) in Hong Kong should be structured, including the establishment of a Deposit Protection Board and a DPS Fund.
24 April 2003	The HKMA announces that Hong Kong will process its first transaction through the new Euro Clearing System on 28 April 2003, allowing financial institutions in Hong Kong and in the region to settle euro transactions real-time in the Asian time zone.
29 April 2003	The monthly survey of residential mortgage lending indicates that both new loans drawn down and new approvals rose during March, by 29.0% and 65.1% to HK\$5.1 billion and HK\$6.9 billion respectively. Growth in new approvals was particularly strong for primary market transactions, rising by 80.6% in number terms.
29 April 2003	The HKMA publishes its Annual Report for 2002. The Report explains the HKMA's work and achievements over the past year and sets out the challenges and objectives for the year ahead.
9 May 2003	The results of the latest survey on residential mortgage loans (RML) in negative equity for the quarter ending in March show that the number of RMLs in negative equity increased to about 83,000 with a value of HK\$135 billion, reflecting the further decline in property prices over the quarter.
19 May 2003	The results of the survey on credit card lending for the first quarter of 2003 are announced. The delinquency ratio fell for the fourth consecutive quarter to 1.25%, compared with 1.28% at the end of 2002. The amount charged off in the first quarter also decreased, to HK\$1.76 billion, or 3.09% of average receivables during the quarter.

29 May 2003	The monthly survey of residential mortgage lending indicates that new mortgage lending increased in April. The value of new loans drawn down during the month rose by 23.7% to HK\$6.3 billion. However, the value of new approvals decreased by 14.8% to HK\$5.9 billion.
30 May 2003	The HKMA issues a statutory guideline that aims at specifying the minimum standards that authorized institutions should observe in relation to the sharing and use of consumer credit data through a credit reference agency.
30 May 2003	The International Monetary Fund (IMF) welcomes the HKSAR Government's temporary fiscal relief and support package to address the adverse impact of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in the Staff Report of the IMF's Article IV Consultation. The IMF projects real GDP growth for Hong Kong at 2.2% for 2003 and expresses support for Hong Kong's commitment to the Linked Exchange Rate system.

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. The order of issue of the press releases each month is as follows:

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

The above press releases on the Exchange Fund data may be found on the HKMA's website at www.info.gov.hk/hkma/eng/press/category/exchange_index.htm

Other latest press releases may also be found at www.info.gov.hk/hkma/eng/press/index.htm