

KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

(December 2003 to February 2004)

23 December 2003	The results of the 2002/03 annual self-assessment conducted by authorized institutions on their compliance with the <i>Code of Banking Practice</i> are announced: the overall state of compliance has significantly improved, with 99% of AIs reporting either full, or almost full, compliance with the Code.
23 December 2003	The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its interim review of Hong Kong's macroeconomic policies, projects Hong Kong's real gross domestic product growth at around 4.5%-5% for 2004 following an estimated growth of 3% for 2003. IMF said that the strong economic recovery is supported by surging inbound tourist arrivals — foremost from the Mainland, a strengthening global economy, the advent of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement and the allied improvement in domestic consumer sentiment.
24 December 2003	The HKMA announces that it has been notified by the People's Bank of China of its decision, following a selection process, to appoint Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited as the Clearing Bank for renminbi business in Hong Kong. The term of appointment is three years.
30 December 2003	The monthly survey of residential mortgage lending indicates that new loans drawn down in November increased by 5.1% to HK\$8.9 billion. However, loans approved during the month fell by 22.8% to HK\$8.1 billion, mainly owing to a 33.9% fall in approvals for primary market transactions.
15 January 2004	The HKMA announces the investment performance of the Exchange Fund for the year 2003. The Exchange Fund recorded an investment income of HK\$89.6 billion in 2003, achieving an investment return of 10.2%, which is 70 basis points above benchmark set for it by the Exchange Fund Advisory Committee.
29 January 2004	The monthly survey of residential mortgage lending indicates that new loans drawn down during December decreased by 3.4% to HK\$8.6 billion, reflecting a decline in new approvals in November. However, loans approved during the month rose by 5.9% to HK\$8.6 billion.
12 February 2004	The results of the latest survey on residential mortgage loans (RMLs) in negative equity for the quarter ending in December show that the number of RMLs in negative equity declined further by almost one-third (around 32,200 cases) over the three-month period to around 67,600 with a value of HK\$107 billion at end-December.
18 February 2004	The results of survey on credit card lending for the fourth quarter of 2003 are announced. The amount charged off in the fourth quarter decreased for the fifth consecutive quarter to HK\$1.13 billion or 2.05% of average receivables during the quarter. The delinquency ratio fell below 1% at end-December, to 0.92% compared with 1.23% at end-September.
27 February 2004	The monthly survey of residential mortgage lending indicates that new loans drawn down during January fell by 16.7% to HK\$7.2 billion. New mortgage approvals, on the other hand, increased by 11.5% to HK\$9.6 billion, with those for primary and secondary market transactions growing at a similar pace.

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