

Schedule for issuing press releases on statistical data

Following is a reminder of the press releases on statistical data to be issued between March and June 2019. The schedule for issuing press releases on statistical data in 2019 was provided to the media in September 2018. No change has been made to the original schedule.

March 2019

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Date	Press Release
5	Retail sales statistics for January 2019
5	Statistics on vessels, port cargo and containers for fourth quarter 2018
11	Quarterly business receipts indices for service industries for fourth quarter 2018
12	Construction output statistics for fourth quarter 2018
12	Statistics on trade involving outward processing in the mainland of China for fourth quarter 2018
14	Index of industrial production and producer price index for the industrial sector for fourth quarter 2018
15	Gross National Income and external primary income flows for fourth quarter 2018
18	Volume and price statistics of external merchandise trade for January 2019
19	Unemployment and underemployment statistics for December 2018 – February 2019
19	Chain volume measures of Gross Domestic Product by economic activity for fourth quarter 2018
21	Consumer Price Index for February 2019
22	Employment and vacancies statistics for December 2018
22	Balance of Payments and International Investment Position statistics for fourth quarter 2018
26	External merchandise trade statistics for February 2019
28	Wage and payroll statistics for December 2018

April 2019

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Date	Press Release
1	Retail sales statistics for February 2019
16	Volume and price statistics of external merchandise trade for February 2019
18	Unemployment and underemployment statistics for January – March 2019
23	Consumer Price Index for March 2019
26	Business expectations for second quarter 2019
29	External merchandise trade statistics for March 2019

May 2019

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Date	Press Release
2	Advance estimates on Gross Domestic Product for first quarter 2019 (Note)
3	Retail sales statistics for March 2019
7	Restaurant receipts and purchases statistics for first quarter 2019
16	Volume and price statistics of external merchandise trade for March 2019
17	Revised figures on Gross Domestic Product for first quarter 2019 (Note)
20	Unemployment and underemployment statistics for February – April 2019
23	Consumer Price Index for April 2019
27	External merchandise trade statistics for April 2019
31	Retail sales statistics for April 2019

June 2019

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Date	Press Release
4	Statistics on vessels, port cargo and containers for first quarter 2019
10	Quarterly business receipts indices for service industries for first quarter 2019
11	Construction output statistics for first quarter 2019

11	Statistics on trade involving outward processing in the mainland of China for first quarter 2019
14	Index of industrial production and producer price index for the industrial sector for first quarter 2019
17	Gross National Income and external primary income flows for first quarter 2019
17	Volume and price statistics of external merchandise trade for April 2019
18	Chain volume measures of Gross Domestic Product by economic activity for first quarter 2019
19	Unemployment and underemployment statistics for March – May 2019
21	Consumer Price Index for May 2019
21	Employment and vacancies statistics for March 2019
21	Balance of Payments and International Investment Position statistics for first quarter 2019
25	External merchandise trade statistics for May 2019
27	Wage and payroll statistics for March 2019

Note: Starting from the reference period of the first quarter of 2019, C&SD will issue press releases on advance estimates on quarterly GDP. C&SD will compile and release revised figures on GDP in the "Gross Domestic Product (Quarterly) Report" when more data become available. The revised figures on GDP for the first quarter of 2019 will also be included in the "First Quarter Economic Report 2019" and the press release to be issued by the Office of the Government Economist under the Financial Secretary's Office on the economic situation in the first quarter of 2019 and first update of GDP and price forecasts for 2019 as a whole. No separate press release on the revised figures on GDP will be issued by C&SD.

The schedule for regular press releases in the other months of 2019 can be downloaded at the website of the Census and Statistics Department (www.censtatd.gov.hk/press_release/index.jsp).

Appointment to Advisory Committee on Cruise Industry announced

The Government today (February 28) announced the appointment of Ms

Stephanie Young, managing director of a theme park in Hong Kong, to the Advisory Committee on Cruise Industry (ACCI) with effect from March 1, 2019, to January 27, 2020.

A Government spokesman said Ms Young is appointed following the departure of Mr Samuel Lau Wing-kee. He expressed gratitude to Mr Lau for his contribution and advice to the work of the ACCI during his tenure of office.

The ACCI was established in January 2008 to advise the Government on measures to enhance the development of Hong Kong as a regional cruise hub.

The membership of the ACCI with effect from March 1, 2019, is as follows:

Chairman

Commissioner for Tourism

Members

Ms Crystal Campbell

Mr Chan Kam-foo

Mrs Nancy Chung Yiu Choi-yuk

Mr Anthony Lau Chun-hon

Ms Eunice Lee Sau-yan

Ms Astor Ng Ching-han

Mr Ng Hi-on

Mr Blondel So King-tak

Mr Hazen Tang Tim-wan

Mr James Wong Cheuk-on

Mr Jason Wong Chun-tat

Mr Balwin Yeung Pok-hung

Ms Stephanie Young

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority (HA) is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rate in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

In addition, the weekly bulletin "Surge in Brief" (appended) will be issued every Thursday to illustrate the past month trend of key service statistics in public hospitals. "Surge in Brief" can be accessed in the HA Winter Surge designated webpage (www.ha.org.hk/goto/wintersurge/en).

[Transcript of remarks by FS at Budget press conference \(with photos/video\)](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan; the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau; Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury), Ms Alice Lau; and the Government Economist, Mr Andrew Au, at the Budget press conference at Central Government Offices, Tamar, yesterday (February 27):

Reporter: Mr Chan, considering climate change is the most urgent issue facing the world, aren't your environmental measures somewhat anaemic, just more electric cars and green government buildings when we have toxic air, polluted beaches? Secondly, the elephant in the room with the Greater Bay Area plan, how exactly will Hong Kong's free and open legal system integrate with the Mainland's – one side will surely have to compromise and change?

Financial Secretary: Thank you for the good question. In terms of our commitment under the climate change, we will never compromise our position. The Environment Bureau has published their blueprint in this respect before – we are working towards this. Environmental protection is very dear to our heart, so in terms of government policy in the past, we did have used resources, say for example for commercial vehicles – diesel commercial vehicles – to be changed. We also introduced incentives to change some of the taxis – these are earlier examples. Going forward, if there are suitable initiatives we will spare no effort in promoting them.

Reporter: Greater Bay...

Financial Secretary: In this area, I mean the environmental protection area, there are areas of co-operation, but certainly that does not and will not be taken as a compromise from Hong Kong's standpoint in terms of our environmental efforts and commitments.

Reporter: But the political differences between the Greater Bay Area and Hong Kong, how will it be compatible?

Financial Secretary: The Greater Bay Area is a very unique bay area, in terms of this area have three customs areas and under "one country, two systems". One of the key objectives is to have the factors of production to be freely

flowed within this area, but under the current arrangement and the customs restriction there are some policy innovations to be explored. But in terms of our own independent judiciary, rule of law, this is so dear to our heart and this is the foundation for the success of Hong Kong, which we will never compromise.

Reporter: We notice that the fiscal surplus has decreased a lot this year, and the land revenue also dropped quite a lot. But as many sites will be kept for building public housing, is it possible that it would be unlikely for the Government to have more sites for sale in the coming years? And under these circumstances, how will the Government make up for the reduction in revenue, and what would be the new sources of revenue that you will consider? And is it a healthy trend to keep spending so much while our surplus is declining?

Financial Secretary: Thank you for the good question. In terms of land revenue, in the year 2018-19 the projected outturn is about \$115 billion, which is slightly less than what we have originally budgeted for. But it is only a very small margin, mainly because of the two unsuccessful tenders in the past year. Going forward, what you have pointed out is quite correct, in the sense that after changing the split between public and private housing land supply the number of sites and the amount of private residential housing supply will decrease, and consequently may have an impact on our land revenue. But this has to be looked at very carefully in terms of – apart from residential sites, do we have commercial sites for sale? In the coming years, we have quite a substantial amount of commercial sites to be put to the market, say, for example the site on top of the West Kowloon high-speed railway station is a very valuable site and the expected sales proceeds would be very high, and also for this year there are also commercial sites in Kai Tak.

Apart from quantity, what is also relevant is the location of the sites and the expected market response and the expected price that these sites could fetch. In the coming year a lot of the sites are in prime locations, say for example in Kai Tak, so that's why when we plan for the land revenue for 2019-20, we are still putting in a comparatively high figure. As to the rest of the five-year period, we have taken experience from our past history, meaning that we take the land revenue as a percentage of GDP in the past 10 years average as the yardstick for us to project the rest of the midrange period. We will keep this under close review, but in the meantime I think this is a very practical approach taking into consideration the actual sites and actual situation.

Reporter: What are other sources of government revenue...?

Financial Secretary: In terms of profits tax income and salaries tax income, the drop next year compared to this year is in fact due to the one-off relief measures. If you look at profits tax and salaries tax, it has been growing in the past few years. At the moment, given our substantial amount of fiscal reserve, we do not think there is a very urgent immediate need for us to look for new income sources, although the Tax Policy Unit should bear this in mind and take this as one of the agenda for their work.

Reporter: One lawmaker earlier highlighted that, despite you announcing that there are a number of increases – one-off increases – to social security allowances, they noted that the Government recently just raised the age limit for elderly social security payments and you announced this employment supplement subsidy, this new subsidy, and there's no increase in the subsidy. So, would you consider raising that as well for the year? And the second question is on the lower caps for the salaries tax and relevant sweeteners – you explained that it's because of the uncertainties Hong Kong economy is facing and also much lower budget surplus that we're seeing in this financial year. So, should the public be expecting fewer and fewer sweeteners, or a smaller amount of sweeteners going forward? And my third question is on the loan-to-value ratio – you mentioned in your Budget that you don't think, it's not the right time for the Government to relax any of your cooling measures on the property market. But earlier you indicated that you have heard people's voices on relaxing these mortgage requirements on loan-to-value ratio, so does that mean that this is not coming anytime soon at all? Thank you.

Financial Secretary: Thank you. The first question that you asked, we did consult the Labour and Welfare Bureau, and it remains their position that this should not be changed at this stage because they are undertaking a review. In the coming two days the Secretary for Labour and Welfare will be hosting a budget briefing press conference. I think he will be in a position to give you more details. As to your question about whether in the future sweeteners will be getting smaller and smaller, that really depends on also our financial position at that time. Depending on the economic situation, the forecast surplus of the Government in the coming years seems to be not as big as before, and being a completely open and small economy we are certainly influenced by external factors. So, on this front, I do not want to speculate, but on the other hand let's work hard to build our economy – that is the basis for everything. Finally, on the property market, yes we do not intend to relax any of the demand-management measures, and last month I think the CE and subsequently myself also stated that in terms of mortgage percentage this would not be relaxed as well, because we do not want to be misperceived as to, at this stage, doing anything to try to influence the market. On salaries tax, let me ask my colleagues to supplement.

Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury): Thank you. On salaries tax, I just want to remind us all that it was just last year that the Financial Secretary actually introduced quite a number of changes to the overall salaries tax regime. So, it's not just about the one-off – what we call sweeteners or concessions, but the Financial Secretary does bear in mind especially the tax burden for the middle and lower income classes. Last year, in so far as salaries tax regime is concerned, we broadened the tax band, so each band has been increased from \$45,000 to \$50,000. We added a new tax band, an additional tax band, and we lowered the marginal tax rate. We also enhanced quite a number of tax deductible items, including allowance with children, allowance for dependent parents, and also introduced a new allowance for disabled dependents. So, these measures collectively will actually have a long-term, recurrent impact on relieving the tax burden of

taxpayers, especially for the lower and middle class taxpayers. Thank you.



[EMSD urges the public not to install shower heads with on/off valve for "Shower Type" storage electric water heaters \(with photo\)](#)

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (February 27) urged the public not to install shower heads with on/off valve for "Shower Type" storage electric water heaters.

Shower heads with on/off valves available in the market are not suitable for use with the "Shower Type" storage electric water heaters, as the on/off valve will hinder the release of pressure inside the water heater, and thus lead to explosion when there is excessive pressure.

Shower heads with on/off value, which may vary in designs, look similar to other shower heads. One example of such shower head available in the market is shown in the photo. If in doubt, the public should consult suppliers of relevant electric water heaters or contact the EMSD through

1823.

