

SHA expresses deep sorrow at passing of the Most Reverend Michael Yeung

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, today (January 3) expressed deep sorrow over the passing of the Most Reverend Michael Yeung, the Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong.

Mr Lau said, "The Most Reverend Michael Yeung was profoundly dedicated in spreading the gospel and actively promoted unity and harmony within the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong. He also made tremendous contributions by leading charity work of the diocese and served the community with care. He will always be remembered."

Appointments to Urban Forestry Advisory Panel

The Development Bureau (DEVB) announced today (January 3) that 16 non-official members have been appointed to the Urban Forestry Advisory Panel (UFAP) for a term of two years from January 1, 2019.

The new non-official members are Professor Leslie Chen Hung-chi and Dr Wang Xiaoming. The re-appointed non-official members are Dr Paul Barber, Mr Chan Yun-cheung, Professor Chau Kwai-cheong, Ms Cecilia Cheung So-mui, Mr Kingsley Choi Lim-cho, Mr Mark Duntemann, Mr Kevin Eckert, Dr Billy Hau Chi-hang, Mr Evans Iu Po-lung, Mr Patrick Lau Hing-tat, Dr David Lau Tai-wai, Mr Frank Rinn, Mr Ian Shears and Dr Wong Fook-ye.

A spokesman for the DEVB said, "The UFAP comprises both local and overseas experts from different fields including urban forestry managers, horticulturalists, arborists, landscape architects and botanists, and will provide advice on urban forestry policies and initiatives from multiple perspectives."

The spokesman also expressed gratitude to Dr Philip Cannon, Professor Cecil Konijnedijk, Professor Xing Fuwu and Professor Zhang Qixiang, the four outgoing non-official members of the UFAP.

Appointed by the Secretary for Development, members of the UFAP advise the DEVB on urban forest management strategies, an applied research and development regime, and positive capacity building initiatives for the arboriculture and horticulture industry.

The membership of the new term of the UFAP is set out below:

Chairman

Head of Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section, DEVB

Non-official members

Dr Paul Barber
Mr Chan Yun-cheung
Professor Chau Kwai-cheong
* Professor Leslie Chen Hung-chi
Ms Cecilia Cheung So-mui
Mr Kingsley Choi Lim-cho
Mr Mark Duntemann
Mr Kevin Eckert
Dr Billy Hau Chi-hang
Mr Evans Iu Po-lung
Mr Patrick Lau Hing-tat
Dr David Lau Tai-wai
Mr Frank Rinn
Mr Ian Shears
* Dr Wang Xiaoming
Dr Wong Fook-yee

Official members

Head of Tree Management Office, DEVB
Representative of Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Representative of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Representative of Highways Department
* Representative of Housing Department

(* New non-official and official members)

An unseasonably warm December

With the northeast monsoon over southern China weaker than normal for most of the month, December 2018 was much warmer than usual in Hong Kong. The monthly mean temperature was 19.2 degrees, 1.3 degrees above the normal figure of 17.9 degrees and the sixth highest on record for December. The mean minimum temperature was 17.6 degrees, 1.7 degrees above the normal figure of 15.9 degrees and the fourth highest on record for December. The month was also drier than usual with total rainfall of 11.9 millimetres, about 44 per cent of the normal figure of 26.8 millimetres. The annual total rainfall of 2162.9 millimetres in 2018 was about 10 per cent below the annual normal

figure of 2398.5 millimetres.

Under the influence of the northeast monsoon, the weather in Hong Kong was generally fine for the first two days of the month. Affected by a relatively warm and humid maritime airstream, local weather became exceptionally warm over the next two days. The maximum temperature at the Hong Kong Observatory soared to 27.1 degrees on December 4, the highest of the month, and the daily mean temperature on that day was 24.8 degrees, the highest on record for December.

With a fresh to strong easterly airstream setting in, it was mainly cloudy with a few rain patches in Hong Kong on December 5 and 6. A cold front moved across the coastal areas of Guangdong in the morning of December 7 and the northeast monsoon behind the cold front brought cooler weather together with a few rain patches to the territory over the next three days. It was rather cool from December 11 to 14 under the influence of a replenishment of the northeast monsoon. With the northeast monsoon moderating, the weather improved gradually on December 15 with plenty of sunshine in the afternoon.

Another replenishment of the northeast monsoon reached the south China coastal areas on December 16, bringing mainly cloudy weather with a few light rain patches to Hong Kong. Under the influence of a dry northeast monsoon, it was generally fine and dry with cool mornings in Hong Kong over the next two days. As the northeast monsoon affecting the south China coastal areas was gradually replaced by a relatively warm and humid maritime airstream, local temperatures rose gradually on December 19 and 20. With abundant sunshine during the day, it was rather warm over the next two days and the daily mean temperature on December 22 reached 22.2 degrees, making it the warmest Winter Solstice on record.

With the northeast monsoon reaching the coastal areas of Guangdong, it was rainy and cooler on December 23. While the rain eased off gradually, the weather remained cloudy and cool over the next two days. As the clouds covering southern China gradually thinned out, local weather turned generally fine and mild on December 26 and 27. Meanwhile, the winter monsoon affecting southern China strengthened and spread south gradually. Under the influence of the intense winter monsoon, local weather became windy with temperatures falling progressively towards the end of the month. With chilly northerlies prevailing and cloudy skies, it was cold on the last two days of the month with the temperature at the Hong Kong Observatory dropping to a minimum of 10.3 degrees on December 30, the lowest of the month.

Two tropical cyclones occurred over the South China Sea and the western North Pacific in December 2018.

Details of issuance and cancellation of various warnings/signals in December are summarised in Table 1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal for December are tabulated in Table 2.

Provisional statistics of retail sales for November 2018

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released the latest figures on retail sales today (January 3).

The value of total retail sales in November 2018, provisionally estimated at \$39.2 billion, increased by 1.4% over the same month in 2017. The revised estimate of the value of total retail sales in October 2018 increased by 6.0% over a year earlier. For the first eleven months of 2018 taken together, it was provisionally estimated that the value of total retail sales increased by 9.7% over the same period in 2017.

After netting out the effect of price changes over the same period, the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales in November 2018 increased by 1.2% over a year earlier. The revised estimate of the volume of total retail sales in October 2018 increased by 5.3% over a year earlier. For the first eleven months of 2018 taken together, the provisional estimate of the total retail sales increased by 8.4% in volume over the same period in 2017.

Analysed by broad type of retail outlet in descending order of the provisional estimate of the value of sales and comparing November 2018 with November 2017, the value of sales of commodities in department stores increased by 3.9%. This was followed by sales of medicines and cosmetics (+10.1% in value); food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (+1.9%); other consumer goods, not elsewhere classified (+14.3%); motor vehicles and parts (+7.0%); fuels (+3.1%); footwear, allied products and other clothing accessories (+1.7%); furniture and fixtures (+2.8%); books, newspapers, stationery and gifts (+6.2%); and optical shops (+5.4%).

On the other hand, the value of sales of jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts decreased by 3.9% in November 2018 compared with a year earlier. This was followed by sales of electrical goods and other consumer durable goods, not elsewhere classified (-4.9% in value); commodities in supermarkets (-0.1%); wearing apparel (-3.6%); and Chinese drugs and herbs (-0.4%).

Based on the seasonally adjusted series, the provisional estimate of the value of total retail sales decreased by 2.7% in the three months ending November 2018 compared with the preceding three-month period, while the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales decreased by 1.8%.

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. They

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 indicated that retail sales decelerated again to a modest growth in November after some acceleration in October. The generally moderated growth in retail sales in recent months reflected more cautious consumption sentiment in the face of various external uncertainties such as the US-Mainland trade tensions and volatilities in the global financial markets.

The spokesman commented further that, looking forward, while the favourable local job and income conditions and continued expansion in inbound tourism should still provide some support to the retail sector in the near term, consumer sentiment could be affected by weaker asset prices and the external uncertainties. The Government will closely monitor the situation.

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 October 2018 as well as the provisional figures for November 2018. 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 eleven months of 2018 taken together are also shown.

Table 2 presents the revised figures on volume index of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for October 2018 as well as the provisional figures for November 2018. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the first eleven months of 2018 taken together are also shown.

Table 3 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 free of charge 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 C&SD (Tel: 3903 7400; email: mrs@censtatd.gov.hk).

SDEV to visit Harbin

The Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, will depart for Harbin tomorrow (January 4) to attend the opening ceremony and related activities of the Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival, together with a delegation of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries.

On arrival, Mr Wong will attend a dinner hosted by leaders of the Harbin Municipal Government and a variety show afterwards.

On January 5, he will officiate at the launch of a youth ice hockey game between Hong Kong and Harbin, visit the Harbin International Snow Sculpture Art Expo and attend the opening of the Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival.

Mr Wong will return to Hong Kong on January 6. During his absence, the Under Secretary for Development, Mr Liu Chun-san, will be the Acting Secretary for Development.