

**Press Release**  
**LCQ12: Safe deposit boxes**  
Wednesday, May 17, 2017

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Ting-kwong and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 17):

Question:

It has been reported that as safe deposit boxes for rent in banks have been persistently in short supply in recent years, more and more non-bank institutions are engaged in safe deposit box business. However, some members of the public doubt whether it is safe and reliable for them to store their valuables in the safe deposit boxes provided by such institutions. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows (i) the total number and year-on-year rate of increase/decrease of bank deposit boxes, and (ii) the ratio of the total number of bank deposit boxes to the number of applicants for renting them, in each of the past five years, and set out the relevant figures by District Council district;

(2) whether it knows (i) the current average waiting time for bank deposit boxes and (ii) the reasons for the persistent short supply of them;

(3) whether the authorities will study the provision of incentives or assistance to encourage banks to provide more safe deposit boxes for rent by the public, e.g. encouraging banks to provide safe deposit boxes in buildings which are conveniently accessible by transport and in compliance with the relevant requirements; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether it knows the total number of safe deposit boxes currently provided by non-bank institutions; and

(5) how the authorities currently regulate the safe deposit box business operated by non-bank institutions to protect the rights of renters, including whether they have stipulated the circumstances under which such institutions will be held responsible for the loss suffered by renters; whether they have

assessed if the protection currently afforded to such renters is adequate; if they have assessed, of the details?

Reply:

President,

Apart from providing deposit and lending services, banks will usually take into account market factors as well as their own business strategies in considering whether or not to offer other services, such as safe deposit box services.

As the regulatory authority, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) expects banks to maintain good banking practices when providing services, and to properly manage the relevant risks associated with their businesses. These requirements are also applicable to safe deposit box services.

The provision of safe deposit box services by banks is not subject to the approval of the HKMA. The HKMA also does not collect the relevant information in respect of the number and waiting time of safe deposit boxes provided by banks and their distribution by district.

The HKMA will maintain close liaison with the banking industry to ensure that banks properly manage the relevant risks associated with their safe deposit box services.

As regards the provision of safe deposit box services by non-bank institutions, it is a matter of general commercial operation. The Administration does not collect the relevant statistics.

Ends