

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, April 17, 2020 is 108.7 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (April 17) released the latest grading of water quality for 38 gazetted beaches (see Note 1) and one non-gazetted beach (i.e. Discovery Bay, see Note 2).

Twenty-five beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1), 10 as Fair (Grade 2) and four as Poor (Grade 3).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Cheung Chau Tung Wan Beach	Pui O Beach
Chung Hom Kok Beach	Repulse Bay Beach
Clear Water Bay First Beach	Shek O Beach
Clear Water Bay Second Beach	Silver Mine Bay Beach
Deep Water Bay Beach	Silverstrand Beach
Discovery Bay	South Bay Beach
Hap Mun Bay Beach	St Stephen's Beach
Hung Shing Yeh Beach	Stanley Main Beach
Kiu Tsui Beach	Tong Fuk Beach
Kwun Yam Beach	Trio Beach
Lo So Shing Beach	Turtle Cove Beach
Lower Cheung Sha Beach	Upper Cheung Sha Beach
Middle Bay Beach	

Grade 2 beaches are:

Anglers' Beach	Golden Beach
Approach Beach	Hoi Mei Wan Beach
Big Wave Bay Beach	Lido Beach
Cafeteria New Beach	Ma Wan Tung Wan Beach
Casam Beach	Ting Kau Beach

Grade 3 beaches are:

Butterfly Beach
Cafeteria Old Beach

Castle Peak Beach
Kadoorie Beach

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades, namely Good (Grade 1), Fair (Grade 2), Poor (Grade 3) and Very Poor (Grade 4), according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the EPD's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

Note 1: To tie in with the response level under the Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance having been raised to the Emergency Response Level and to encourage people to avoid gathering, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department has announced that all beaches will continue to be temporarily closed until further notice.

Note 2: Discovery Bay is a non-gazetted beach without lifeguard service.

Judicial appointments

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary today (April 17) announced the appointment of Ms Monica Chow Wai-choo, Ms Chak Kwok-yee, Mr Lam Chak-ming, Ms Eleanor Yeung Yee-na, Miss Jo Siu Chi-wan, Mr Lung Gwun-ting, Miss Minnie Wat Lai-man, Mr Peter Yu Chun-cheung and Mr Jeffrey Sze Cho-yiu as Permanent Magistrates. All appointments are made by the Chief Executive on the recommendation of the Judicial Officers Recommendation Commission. They will take effect from April 20, 2020.

The biographical notes of the nine appointees are as follows:

Ms Monica Chow Wai-choo

Ms Chow was born in Malaysia in 1964. She obtained an LL.B. from Queen Mary College, University of London, in 1985 and completed the Bar Vocational Course of the Gray's Inn in the United Kingdom in 1986. She was called to the Bar in Hong Kong in 1988. She has been in private practice since 1990.

Ms Chak Kwok-yee

Ms Chak was born in Hong Kong. She completed the Common Professional Examinations of the Manchester Metropolitan University in 2003 and obtained a

P.C.LL. from the University of Hong Kong in 2004. She further acquired an LL.M. in Arbitration and Dispute Resolution from the University of Hong Kong in 2008. She became a Mediator accredited by the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution in 2009. She was called to the Bar in Hong Kong in 2005. She has been in private practice since 2006.

Mr Lam Chak-ming

Mr Lam was born in Hong Kong in 1973. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy from the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, in 1997. He obtained an LL.B. from the University of London (External) in 2002 and a P.C.LL. from the University of Hong Kong in 2003. He further acquired an LL.M. in International Economic Law and a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Laws, both from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, in 2012 and 2019 respectively. He was admitted as a Solicitor in Hong Kong in 2007. He was in private practice from 2007 to 2009. He worked in the Official Receiver's Office as a Contract Solicitor between 2009 and 2015. He has been appointed as a Judicial Associate (General) in the Judiciary for the period from 2015 to September 2017 and since 2018.

Ms Eleanor Yeung Yee-na

Ms Yeung obtained an LL.B. from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom in 2007 and a P.C.LL. from the University of Hong Kong in 2008. She was awarded the British Chevening Scholarship in 2008 and further acquired a Bachelor of Civil Law Degree from the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom in 2009. She was called to the Bar in Hong Kong in 2010 and has been in private practice from the same year.

Miss Jo Siu Chi-wan

Miss Siu was born in Hong Kong. She obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Surveying from the University of Hong Kong in 2003. She further obtained an LL.B. from the University of London in 2007 and a P.C.LL. from the University of Hong Kong in 2008. She was called to the Bar in Hong Kong in 2009. She was in private practice for the period from 2009 to 2010. She worked in the Department of Justice as a Government Counsel between 2010 and 2011. She has resumed private practice as Barrister since 2011.

Mr Lung Gwun-ting

Mr Lung was born in Hong Kong in 1980. He obtained an LL.B. and a P.C.LL., both from the University of Hong Kong, in 2002 and 2003 respectively. He further acquired a Master of Arts Degree in Social Work (Family-Centred Practice and Family Therapy) from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2017. He is an accredited General Mediator, Family Mediator and Family Mediation Supervisor by the Hong Kong Mediation Accreditation Association Limited. He was admitted as a Solicitor in Hong Kong in 2005 and has been in private practice from the same year.

Miss Minnie Wat Lai-man

Miss Wat was born in Hong Kong in 1984. She obtained an LL.B. and a P.C.L.L., both from the City University of Hong Kong, in 2006 and 2007 respectively. She was called to the Bar in Hong Kong in 2008 and has been in private practice from the same year.

Mr Peter Yu Chun-cheung

Mr Yu was born in Mainland China in 1984. He obtained an LL.B. and a P.C.L.L., both from the City University of Hong Kong, in 2006 and 2007 respectively. He obtained a Master of Laws Degree in International Trade and Commercial Law from the University of Durham in the United Kingdom in 2009. He was called to the Bar in Hong Kong in 2009 and has been in private practice from the same year.

Mr Jeffrey Sze Cho-yiu

Mr Sze was born in Hong Kong in 1986. He obtained an LL.B. and a P.C.L.L., both from the City University of Hong Kong, in 2009 and 2010 respectively. He was called to the Bar in Hong Kong in 2011 and has been in private practice from the same year.

Banking sector launches Pre-approved Principal Payment Holiday Scheme for corporate customers

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) together with the Banking Sector SME Lending Coordination Mechanism announced today (April 17) the launch of the Pre-approved Principal Payment Holiday Scheme for eligible corporate customers. The key features of the Scheme are:

- All corporate customers that have an annual sales turnover of HK\$800 million or less—estimated to cover more than 80 per cent of all corporate borrowers in Hong Kong—and that have no outstanding loan payments overdue for more than 30 days are eligible for the Scheme.
- All loan principal payments of eligible customers falling due within a 6-month period between May 1, 2020 and October 31, 2020 will be pre-approved for deferment. Principal payments of loans (including revolving facilities) will generally be deferred by 6 months, whereas trade facilities, given their short-term nature, will be deferred by 3 months.

- The Scheme does not cover syndicated loans or loans used for financing purchases of shares or other financial assets.
- Banks will begin informing eligible customers of the pre-approval under the Scheme as soon as practicable. Eligible customers do not need to apply. They only need to contact the bank within 14 days of the bank's notice to confirm the detailed arrangements of the principal payment holiday.
- The HKMA has issued a circular requesting all banks to participate in the Scheme, and has received support from all the 11 major lenders in the Coordination Mechanism.

In light of the economic challenges brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak, the banking sector considers it essential for the Scheme to be implemented quickly in order to alleviate the cash-flow pressure faced by corporate customers. Considering the Scheme's novel nature and the need to roll it out within a short period, the HKMA has reminded banks to devote sufficient resources to ensuring the smooth operation of the Scheme, and to set up hotlines for customers who wish to make enquiries. The HKMA will monitor the operation of the Scheme and maintain close dialogues with banks with the aim of improving the Scheme's implementation on an ongoing basis. For more details about the Scheme, please refer to the attachment.

The Banking Sector SME Lending Coordination Mechanism was established by the HKMA in October 2019. Participating banks have expanded from the nine banks most active in SME lending at establishment to 11 banks at present. The Hong Kong Association of Banks and the HKMC Insurance Limited are represented in the Mechanism. Since its establishment, the Mechanism has rolled out four rounds of relief measures for corporate and retail customers, including principal payment holidays for SMEs and residential mortgages, loan tenor extensions, and the conversion of trade financing lines into temporary overdraft facilities. The measures have worked as intended—as at the end of March 2020, nearly 9 000 SME applications for relief measures have been approved by banks active in SME financing, amounting to over HK\$57 billion. Banks have approved over 2 800 principal payment holiday applications for residential mortgages and emergency personal loans, involving an aggregate amount of over HK\$8 billion.

Transcript of remarks by Secretary for Justice at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, at a media session at the Legislative Council Complex today (April 17):

Reporter: Secretary, according to your professional opinion, does filibustering constitute misconduct in public office? Is the Department of Justice (DoJ), or will the DoJ be studying whether anything should be done about the House Committee situation? Second question regarding the Reuters report, are you basically saying that some of these concerns expressed by senior judges are basically unfounded? Since these concerns are not going away as they are raised over and over again, is there anything the DoJ is going to do about it?

Secretary for Justice: The DoJ is not going to comment on any specific acts, especially if those specific acts are now under the scrutiny of certain investigation or law enforcing agency, allegedly. We do not know what is happening, and therefore it would be inappropriate for me to comment on any specific case, so pardon me for not directly answering the first question. I have given you the elements regarding misconduct in public office, and whether a particular individual will or will not meet that particular situation will depend on the evidence and the applicability and the context and everything.

As to the report from certain reporting about our judicial independence, I think it is extremely important that I utilise this opportunity to ask you all to look at what the Chief Justice has said on April 15, after those reports came out. I do not have the exact English wording here, but you will see from those wordings that the Chief Justice stated that since his taking office in 2010, he has not encountered nor experienced any interference from the Mainland authorities in any shape or form that affects judicial independence, including the appointment of judges. I think that is a very important matter that I hope all should take into account when looking at the article. Nothing is better than the direct evidence of the Chief Justice himself telling us that there is not any such interference. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)