

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, June 20, 2018 is 100.8 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

Missing man in Kwai Chung located

A man who went missing in Kwai Chung was located.

Wong Man-chuk, aged 49, went missing after he left an elderly home on Shek Yam Road on May 23 afternoon. Staff of the elderly home made a report to Police on the same day.

The man was located in Tsuen Wan MTR Station on May 26 morning. He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

LCQ12: Handling of emergency at Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

Following is a question by the Hon Jeremy Tam and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Security, Mr Sonny Au, in the Legislative Council today (June 20):

Question:

According to the Inter-Governmental Agreement in respect of the Construction, Operation, Maintenance and Management of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, signed by the governments of Hong Kong, Guangdong Province and Macao in 2010, the three said governments will adopt the "territoriality principle" in respect of the operation and management of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB). The three governments will handle various issues within their own jurisdictions in accordance with the respective local laws. Regarding the rescue arrangements for incidents that have occurred on the Hong Kong Link Road (HKLR) of HZMB, which is within Hong Kong's jurisdiction, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) when an incident involving personal injuries has occurred on a lane (i) in the Hong Kong-bound direction and (ii) in the Mainland-bound direction of

HKLR, of the respective routes to be taken by ambulances (a) going from the ambulance depot(s) to the scene and (b) conveying the injured persons from the scene to the North Lantau Hospital (NLH);

(2) whether the ambulance routes mentioned in (1) will involve travelling on the shoulder in the opposite direction of the traffic; if so, whether there are measures in place to ensure traffic safety; if there are such measures, of the details and whether such measures include temporarily closing off the lane adjacent to the shoulder; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the journey distance of conveying injured persons from a section of HKLR closest to the boundary to NLH, and the respective estimated journey times during rush and non-rush hours;

(4) when a traffic accident involving a number of injured persons has occurred at a section of HKLR closest to the boundary, making it necessary for ambulances to divert some of the injured persons to public hospitals other than NLH (such as the Princess Margaret Hospital), of (i) the journey distances and (ii) the estimated journey times of conveying the injured persons from the scene to such hospitals respectively;

(5) of the circumstances under which the authorities will arrange for the Government Flying Service to send helicopters to convey injured persons from HKLR to public hospitals; and

(6) whether the authorities have plans to arrange for maritime rescue teams to take part in the rescue operations on HKLR; if so, of the details (including the government departments involved)?

Reply:

President,

Emergency rescue departments in Hong Kong will draw up emergency and rescue plans and conduct drills in response to possible emergencies at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Main Bridge, Hong Kong Link Road (HKLR) or Hong Kong Port. The rescue departments in Hong Kong, Macao and the Mainland will also establish a liaison mechanism and keep in close contact for co-ordination and mutual support when necessary, so as to ensure prompt and appropriate care to casualties.

Having consulted the relevant departments, my reply to various parts of the Hon Jeremy Tam's question is as follows:

(1) & (2) Should there be any emergency at the HKLR involving vehicles heading to Hong Kong, ambulances will attend the scene by making a U-turn at one of the turnaround facilities (one near San Shek Wan and the other on the HZMB eastern artificial island) depending on the incident location to offer emergency ambulance service to casualties. The casualties will be conveyed to Hong Kong hospitals for treatment after being handled at the scene.

Under the same principle, in case of emergencies at the HKLR involving vehicles heading to Zhuhai, ambulances will take the Zhuhai-bound lane to attend the scene. Upon handling the casualties at the scene, ambulances can make a U-turn back to Hong Kong at the turnaround facility near San Shek Wan or the one on the HZMB eastern artificial island and convey the casualties to hospitals for treatment.

Whether it is necessary for the rescue vehicles to run in the opposite direction of the traffic on the HKLR when performing duties will be determined in the light of the actual circumstances and needs. Where necessary, the Police will offer assistance to facilitate the ambulances to attend the scene soonest possible for safely conveying the casualties to hospitals.

(3) & (4) The driving distance for conveying casualties from the boundary between Hong Kong and Guangdong of the HZMB to the North Lantau Hospital (NLH) is about 20 km.

If the incident involves a large number of casualties, the Hong Kong Fire Services Department (FSD) will divert the casualties to different hospitals for treatment in accordance with the triage system established with the Hospital Authority. This system is well-tested as it was established having regard to past experience of major incidents and the reviews conducted afterwards.

The actual travelling time from the boundary between Hong Kong and Guangdong of the HZMB to the NLH or other hospitals is subject to numerous factors. The FSD will work closely with other departments to ensure that the ambulances will be able to convey the casualties to hospitals for treatment in a rapid and safe manner.

(5) One of the major responsibilities of the Government Flying Service (GFS) is search and rescue operations. If there is a need for assistance in an incident, particularly when the traffic is so packed at the scene, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the FSD may request the GFS for assistance in the rescue operation, including providing air ambulance service under safe conditions, conveying the casualties to hospitals for treatment or transporting personnel, tools and kits, medical supplies, etc. to facilitate the rescue operation.

(6) If maritime search and rescue is needed, relevant departments (including the Marine Department (MD), the HKPF and the FSD, etc.) will carry out rescue operations under the "Contingency Plan for Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue". The Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre of the MD is responsible for co-ordinating the search and rescue operations. Where necessary, the marine departments of Guangdong and Hong Kong will conduct joint search and rescue operations in accordance with the existing cooperation mechanism.

LCQ4: Building designs adding difficulties to repair and maintenance works

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Cheuk-ting and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (June 20):

Question:

It has been reported that quite a number of residential buildings newly completed in recent years were constructed with bay windows, fitted with glass curtain walls, installed with decorative components on external walls, and had air-conditioners and drainage pipes installed in concealed locations on the external walls. Such design features have added difficulties to the repair and maintenance works, e.g. the work locations being inaccessible from the inside of the buildings. Since scaffolds cannot be erected on the external walls of some buildings, the more expensive gondolas are needed to be used when works are carried out on the external walls, thus increasing the financial burdens on property owners. Furthermore, due to the design constraints of some external walls, gondolas cannot get close to the work locations. As a result, workers have to stretch their bodies out of the gondolas when carrying out works. This, coupled with the gondolas swinging with the wind, has increased the risk of workers falling from height. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of industrial accidents in the past five years in which workers fell from height while carrying out works on external walls of buildings and the resultant casualties (with a breakdown by whether the relevant works were carried out by using scaffolds or gondolas);

(2) whether it will formulate policies and guidelines to stipulate that the needs of future repair and maintenance works have to be taken into account in the building designs, so as to minimise the need to carry out works at height and to ensure that scaffolds can be erected on the external walls for carrying out the relevant works; and

(3) of the measures put in place to step up the regulation of works on the external walls of buildings which are already completed so as to protect the safety of workers working at height?

Reply:

President,

The Government is highly concerned about the safety of works carried out at external walls of buildings. According to the occupational safety and health legislation administered by the Labour Department (LD), duty-holders (including contractors/employers) have the duty to conduct task-specific risk assessment before commencing repair and maintenance works at external walls, including taking the actual working environment and condition (such as the uniqueness of building design) into consideration, and based on the results of the risk assessment, to formulate appropriate safe working methods, procedures and necessary safety measures. LD, through promulgation of Codes of Practice (CoP)/Guidelines, publicity and promotion, as well as carrying out routine inspections, ensures the safety of workers working at external walls of buildings. The Government also understands the importance of building design to the safety of works carried out at external walls, and relevant government departments are actively following up on this issue.

In consultation with the Development Bureau and the Buildings Department (BD), the Labour and Welfare Bureau provides a consolidated reply to the three parts of the question as follows:

(1) From 2013 to 2017, there were 13 fatal industrial accidents relating to workers falling from height during renovation and repair works carried out at the external walls of existing buildings, resulting in the death of 14 workers. Among these cases, 11 involved the erection, dismantling or use of scaffolds. None of the cases involved the use of suspended working platforms (SWPs). According to the results of the accident investigations conducted by LD, there was no evidence showing that the design of the external walls of these buildings was not suitable for erection of scaffolds to carry out the works. LD does not keep the figures of non-fatal accidents relating to repair and maintenance works at external walls.

(2) With regards to the design of new buildings, in order to encourage the industry, when designing buildings, to consider the incorporation of facilities to facilitate external inspection and maintenance of buildings, BD implemented new initiatives in early 2016. In considering applications for exemption of components of the exterior of buildings, such as air conditioners (ACs) platforms and curtain walls, from gross floor area (GFA) calculation, the provision of ancillary facilities for repair and maintenance of such exterior components is one of the prerequisites. BD has issued a circular letter to the industry in December 2016 promulgating Guidelines for Designing Access and Safety Provisions for the Maintenance and Repair of External Air Conditioners (ACs) at Height. The guidelines set out the requirements regarding adequate working spaces around ACs, appropriate access, etc. Upon issue of these guidelines, development projects with general building plans first approved by BD involving exclusion of ACs platforms from the GFA calculation should comply with the guidelines and provide relevant ancillary facilities. A working group was set up by BD, LD and the building industry in 2017 to review the guidelines for designing ACs platform to facilitate workers carrying out repair works safely. The working group also reviews the requirements for installing cast-in anchor devices on external walls to complement the use of safety belt. BD will consult the building industry later on the proposed revisions to the guidelines of ACs

platform per the established procedures.

BD is now looking into the legislative amendment of the Building (Construction) Regulations (Cap 123B) including introduction of requirements to mandate provision of adequate safety facilities in building design to facilitate future repair and maintenance works on external walls. When the amended regulations commence operation, BD will require Authorized Persons to provide information on the facilities for external repair of buildings, such as working platforms that conform with legislations relating to occupational safety and health, etc. Such facilities must be specified on the building plans for consideration and approval by BD for compliance with the proposed revised provisions. To complement the proposed amended regulations, BD is formulating guidelines on the design of access for repair and will consult the building industry per the established procedures later.

(3) LD administers the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509), the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance (Cap 59) and their subsidiary regulations. LD, through inspection and enforcement including area patrols outside office hours and special enforcement operations targeting high risk works such as working at height, sends officers to carry out surprise inspection on works carried out at external walls of buildings, with a view to deterring operation contravening safety regulations and to enhancing safety of such works. The legislation stipulates the safety requirements for work at height (including works carried out at external walls) that duty-holders should comply with, including erection of safe working platforms, as well as provision of secure fences, safe access and egress and suitable fall-arrestors for working platforms to protect the occupational safety of workers working at height.

On working-at-height, LD published CoP/Guidelines, including the CoP for Bamboo Scaffolding Safety, CoP for Safe Use and Operation of SWPs, Guidance Notes on Classification and Use of Safety Belts and their Anchorage Systems, etc. They set out practical operation requirements and measures for general working environment/condition in respect of external wall works safety to help contractors/employers understand and comply with the legislative requirements and their responsibilities under other legislations. Under this principle, LD will review and update the relevant CoP/Guidelines from time to time to reflect the changes in general working environment.

However, as the design of the external walls of buildings varies, contractors/employers have the duty to conduct task-specific risk assessment before commencing repair and maintenance works at external walls, including taking the actual working environment and condition (such as the uniqueness of building design) into consideration, and based on the results of the risk assessment, to formulate appropriate safe working methods, procedures and necessary safety measures including the provision of suitable working platforms and fall arrestors for the workers and ensuring their proper use, in order to comply with statutory work-safety requirements. When necessary, contractors/ employers should also seek professional advice.

LCQ4: Building designs adding difficulties to repair and maintenance works

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Cheuk-ting and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (June 20):

Question:

It has been reported that quite a number of residential buildings newly completed in recent years were constructed with bay windows, fitted with glass curtain walls, installed with decorative components on external walls, and had air-conditioners and drainage pipes installed in concealed locations on the external walls. Such design features have added difficulties to the repair and maintenance works, e.g. the work locations being inaccessible from the inside of the buildings. Since scaffolds cannot be erected on the external walls of some buildings, the more expensive gondolas are needed to be used when works are carried out on the external walls, thus increasing the financial burdens on property owners. Furthermore, due to the design constraints of some external walls, gondolas cannot get close to the work locations. As a result, workers have to stretch their bodies out of the gondolas when carrying out works. This, coupled with the gondolas swinging with the wind, has increased the risk of workers falling from height. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of industrial accidents in the past five years in which workers fell from height while carrying out works on external walls of buildings and the resultant casualties (with a breakdown by whether the relevant works were carried out by using scaffolds or gondolas);

(2) whether it will formulate policies and guidelines to stipulate that the needs of future repair and maintenance works have to be taken into account in the building designs, so as to minimise the need to carry out works at height and to ensure that scaffolds can be erected on the external walls for carrying out the relevant works; and

(3) of the measures put in place to step up the regulation of works on the external walls of buildings which are already completed so as to protect the safety of workers working at height?

Reply:

President,

The Government is highly concerned about the safety of works carried out at external walls of buildings. According to the occupational safety and health legislation administered by the Labour Department (LD), duty-holders (including contractors/employers) have the duty to conduct task-specific risk assessment before commencing repair and maintenance works at external walls, including taking the actual working environment and condition (such as the uniqueness of building design) into consideration, and based on the results of the risk assessment, to formulate appropriate safe working methods, procedures and necessary safety measures. LD, through promulgation of Codes of Practice (CoP)/Guidelines, publicity and promotion, as well as carrying out routine inspections, ensures the safety of workers working at external walls of buildings. The Government also understands the importance of building design to the safety of works carried out at external walls, and relevant government departments are actively following up on this issue.

In consultation with the Development Bureau and the Buildings Department (BD), the Labour and Welfare Bureau provides a consolidated reply to the three parts of the question as follows:

(1) From 2013 to 2017, there were 13 fatal industrial accidents relating to workers falling from height during renovation and repair works carried out at the external walls of existing buildings, resulting in the death of 14 workers. Among these cases, 11 involved the erection, dismantling or use of scaffolds. None of the cases involved the use of suspended working platforms (SWPs). According to the results of the accident investigations conducted by LD, there was no evidence showing that the design of the external walls of these buildings was not suitable for erection of scaffolds to carry out the works. LD does not keep the figures of non-fatal accidents relating to repair and maintenance works at external walls.

(2) With regards to the design of new buildings, in order to encourage the industry, when designing buildings, to consider the incorporation of facilities to facilitate external inspection and maintenance of buildings, BD implemented new initiatives in early 2016. In considering applications for exemption of components of the exterior of buildings, such as air conditioners (ACs) platforms and curtain walls, from gross floor area (GFA) calculation, the provision of ancillary facilities for repair and maintenance of such exterior components is one of the prerequisites. BD has issued a circular letter to the industry in December 2016 promulgating Guidelines for Designing Access and Safety Provisions for the Maintenance and Repair of External Air Conditioners (ACs) at Height. The guidelines set out the requirements regarding adequate working spaces around ACs, appropriate access, etc. Upon issue of these guidelines, development projects with general building plans first approved by BD involving exclusion of ACs platforms from the GFA calculation should comply with the guidelines and provide relevant ancillary facilities. A working group was set up by BD, LD and the building industry in 2017 to review the guidelines for designing ACs platform to facilitate workers carrying out repair works safely. The working group also reviews the requirements for installing cast-in anchor devices on external walls to complement the use of safety belt. BD will consult the building industry later on the proposed revisions to the guidelines of ACs

platform per the established procedures.

BD is now looking into the legislative amendment of the Building (Construction) Regulations (Cap 123B) including introduction of requirements to mandate provision of adequate safety facilities in building design to facilitate future repair and maintenance works on external walls. When the amended regulations commence operation, BD will require Authorized Persons to provide information on the facilities for external repair of buildings, such as working platforms that conform with legislations relating to occupational safety and health, etc. Such facilities must be specified on the building plans for consideration and approval by BD for compliance with the proposed revised provisions. To complement the proposed amended regulations, BD is formulating guidelines on the design of access for repair and will consult the building industry per the established procedures later.

(3) LD administers the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509), the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance (Cap 59) and their subsidiary regulations. LD, through inspection and enforcement including area patrols outside office hours and special enforcement operations targeting high risk works such as working at height, sends officers to carry out surprise inspection on works carried out at external walls of buildings, with a view to deterring operation contravening safety regulations and to enhancing safety of such works. The legislation stipulates the safety requirements for work at height (including works carried out at external walls) that duty-holders should comply with, including erection of safe working platforms, as well as provision of secure fences, safe access and egress and suitable fall-arrestors for working platforms to protect the occupational safety of workers working at height.

On working-at-height, LD published CoP/Guidelines, including the CoP for Bamboo Scaffolding Safety, CoP for Safe Use and Operation of SWPs, Guidance Notes on Classification and Use of Safety Belts and their Anchorage Systems, etc. They set out practical operation requirements and measures for general working environment/condition in respect of external wall works safety to help contractors/employers understand and comply with the legislative requirements and their responsibilities under other legislations. Under this principle, LD will review and update the relevant CoP/Guidelines from time to time to reflect the changes in general working environment.

However, as the design of the external walls of buildings varies, contractors/employers have the duty to conduct task-specific risk assessment before commencing repair and maintenance works at external walls, including taking the actual working environment and condition (such as the uniqueness of building design) into consideration, and based on the results of the risk assessment, to formulate appropriate safe working methods, procedures and necessary safety measures including the provision of suitable working platforms and fall arrestors for the workers and ensuring their proper use, in order to comply with statutory work-safety requirements. When necessary, contractors/ employers should also seek professional advice.