

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, April 2, 2020 is 109 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

Best Landscape Award for Private Property Development 2020 cancelled

In view of the latest situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) announced today (April 2) that the Best Landscape Award for Private Property Development 2020, which had been calling for nominations, has been cancelled.

The Award, organised by the LCSD, is co-organised by the Home Affairs Department, the Hong Kong Institute of Architects, the Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects, the Institute of Horticulture (Hong Kong), the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, the Professional Green Building Council and the Hong Kong Association of Property Management Companies. According priority to the health of the nominees, the adjudication panel and staff, the organising committee decided to cancel the Award after thorough consideration.

CEDB responds to media enquiries on RTHK programme

In response to media enquiries regarding concerns arising from an interview with an official of the World Health Organization (WHO) in a Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) programme ("The Pulse"), a spokesman for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) said the following today (April 2):

"The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, has clearly stated in a press release issued by the CEDB on February 18 and at his media stand-up on March 17 that RTHK must uphold and abide by the Charter of RTHK in discharging its duties to provide public service broadcasting. In reporting their work to the CEDB, the Director of Broadcasting and RTHK management have repeatedly pledged to the Secretary that RTHK will strictly

adhere to and at all times abide by the Charter.

The public purposes and mission of RTHK have been clearly specified in the Charter, which includes engendering a sense of citizenship and national identity through programmes that contribute to the understanding of our community and nation; and promoting understanding of the concept of "One Country, Two Systems".

The Secretary holds the view that the presentation in that episode of the aforesaid programme has breached the One-China Principle and the purposes and mission of RTHK as a public service broadcaster as specified in the Charter. It is common knowledge that the WHO membership is based on sovereign states. RTHK, as a government department and a public service broadcaster, should have proper understanding of the above without any deviation. As the Editor-in-chief of RTHK, the Director of Broadcasting should be responsible for this.

The Secretary has once again urged the Director of Broadcasting and RTHK to fully abide by the Charter and that they must handle all programmes in a professional and vigilant manner as required of them."

SLW appeals to foreign domestic helpers and employers to join hands in prevention of epidemic spread (with photo/video)

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, today (April 2) called upon foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) and their employers to exercise a mutual understanding on rest day arrangements. He thanked FDHs for their contributions to Hong Kong society and appealed to them to observe social distancing in the fight against COVID-19. A series of publicity measures are underway to convey the messages.

In a video message appealing to all FDHs and employers to join hands in this fight, Dr Law said, "The Government has prohibited group gatherings with more than four people in public places. Offenders are liable to prosecution. We fully understand that most helpers would like to meet their friends during their rest days. However, we are now at a critical juncture in our fight against COVID-19, and it is essential that all of us practise social distancing to prevent the spread of the disease."

With effect from March 29 to April 11, group gatherings with more than four people in public places are prohibited and offenders are liable to a

fixed penalty of \$2,000, or if charged in a court, a maximum penalty of fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Dr Law also appealed to employers to understand the current special circumstances and discuss the rest day arrangements with their helpers by encouraging them to stay home for rest, or take their rest day on weekdays instead of at the weekend. "Employers are also reminded that it is against the law to refuse to grant a rest day or compel your helpers to work on a rest day without consent," he added.

A wide range of publicity efforts have been undertaken to drive home the above messages. These include joint efforts with consulates-general to convey the messages to their nationals through their websites and social media platforms; putting up and distributing posters and leaflets (available in major FDH languages, including Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia and Thai) across the territory as well as through electronic means; and broadcasting appeal messages in radio programmes targeting FDHs.

Furthermore, some frequently asked questions and answers on rest day arrangements and relevant employment matters are available on the dedicated FDH portal (www.fdh.labour.gov.hk) of the Labour Department (LD) for employers' reference.

Apart from social distancing measures, the Government has implemented initiatives to assist employers and FDHs to cope with the special circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic:

- All FDH contracts that expire on or before June 30 may be extended up to July 31 upon mutual agreement between the employer and the FDH (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202003/19/P2020031900394.htm);
- FDHs whose existing contracts are due to expire or are terminated on or before July 31 may apply to the Immigration Department (ImmD) for an extension of limit of stay in Hong Kong (for a maximum period of one month) as visitor to facilitate them to find a new employer in Hong Kong (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202003/21/P2020032000829.htm); and
- FDHs on a renewed contract with the same employer upon completion of the current contract, or those due to start a new contract with a new employer may apply to ImmD for deferring home leave for no more than 18 months.

For any update and health information on COVID-19, please visit the Government's "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/). Information in Chinese, English, Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Hindi, Sinhala, Bengali, Nepali and Urdu is available.

Should FDHs and their employers have enquiries on employment matters, they may seek the LD's assistance through its dedicated email account for FDH matters (fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk) and through the online form on its dedicated FDH portal (www.fdh.labour.gov.hk).



Import of poultry meat and products from CsongrÁid County in Hungary suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (April 2) that in view of a notification from the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N8 avian influenza in Csongrád County in Hungary, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products, including poultry eggs, from the county with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong has currently established a protocol with Hungary for the import of poultry meat but not for poultry eggs. According to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 3,170 tonnes of frozen poultry meat from Hungary last year.

"The CFS has contacted the Hungarian authorities over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the World Organisation for Animal Health and the relevant authorities on avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.