

# Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 is 107.5 (same as yesterday's index).

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## Extension of opening hours of FEHD public columbaria during Ching Ming Festival

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (March 17) said that the opening hours of public columbaria under the FEHD will be extended to 7am to 7pm two weeks before and after the Ching Ming Festival (the period between March 21 to April 19) to lessen crowd conditions. The FEHD appealed to the public to avoid going grave sweeping during the peak period on the day of the Ching Ming Festival, and to stagger grave-sweeping activities over a wider period before and after the festival to reduce the risk of spreading the disease.

The FEHD also urged people visiting cemeteries and columbaria paying respect to ancestors during the festival to keep the environment clean and dispose of used containers properly to prevent mosquito breeding.

An FEHD spokesman said, "The FEHD will provide special cleaning services such as disinfection of handrails and lift buttons inside public cemeteries and columbaria during the festival period, and deploy more staff to clear undergrowth and remove rubbish, and empty bottles and containers left behind by grave sweepers. We will also remove water in containers and incense burners, and level the ground surface to prevent accumulation of water. Furthermore, additional litter bins and toilet facilities will be provided."

The spokesman urged the public to co-operate by clearing stagnant water and rubbish before leaving to prevent mosquito breeding. Containers such as lunch boxes, drink cans, plastic bags and buckets for burning incense should also be removed.

"As a precaution against mosquitoes, grave sweepers are advised to wear light-coloured long-sleeved tops and trousers, and apply insect repellent to exposed parts of their body," he said.

The FEHD has also advised managers of private cemeteries to take similar precautions against mosquitoes.

To protect the environment and to prevent hill fires, members of the public are encouraged to replace incense burning with flowers when paying tribute to their ancestors. Grave sweepers should take extra care when burning incense, which should only be carried out inside a designated joss paper furnace or iron bucket. They should make sure that all fires have gone out before leaving. Grave sweepers are also reminded to keep flammable items (for e.g. alcohol antiseptic sprays and alcohol-based instant hand sanitisers) away from fires.

The Government has been promoting green burials, and the FEHD has set up the Internet Memorial Service webpage ([www.memorial.gov.hk](http://www.memorial.gov.hk)) and its mobile application for members of the public to pay tribute to their deceased beloved anywhere and anytime.

The spokesman also urged the public to pay attention to special traffic and transport arrangements which will be implemented during the Ching Ming Festival. Access to Cape Collinson Crematorium, Diamond Hill Crematorium, Fu Shan Crematorium, Kwai Chung Crematorium, Wo Hop Shek Crematorium and Wo Hop Shek Cemetery will be closed to all vehicles while the special traffic and transport arrangements are in operation, except for those with special permission.

For details of the special traffic and transport arrangements in the vicinity of cemeteries and crematoria during the Ching Ming Festival, please visit the Transport Department website ([www.td.gov.hk](http://www.td.gov.hk)).

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## Exchange Fund Bills tender results

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

### Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date	: March 17, 2020
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: Q2012
Issue date	: March 18, 2020
Maturity date	: June 17, 2020
Amount applied	: HK\$99,200 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$44,243 MN
Average yield accepted	: 0.51 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 0.66 PCT
Pro rata ratio	: About 35 PCT
Average tender yield	: 0.76 PCT

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Tender date	: March 17, 2020
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: H2041
Issue date	: March 18, 2020
Maturity date	: September 16, 2020
Amount applied	: HK\$38,480 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$11,000 MN
Average yield accepted	: 0.52 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 0.59 PCT
Pro rata ratio	: About 44 PCT
Average tender yield	: 0.73 PCT

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Tender date	: March 17, 2020
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: Y2087
Issue date	: March 18, 2020
Maturity date	: March 17, 2021
Amount applied	: HK\$7,640 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$1,300 MN
Average yield accepted	: 0.52 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 0.55 PCT
Pro rata ratio	: About 39 PCT
Average tender yield	: 0.68 PCT

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning March 23:

Tender date	: March 24, 2020
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: Q2013
Issue date	: March 25, 2020
Maturity date	: June 24, 2020
Tenor	: 91 Days
Amount on offer	: HK\$44,156 MN

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Tender date	: March 24, 2020
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: H2042
Issue date	: March 25, 2020

Maturity date	: September 23, 2020
Tenor	: 182 Days
Amount on offer	: HK\$11,000 MN

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## Hong Kong Customs mounts special operation against unfair trade practices by employment agency

Hong Kong Customs mounted a special enforcement action codenamed "Phantom" in recent months against unfair trade practices by employment agencies. During the operation, two saleswomen were arrested for being suspected of having applied false trade descriptions in the course of selling employment agency services, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO). The service contracts sum involved was about \$180,000.

Customs officers earlier received information alleging that staff members of two employment agencies in Kwun Tong and To Kwa Wan were suspected of making false claims in the sale of employment agency services to foreign domestic helpers that the company was a licensed employment agency and could arrange foreign domestic helpers' relatives and friends to come and work in Hong Kong. However, no such job applications were made by the companies.

After an investigation, Customs arrested two saleswomen of the employment agency, aged 54 and 42, one of whom was the mastermind. A total of eight victims were involved and the sum of the service contracts amounted to about \$180,000.

The operation "Phantom" is ongoing.

The Group Head (Unfair Trade Practice Investigation), Ms Suzette Ip, said at a press conference today (March 17) that Customs will continue to step up enforcement to combat unfair trade practices by employment agencies.

She reminded traders that they must comply with the requirements of the TDO. Consumers are also reminded to procure services from reputable shops. Before purchasing an employment agency service, consumers should conduct research on the company background and related job application procedures and details. Before filling in any documents, consumers should clearly understand the purpose of the documents and pay special attention to the terms and conditions as listed. When in doubt, do not provide personal information, sign documents and make transactional decisions lightly.

Under the TDO, any trader who applies a false trade description to a service supplied to a consumer commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TD0 to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)).

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## **New District Officer for Yau Tsim Mong assumes office (with photo)**

Mr Edward Yu will assume the post of District Officer (Yau Tsim Mong) tomorrow (March 18), succeeding Mrs Laura Aron.

Mr Yu joined the Administrative Service in 1998. He has served in various bureaux including the Home Affairs Bureau, the former Transport Bureau, the former Constitutional Affairs Bureau, the former Education and Manpower Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the Security Bureau, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and the Education Bureau.

He was Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Recreation and Sport) before taking up the new post.

