

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, January 30, 2019 is 103.3 (down 0.1 against yesterday's index).

LCQ8: Establishment of Traffic Wardens

Following is a question by the Hon Hui Chi-fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

Regarding the establishment of and the manpower deployment for Traffic Wardens, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the establishment of Traffic Wardens in various police districts across the territory, as well as the mechanism and criteria adopted for formulating such establishment;
- (2) of the reasons why it has not set up a mechanism for reviewing the establishment of and manpower deployment for Traffic Wardens;
- (3) whether it received in the past five years any request from members of the local communities and District Councils for deploying additional Traffic Wardens to carry out duties in their districts; if so, of the respective reasons for accepting and rejecting such requests;
- (4) how the pay scales of the two ranks of Traffic Wardens as well as the time and costs involved in the induction training for Traffic Wardens at present compare with those of police officers; and
- (5) in which years of the past decade the authorities increased or reduced the manpower of Traffic Wardens, and the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Hui Chi-fung's question is as follows:

- (1) The establishment of Traffic Wardens in various police districts across the territory is set out at Annex 1.

Traffic Wardens are responsible for the enforcement duties under the

Fixed Penalty (Traffic Contraventions) Ordinance (Cap. 237) and the Motor Vehicle Idling (Fixed Penalty) Ordinance (Cap. 611), as well as managing and directing vehicles and pedestrians. Apart from relying on Traffic Wardens for parking-related enforcement duties, police officers in the police districts also take enforcement actions concerning parking and road traffic offences.

The Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) will consider various factors, including the overall manpower distribution of frontline enforcement staff and resources deployment in individual police districts, as well as traffic conditions in the districts (such as the number of on-street metered parking spaces), and deploy manpower as appropriate to meet actual operational needs.

(2) There is an established mechanism for the Government to review and determine the manpower resources for all departments. The Police have always conducted timely reviews of the establishment and resources for frontline enforcement staff based on operational needs. Where warranted, resources will be redeployed internally or additional resources will be sought to cope with traffic enforcement duties. The Police created a total of eight Traffic Warden posts in 2017 and 2018 and will create another 49 Traffic Warden posts in the 2018-19 financial year.

(3) In the past five years, the Police have received requests from District Council members and the public, etc. for deploying additional Traffic Wardens to carry out duties in certain districts. The Police have not retained comprehensive records relating to such requests and are therefore unable to provide the reasons for accepting or rejecting these requests. When the Police deploy Traffic Wardens for enforcement duties, they have to take into consideration various factors, including the overall manpower distribution of frontline officers and resource deployment in individual police districts, as well as the traffic conditions in the districts (such as the number of on-street metered parking spaces), and deploy manpower as appropriate to meet actual operational needs.

(4) The job nature and job requirements of Traffic Wardens and police officers differ, and that Traffic Wardens are civilian staff, not disciplinary staff. It would be difficult to compare these two grades of officers.

The monthly salary of Traffic Wardens ranges from Master Pay Scale (MPS) point 6 (\$17,855) to point 12 (\$25,790). For Senior Traffic Wardens, their monthly salary ranges from MPS point 13 (\$27,340) to point 16 (\$31,685). Newly recruited Traffic Wardens are required to undergo a four-week induction training, which aims to ensure that they have a firm grasp of the professional knowledge, skills and attitude necessary for discharging their duties.

(5) In the past decade, the Police have created 77 Traffic Warden posts to meet operational needs. Details can be found at Annex 2.

LCQ5: Park-and-ride facilities

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

In recent years, more and more members of the public have moved to reside in remote rural areas in the New Territories. Owing to a lack of public transport services in such areas, they need to commute, by private cars, to and from the nearby town centres for meeting their daily needs, or to and from the urban areas for work. In order to relieve the pressure generated by the growing number of private cars on the road networks in the urban areas, the Government has over the years implemented park-and-ride (PnR) schemes, which offer concessionary parking fees to encourage members of the public to park their private cars near public transport hubs or railway stations and then take public transport to go to the urban areas. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the public transport hubs and railway stations at which a PnR scheme is currently implemented; the number of parking spaces, their utilisation rates during peak and non-peak hours, the percentage of time when such parking spaces were fully occupied, the levels of parking fees charged and the concessions offered, at each of such locations in each of the past three years;

(2) given that the problem of road congestion in the urban areas is worsening, whether the Government will increase substantially the number of parking spaces and parking fee concessions provided under PnR schemes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there have all along been suggestions from members of the public for implementing an extensive PnR scheme at the Tuen Mun Road Bus-Bus Interchange and the Tai Lam Tunnel Bus-Bus Interchange as well as increasing the number of parking spaces provided under the PnR schemes near Kam Sheung Road Station of the West Rail Line and Sheung Shui Station of the East Rail Line, whether the Government has followed up those suggestions; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been adopting a public transport-oriented policy, which encourages the public to make good use of the public transport network for their journeys as far as possible and minimise their reliance on private cars. Railway provides high capacity and convenient services. It is a green and efficient mass transit. Thus, the Government has all along adopted railway as backbone of the public transport system, while coordinating the

complementarity among different public transport services, including franchised bus services with high capacity, and public light buses which provides supplementary feeder services. In fact, over 12 million passenger trips, accounting for nearly 90 per cent of the total passenger trips, are made on public transport every day, the usage of which is the highest in the world.

On this basis, the Government supports the provision of park-and-ride (PnR) facilities at or near suitable railway stations to encourage drivers to take the train after parking their vehicles, hence reducing the road traffic entering congested areas.

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Chan Han-pan's question is as follows:

(1) Currently, there are 25 car parks providing PnR concessions in Hong Kong, nine of them are managed by the Housing Department and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), 12 are managed by the Link Asset Management Limited (the LINK) and four are managed by other private companies, providing a total of around 10 000 parking spaces.

Among the aforesaid car parks, the nine car parks with PnR services managed by the Housing Department and the MTRCL provides a total of 3 513 PnR parking spaces. These car parks are located at or near MTR stations, including the Hong Kong Station, Ocean Park Station, Kowloon Station, West Kowloon Station of the High Speed Rail, Hung Hom Station, Tsing Yi Station, Choi Hung Station, Sheung Shui Station and Kam Sheung Road Station, to make it convenient for drivers to switch to MTR. Drivers who park their cars and switch to MTR to travel to their destinations can enjoy a parking fee discount of about 50 per cent on average at these car parks. The PnR rate of each car park and relevant details have been uploaded to the MTRCL's website for public reference.

In the third quarter of 2018, the parking spaces in the nine car parks mentioned above were patronised by nearly 2 980 users per day on average, with PnR users accounting for about 60 per cent of the total number of users, see Annex 1 for details. The Transport Department (TD) has not kept the relevant usage figures in the past three years.

As regards the car parks managed by the LINK or other private companies, the provision of PnR concessions is a matter of commercial decision. The Government does not have statistics on utilisation in this respect. The number of parking spaces in these car parks with PnR concessions are tabulated in Annex 2.

(2) and (3) Regarding enhancing the PnR facilities near Sheung Shui Station and at Kam Sheung Road Station, there is a public car park in Po Shek Wu Estate at Choi Yuen Road, Sheung Shui. After the completion of all the works, a total of about 220 private car parking spaces will be created, 60 per cent of which, i.e. about 130 private car parking spaces, will be PnR spaces. The first phase car park was commissioned in August 2018 and provides 166 private car parking spaces, of which 100 are PnR spaces. The TD will continue to

monitor the usage pattern of the PnR facilities in the above car park.

The existing PnR facilities at Kam Sheung Road Station of the West Rail Line will be permanently reprovisioned in Package 1 of the property development project at that station. The car park offering PnR concessions at the station is expected to commence operation in 2025 and provides 610 PnR spaces.

Moreover, regarding the Member's suggestion for new PnR schemes for private cars for the Tuen Mun Road Bus-Bus Interchange and the Tai Lam Tunnel Bus-Bus Interchange respectively, the TD will continue to monitor the demand closely. With the principle of "single site, multiple uses" in mind, the TD will explore and identify available sites with a view to providing the parking facilities and associated link road facilities required.

Looking ahead, the Government will continue to make reference to the recommendations in the Report on Study of Road Traffic Congestion in Hong Kong released by the Transport Advisory Committee in December 2014, including adjusting the first registration tax and annual licence fee for private cars, reviewing the parking policy, in order to reduce private car usage and alleviate road traffic congestion. In taking forward individual railway projects, as well as urban renewal and new development projects, the Government will also consider introducing more PnR facilities at suitable locations. When proceeding with railway projects, the Government will request the MTRCL to conduct an assessment of how stations are to be connected with other modes of public transport and the interchange arrangements involved. Where conditions of individual railway projects are deemed suitable, the Government will ask the MTRCL to consider various options for adding PnR facilities to facilitate the use of the mass transit system.

From the angle of practical consideration, it is often not easy to identify suitable sites for new car parks nowadays. Another concern that needs to be addressed would be the traffic impact of additional parking spaces on the local road network. Given the principle that our transport policy is to develop a public transport oriented system with railway as the backbone, the TD will continue to optimise public transport services. This will encourage more motorists to change their travel pattern and switch to public transport services directly, thereby enabling more efficient use of our limited road space. Thank you President.

LCQ6: Air Quality Objectives

Following is a question by the Hon Chu Hoi-dick and a reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

Earlier on, the Environment Bureau (ENB) recommended to the Air Quality Objectives Review Working Group that the average 24-hour concentration limit stipulated for fine suspended particulates (i.e. PM_{2.5}) in the Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) be tightened from 75 µg/m³ at present to 50 µg/m³, but the number of exceedances allowed be relaxed from the current level of not more than 9 days to not more than 35 days per calendar year. On the other hand, some environmentalists have pointed out that it is anticipated that during the period from 2020 to 2025, there will be a high concentration of air pollutants over the waters around Kau Yi Chau, i.e. the reclamation area under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that under the World Health Organization's Interim Target-2, the number of exceedances allowed in respect of PM_{2.5} is no more than three days per calendar year, of the justifications for ENB's recommendation to relax that number to 35 days;

(2) whether it has assessed if the recommendation has run counter to the aim of reviewing AQOs as set out in section 7A of the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, which is to ensure that AQOs are the objectives that should be achieved and maintained in order to promote the conservation and the best use of air in the air control zone in the public interest; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, whether ENB will shelve the recommendation; and

(3) given that some members of the public suspect that the recommendation was made to make it easier for the environmental impact assessment reports for the reclamation and related infrastructure works projects under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision to get approval, whether ENB will shelve the recommendation so as to allay public concerns?

Reply:

Acting President,

The World Health Organization (WHO) Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) clearly state that different countries may set different air quality standards due to different approaches in balancing health risks, technological feasibility, and economic, political and social considerations. The AQGs recommend guideline values (i.e. ultimate targets) and interim targets (ITs) for air quality. The setting of ITs by WHO is intended for governments, having regard to their local circumstances, to adopt ITs to progressively tighten their air quality standards towards an ultimate goal of meeting the WHO ultimate targets. At present, no country has fully adopted WHO ultimate targets as legal air quality standards.

The AQGs do not provide recommendations on the number of allowable exceedances when formulating the guideline values of the concerned air pollutants. In view of the fact that air quality may violate the standards owing to uncontrollable circumstances such as extreme weather, Chapter 8 of the AQGs states that when the air quality standards are set to be legally

binding, governments could quantify the compliance criteria through establishing the number of allowable exceedances. The AQGs have also quoted the number of allowable exceedances for the 8-hour ozone standard set by the European Union (EU) at 25 times per year and that for the 24-hour nitrogen dioxide standard set in South Africa at three times per year as examples to illustrate that the numbers of allowable exceedances for different air pollutants concentration limits vary among different places.

The prevailing Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) came into effect on January 1, 2014. The Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO) stipulates that the AQOs must be reviewed at least once in every five years. The Environment Bureau embarked on a review of the AQOs in mid-2016 and formed a AQOs Review Working Group (Working Group) and sub-groups comprising members from relevant stakeholders and government department representatives to take forward the work. The review has been completed in December 2018. We plan to report the review findings to the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) in the first quarter of this year, consult the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on the Environmental Affairs (EA Panel) afterwards and launch a three-month public consultation. After completing the public consultation, we shall consider views collected and consult the ACE and the EA Panel on the way forward. If the AQOs are to be tightened, we shall submit an amendment bill to the LegCo with a view to implementing the new AQOs as soon as possible.

My responses to the questions raised by the Hon Chu Hoi-dick are as follows:

(1) and (2) As I mentioned earlier, the WHO AQGs do not provide recommendations on the number of allowable exceedances of the 24-hour particulate matter (PM) guideline values. In fact, the number of allowable exceedances of the 24-hour PM standards varies among places. For example, the EU and the United Kingdom allow 35 exceedances per year for the 24-hour PM₁₀ (respirable suspended particulates) standards. They have set an annual PM_{2.5} (fine suspended particulates) standard but not any 24-hour PM_{2.5} standard.

The assessment results of the AQOs review reveal that there is scope for tightening the AQO for annual PM_{2.5} from IT-1 to IT-2. If the AQO for 24-hour PM_{2.5} is to be tightened concurrently to IT-2, there could be more than 30 days on which the 24-hour PM_{2.5} concentrations at the north-western and northern parts of the New Territories would exceed the IT-2 level due to unfavourable meteorological conditions or regional air pollution influence. Therefore, according to WHO AQGs, setting a number of allowable exceedance of 35 is appropriate and in line with international practices (including EU and United States). The air science and health experts of the Working Group also consider that the above approach to tighten the AQOs of PM_{2.5} can help enhance public health protection.

Therefore, the approach of progressively tightening the air quality standards through the adoption of ITs and setting the number of allowable exceedances for determining compliance with the standards according to AQGs is fully in line with section 7A of the APCO.

(3) The review of AQOs is based on WHO AQGs and scientific grounds. The

assessment approaches adopted and the findings have been thoroughly discussed among air scientists and health experts. As aforesaid, we are going to report the review findings to the ACE and embark on the public consultation. If the AQOs are to be tightened, we shall submit an amendment bill to the LegCo.

Thank you, Acting President.

Hong Kong Customs inspects Lunar New Year Fairs

Hong Kong Customs today (January 30) distributed pamphlets to stall operators at various Lunar New Year Fairs to remind them not to sell infringing goods.

The Divisional Commander (Intellectual Property General Investigation), Ms Peggy Tam, said today that Customs will step up inspections in different districts, including at Lunar New Year Fairs, and take stringent enforcement actions against infringing activities to protect consumer interests.

Last November, Customs distributed leaflets to successful bidders for Lunar New Year Fair stalls reminding them to be cautious about the authenticity and origin of their purchased goods. They were also reminded to verify with the corresponding agents or representatives of trademark and copyright owners if in doubt.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Under the Copyright Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any infringing goods commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$50,000 per infringing copy and imprisonment for four years.

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