

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, October 17, 2024 is 104.9 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

EMSD releases lift and escalator contractors' latest performance ratings

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (October 17) announced the performance ratings of the registered lift and escalator contractors for the past 12 months (from October 2023 to September 2024) for public reference.

According to the rating results, 31 registered lift contractors and 16 registered escalator contractors were awarded the Safety Star. Among these contractors, 15 registered lift contractors and 10 registered escalator contractors had not been found non-compliant with the safety and maintenance requirements as reported in the last two consecutive announcements of performance results, and were therefore given the highest rating of five Quality Stars. The EMSD conducted 30 325 inspections of lifts and escalators during the period.

The rating results, conviction records, summaries of the warning letters and equipment failure records are available on the EMSD's website (www.emsd.gov.hk/emsd/eng/pps/le_pub_mpr.shtml).

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and

supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on October 16 to noon today (October 17), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 244 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 93 031 samples of food imported from Japan (including 59 309 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 20 908 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Government sets up Task Group on New Medical School

The Government announced today (October 17) the establishment of the Task Group on New Medical School responsible for devising the direction and

parameters for a new medical school. The Task Group intends to extend invitation of proposals within this year to local universities interested in establishing the new medical school, so as to select a suitable university for setting up the third medical school.

The Chief Executive announced in his Policy Address 2024 that the Government supports the establishment of the third medical school by a local university, with a view to nurturing more talented medical practitioners in support of the local healthcare system to provide quality service, while at the same time driving Hong Kong's development into an international medical training, research and innovation hub.

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, said, "The establishment of the third medical school is an important project in developing medical education in Hong Kong to drive the pursuit of excellence in medical teaching and research in Hong Kong. Echoing the plan to develop Hong Kong into an international health and medical innovation hub, I hope that the new medical school could pursue an innovative strategic position complementarity with the two existing ones, in areas such as the medical curriculum, sources of students and research projects, with a view to promoting diversified development in local medical education and research as well as attracting more local, Mainland and overseas medical talent to take up teaching and research duties.

"We attach significant importance to the establishment of the new medical school. To that end, we have in particular invited seasoned local, Mainland and overseas academics for medical teaching and university management, professionals, the President of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine and the Chairman of the Medical Council of Hong Kong, together with relevant Directors of Bureaux and Heads of Departments of the Government, to form the Task Group on New Medical School. The Task Group will holistically examine various factors when considering proposals submitted by universities, including the strategic position of the medical school, curriculum design, student recruitment arrangement, demand and supply of teaching and training manpower, facilities, and financial resources required. I sincerely look forward to working closely with all members of the Task Group to start a new chapter for medical education in Hong Kong. Our first target is to extend invitation of proposals within this year to local universities interested in setting up the new medical school."

The terms of reference of the Task Group on New Medical School are as follows:

1. To devise directions and parameters for the establishment of a new medical school with the aim of supporting the local healthcare system in providing quality medical services and fostering the development of Hong Kong as an international hub for medical training, research and innovation, and the criteria for assessing proposals for a new medical school from local universities.
2. To liaise with interested local universities, invite and assess proposals from them for a new medical school, to handle related matters

(including but not limited to funding arrangements, programme accreditation, teaching hospital and research support), and to formulate recommendations on the establishment of a new medical school and related arrangements for decision by the Chief Executive in Council; and

3. To liaise with the university selected for the establishment of the new medical school on its implementation plan (including but not limited to funding arrangements, programme accreditation, teaching hospital and research support), and to provide facilitation on the interim and long-term arrangements for a designated school campus and teaching hospital in consultation with the relevant government bureaux/departments.

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The membership of the Task Group on New Medical School is as follows (see Annex for brief biographies of expert advisors of the Task Group):

Co-chairmen

Secretary for Education

Secretary for Health

Alternate Co-Chairmen

Permanent Secretary for Education / Under Secretary for Education

Permanent Secretary for Health / Under Secretary for Health

Expert Advisors

Chairman of the Medical Council of Hong Kong

President of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (or representative)

Professor Nivritti Gajanan Patil

Professor Joseph Sung Jao-yiu

Professor Zhao Yupei

Mr Philip Tsai Wing-chung

Official Members

Permanent Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands) (or representative)

Permanent Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry (or representative)

Secretary-General of the University Grants Committee (or representative)

Director of Health (or representative)

Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority (or representative)

Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

Deputy Secretary for Health 3

Commissioner for Primary Healthcare (or representative)

Import of poultry meat and products from areas in Italy suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (October 17) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Brescia Province and Cremona Province of Lombardy Region in Italy, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above-mentioned areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 40 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and about 10 000 poultry eggs from Italy in the first six months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the Italian authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.