

# Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, July 10, 2024 is 106.6 (same as yesterday's index).

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## 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 July 9 to noon today (July 10), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 311 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html)).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 66 512 samples of food imported from Japan (including 42 807 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 15 942 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

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## Man convicted of managing unlicensed employment agency

A man was prosecuted by the Labour Department (LD) for managing an employment agency (EA) without a valid licence in violation of the requirements under Part XII of the Employment Ordinance (EO). The man was sentenced to 120 hours' community service order today (July 10) at the Fanling Magistrates' Courts.

In December 2022, the LD received a complaint against a man from an employer seeking to hire a foreign domestic helper. As a subsequent investigation revealed sufficient evidence that the man was managing an EA without a valid licence, the LD took out prosecution against him.

All establishments or persons operating a business in Hong Kong for the purpose of obtaining employment for another person or supplying personnel to an employer are governed by Part XII of the EO and the Employment Agency Regulations. Irrespective of the mode of operation or the types of jobs referred, all EAs must obtain a licence issued by the LD before undertaking any EA activities. Except for the EA licence holder or his or her associates, no one shall operate, manage or assist in the management of an EA. Offenders may face prosecution.

The LD reminds EAs to operate in full compliance with the law as well as the Code of Practice for EAs at all times. Failure to do so may lead to prosecution and/or revocation of licence. The maximum penalty for the offences of unlicensed operation of an EA or overcharging commissions from job seekers is a fine of \$350,000 and imprisonment for three years.

Should there be enquiries about matters related to EAs or complaints about suspected violations of EAs, please contact the Employment Agencies Administration of the LD (telephone: 2115 3667; email: [ea-ee@labour.gov.hk](mailto:ea-ee@labour.gov.hk); address: Unit 906, 9/F, One Mong Kok Road Commercial Centre, 1 Mong Kok Road, Kowloon).

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## LCQ4: Incorporating elements of the National Day celebrations into cultural tourism projects

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yung and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. There are views that incorporating elements of the National Day celebrations into various cultural tourism projects will not only enhance the overall atmosphere of the National Day celebrations in HKSAR, but also help Hong Kong develop quality tourism and become an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) how it will incorporate elements of the National Day celebrations into various cultural tourism projects;

(2) whether it will seek the loan of more grade-one national treasures and more precious cultural relics from the Central Government to the Hong Kong Palace Museum under special arrangements, so as to organise a special exhibition for the National Day celebrations; and

(3) how it will focus its publicity efforts among tourists from the Mainland and overseas on cultural tourism projects incorporating elements of the National Day celebrations?

Reply:

President,

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and is an important historical milestone. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government celebrates the National Day with the public every year and promotes patriotism and national pride through a series of activities and publicity programmes. This year, more celebratory events which are rich in content and diversity will be held to create an intense festive ambience of the National Day and promote patriotism. We celebrate this special day with the public and allow visitors to experience a joyful atmosphere and share the joy of the National Day.

In respect of the questions raised by the Hon Chan Yung, in consultation

with the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau, the consolidated reply is as follows:

The Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) is leading various bureaux and departments to actively prepare for various tasks to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. In this connection, the CS has given instructions at the previous meetings of the Steering Committee on District Governance and the Task Force on District Governance, asking all bureaux and departments to make concerted efforts to plan and take forward the preparatory work for the National Day celebrations on all fronts, with a view to creating a colourful and enthusiastic National Day atmosphere and cultivating people's sense of patriotism at different levels of the community. Apart from the key programmes such as the annual large-scale National Day reception, flag-raising ceremony, variety show and fireworks display, all bureaux and their departments will also organise an array of celebratory activities under their respective areas, with a view to enabling more members of the public from different backgrounds and age groups to take part and share the joy of the National Day.

The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) will arrange a series of cultural and tourism programmes with elements of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, enabling the public, including both citizens and visitors, to come together and celebrate the National Day. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is organising the exhibitions "Brothers in Arms: War of Resistance Activities of the East River Column in Shenzhen and Hong Kong Areas" (tentative title), the "Auspicious Fullness and Togetherness – Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greater Bay Area" (tentative title) and other exhibitions to celebrate the National Day. The LCSD will liaise with different organisations in the Mainland to borrow suitable exhibits. In addition, the LCSD will organise the "75th Anniversary of the Founding of the PRC" exhibition (tentative title) to showcase the major developments and achievements of New China since its founding 75 years ago from social, cultural, scientific and technological perspectives. After conversion, the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defence will hold the "Flag Raising Ceremony cum Drill Performance on the National Day" with three youth uniformed groups. On the National Day, admission to all museums under the LCSD will be free. There are also special activities at museums. For example, the Hong Kong Museum of History has jointly organised with the Henan Provincial Administration of Cultural Heritage "The Ancient Civilisation of the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties in Henan Province" exhibition from April to July this year. Through over 150 sets/items of cultural relics, the exhibition introduces important archaeological sites in Henan Province, as well as the political, social, rituals and etiquette, and cultural landscapes of the three dynasties so as to give members of the public an understanding of the civilisation and history of ancient China. The Hong Kong Museum of Art has organised the "Fragrance of Time – In Search of Chinese Art of Scent" exhibition until 16 October. Featuring historical artefacts and artworks, the exhibition showcases the significance of Chinese fragrance culture in different periods, and enhances public awareness of fine traditional Chinese culture. The Hong Kong Heritage Museum will also organise traditional Chinese costumes activities and the public libraries will celebrate the National Day by specially holding thematic book displays on the

75th anniversary of the founding of the PRC in some libraries.

Hong Kong Palace Museum will stage a special exhibition in late September this year, showcasing approximately 110 precious sets/items from the Neolithic period to the Xia dynasty, including jades, ceramics, bone objects, stone sculptures, and bronze vessels, etc. The exhibition aims to illustrate the origins and evolution of the Chinese civilisation and enhance visitors' understanding of the remarkable achievements and the unified development with diversity of Chinese civilisation, and is one of the celebration activities marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the PRC.

Moreover, the celebration of National Day is adopted as the theme of the annual Mid-Autumn Lantern Carnival to be held at Victoria Park this year. Primary and secondary schools across Hong Kong will be invited to design dazzling lanterns with the theme of National Day. At the same time, the LCSD will present uniquely curated traditional Chinese costumes catwalk shows in which members of the public will be invited to participate by dressing in traditional Chinese costumes.

As regards performances, we have invited the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra to present the "Resounding Chimes. Magnificent works in a Prosperous Age" National Day concert. Featuring the centuries-old traditional musical instrument bianzhong, this concert comes with free pre-performance guided appreciation sessions and live demonstrations. With Hong Kong hosting the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival for the first time this year, its opening programme "Sound River" will be one of the highlights of the celebration programmes.

In addition, "A Symphony of Lights" light and sound show will launch a special edition for celebration of the 75th National Day in October. At the Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races co-organised by the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) and Hong Kong China Dragon Boat Association earlier in June, three races of PRC 75th Anniversary Celebration Trophy were staged and decorations with the theme of the National Day were displayed at the event venue.

The Government is actively promoting "tourism is everywhere". Nowadays, many tourists are keen on in-depth local tourism to experience local culture and characteristics. In view of this, the 18 District Offices under the Home Affairs Department will organise National Day celebratory events with local characteristics in each district, with a view to enabling more members of the public and tourists from different backgrounds and age groups to participate and share the joy of the National Day. At the same time, the events will also showcase to visitors the unique advantages and attractions of Hong Kong in terms of the staunch support we receive from the Motherland and our global outlook.

The CSTB will continue to collaborate with the HKTb and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong to introduce and promote cultural programmes marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the PRC to Mainland and

overseas tourists, including uploading the related information onto the websites of the HKTb as well as the Mainland and overseas Economic and Trade Offices of the HKSAR Government, dedicated webpages and Instagram accounts as well as Mainland social media platforms to promote local programmes celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. In addition, we will also encourage the trade to roll out National Day special offers and programmes and carry out promotion through cross-sectoral efforts, thereby allowing members of the public and tourists to celebrate the National Day.

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## **LCQ11: Alcoholic beverages and related diseases**

Following is a question by the Hon Lam San-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

It has been over 16 years since the Government abolished its duties on wine and liquor with an alcoholic strength of not more than 30% in 2008. Regarding alcoholic beverages and related diseases, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the changes in the alcohol consumption per capita of Hong Kong in recent years compared with that in 2008;
- (2) whether it has studied if the alcohol consumption per capita of Hong Kong in recent years is higher than neighbouring regions; and
- (3) whether it has studied if there is any clear sign that the abolition of duty on liquor has led to an increase in the number of cases of Hong Kong people suffering from alcohol-related diseases, and of the details of the findings of the relevant study?

Reply:

President,

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), harmful use of alcohol is a significant risk factor for more than 200 diseases, injuries and other health conditions. Harmful use of alcohol is associated with the risk of developing a range of health problems such as mental and behavioural disorders (including alcohol dependence), and major non-communicable diseases (NCDs) (e.g. liver cirrhosis and some cancers). In addition to health effects, the harmful use of alcohol can place a heavy burden on individuals, families and society at large. The WHO recommends that governments of various

places should strengthen their responses to reduce alcohol-related harm for prevention and control of NCDs.

In 2018, the Government launched the "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong", setting out nine local targets, with "Reduce harmful use of alcohol" being one of them, to be achieved by 2025. The Government will continue to adopt a risk-based approach to reduce alcohol-related harm, in particular alcohol dependence, alcohol abuse, binge drinking, etc., through publicity, education, treatment and support services, as well as other appropriate measures (e.g. spirits tax).

In consultation with the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Department of Health (DH), the reply to the question raised by the Hon Lam San-keung is as follows:

(1) Alcohol consumption per capita (APC) (in litres of pure alcohol) is closely related to the prevalence of alcohol-related harms and alcohol dependence at the population level. The APC in Hong Kong is calculated by adding the volume of locally produced alcohol and imported alcohol, minus the volume of the export of locally produced alcohol and re-export alcohol, divided by the population aged 15 years or above in Hong Kong. However, the estimation may be affected by many factors, such as stockpiling and consumption level of tourists visiting Hong Kong.

The local APC rose from 2.53 liters in 2005 to 2.87 liters in 2017, up by less than 10 per cent in 12 years. Between 2019 and 2022, Hong Kong's APC showed a downward trend, with 2.45 liters in 2020 and 2.29 liters in 2022. This downward trend may be related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and is also in line with the latest Global Status Report released by the WHO, which pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the APC in various parts of the world. Among them, the APC in the Western Pacific Region, in which Hong Kong belongs, dropped by 16.4 per cent from 2019 to 2020.

Apart from monitoring the APC in Hong Kong, the DH also conducts city-wide population health surveys from time to time to understand the health status and health-related behaviours of the Hong Kong population, including drinking behaviours. Details are set out in the table below, and the trends are broadly in line with the above APC estimates.

Population Health Survey	Proportion of population aged 15 or above who had consumed table wine	Proportion of population aged 15 or above who had consumed spirit
2003/04	7.4% (Note 2)	2.6% (Note 2)
2014/15	33.9% (Note 3)	7.5% (Note 3)
2020-22	11.3% (Note 3)	2.7% (Note 3)

Note 1: The duty for wine and liquor of an alcoholic strength of 30 per cent has been waived since February 2008.

Note 2: Had consumed in the past.

Note 3: Had consumed in 12 months preceding the survey.

(2) The APC varies from region to region around the world. When comparing the APC with neighbouring regions, factors to consider include cultural, religious and economic development of various places. As mentioned above, the APC in Hong Kong in 2020 was 2.45 litres. When comparing this figure with the latest figures published by the WHO for the year of 2020 (Hong Kong's figure was not specified in the database), Hong Kong's APC is relatively low in the Western Pacific Region. The APC in Australia, Korea and Japan was 9.7 liters, 7.4 liters and 6.1 liters respectively, which was higher than Hong Kong's 2.45 liters, whereas the APC in Singapore and Malaysia was 1.8 liters and 0.7 liters respectively, which was lower than Hong Kong's 2.45 liters.

(3) In Hong Kong, as in other parts of the world, there is an increasing number of people suffering from NCDs, resulting in ill health, disability and premature death. These NCDs are associated with a number of common behavioral risk factors, including the harmful use of alcohol. In fact, according to data regularly collected by the DH, from 2007 to 2022, there were between 2 000 and 2 600 hospital admissions each year due to alcohol-related illnesses or injuries (including alcoholic liver disease, mental and behavioural disorders due to use of alcohol, accidental poisoning by and exposure to alcohol marked as the principal diagnosis).

Over the years, the DH has been committed to launching public education campaigns on alcohol-related harms, including the "Understanding Alcohol Harm" publicity and education campaign since 2022, to enhance the public's understanding of the health risks associated with alcohol consumption through various channels. Through the "Change4Health – Alcohol and Health" website, the DH disseminates evidence-based information on drinking and health to the public, and provides online risk assessment of drinking behaviour, personalised health advice, self-help tools, health education resources, etc., so as to encourage drinkers to make changes to their drinking behaviour for the sake of their health. The DH has also launched the Pilot Alcohol Cessation Counselling Service through subvention to a non-government organisation, to provide free counselling service for people identified to have probable alcohol dependence.

In respect of primary healthcare services, Life Course Preventive Care is an evidence-based and comprehensive health strategy that emphasises on prevention and personalised needs. It provides guidance on the health needs of citizens across different life stages. Life Course Preventive Care has been implemented in District Health Centres and District Health Centre Expresses to assist citizens to adopt healthy lifestyle, including early identification and intervention of high-risk drinking behaviors through Health Risk Factor Assessment, with a view to enhancing the overall health of the Hong Kong citizens.

The DH is aware that local academic institution has used statistical models to estimate the impact of the policy on the use of alcohol and the health of Hong Kong people, and the findings of the studies have shown that the reduction of alcohol use can alleviate the burden of alcohol-related



health problems.

In formulating any revenue measures, the Government will take into account the relevant policy needs, views from various parties, the economic situation of Hong Kong, burden on public finance, as well as the needs of various sectors of the community. Apart from consideration from the angle of public finance, public health is also an important factor to consider, as the duty on liquors remains one of the effective ways to encourage the public to reduce drinking.