

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, June 18, 2025 is 103.1 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

LCQ21: Resumption of public rental housing units and Well-off Tenants Policies

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Ms Winnie Ho, in the Legislative Council today (June 18):

Question:

According to government information, 15 000-odd public rental housing (PRH) units were recovered by the Housing Department for various reasons in 2023, which was 55 per cent more than the annual number of about 10 000 units in the past. Regarding the recovery of PRH units and the Well-off Tenants Policies, will the Government inform this Council of the following information in the past five financial years:

- (1) the number of PRH units recovered each year for the following reasons:
 - (i) death of principal tenants or principal tenants being admitted to residential care homes;
 - (ii) principal tenants having purchased subsidised sale flats;
 - (iii) tenants moving out due to breach of tenancy agreements (e.g. accruing 16 points within two years under the Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement or defaulting on rent payment);
 - (iv) tenants moving out due to failure or refusal to return the declaration form on income and assets as required;
 - (v) tenants moving out as their family income/total household net asset value exceeded the limits prescribed under the Well-off Tenants Policies;
 - (vi) tenants were asked to move out as their household members owned domestic properties in Hong Kong;
 - (vii) voluntary surrender of units by tenants (including moving to other regions/countries, moving to other residences, or for unknown reasons);
 - (viii) tenants moving out upon application for transfer; and
 - (ix) other reasons;
- (2) the number of recovered PRH units used for allocation to applicants on the PRH Waiting List each year;

(3) the number of Notices-to-quit (NTQs) issued by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) to PRH tenants each year and, among them, the number of tenants who lodged appeals in this regard, together with a breakdown by the outcome of the appeals (e.g. cancellation of NTQs, amendment of NTQs and setting of conditions for the tenants lodging appeals to rectify the violations, as well as unsuccessful appeals);

(4) the number of cases received by the HA in which applications for granting of new tenancy agreements were made by authorised members of the units due to the death or moving out of the original principle tenants and, among such cases, the number of those which were approved and rejected; among the approved cases, the number of those in which the PRH units involved were granted approval for addition of household members to the tenancy in the past three years;

(5) the number of PRH tenants who had successfully applied for deletion of household members from the tenancy each year and, among them, the number of those who were well-off tenants; and

(6) the respective numbers of PRH tenants who were required under the Well-off Tenants Policies to pay (i) 1.5 times net rent plus rates and (ii) double net rent plus rates each year?

Reply:

President,

In response to the questions raised by the Hon Elizabeth Quat, our reply is as follows:

(1) In the past five financial years (i.e. 2020/21 to 2024/25), the numbers of public rental housing (PRH) units recovered by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA), categorised by reasons for recovery, are listed in Annex 1.

(2) Based on the established allocation policies and programmes, the HA allocates newly completed and refurbished recovered PRH units to meet the needs of applicants under various categories. We will allocate most of the units to PRH applicants and closely monitor the actual allocation figures of other categories (e.g. Compassionate Rehousing) to ensure that any units in excess of the estimated demand under other categories would be allocated to PRH applicants by the end of the year. In the past five financial years, the actual numbers of recovered PRH units allocated to PRH applicants and applicants under other categories are tabulated in Annex 2.

(3) In the past five financial years, the numbers of Notices-to-quit issued by the HA, the numbers of appeal cases received by the Appeal Panel (Housing), and the numbers of appeal cases heard by the Appeal Panel (Housing) as well as the rulings are set out by category in Annex 3.

(4) According to the HA's existing Policy on Grant of New Tenancy (GNT), upon

the death or moving out of the principal tenant of a PRH unit, the tenancy can be granted to his/her spouse who has been listed in the tenancy. If there is no surviving spouse listed in the tenancy, one of the authorised family members currently living in the unit can be granted a new tenancy, provided that the Comprehensive Means Test and Domestic Property Test set at the level of Well-off Tenants Policies are passed. In the past five financial years, there were approximately 32 000 GNT cases approved upon the death or moving out of the original principal tenant. The Housing Department (HD) does not keep statistics on the number of rejected applications for GNT and the number of approved GNT cases which involved addition of household members.

(5) In the past five financial years, the HA approved an average of about 44 000 cases per year on the deletion of family members from PRH tenancies. Among these cases, around 16 700 cases arose from death or admission to elderly homes, while the remaining of about 27 300 cases resulted from moving out or other reasons. The HD does not keep statistics on the number of aforesaid cases which involved "well-off tenants".

(6) In the past five financial years, the numbers of PRH tenants under the HA required to pay 1.5 or double net rent plus rates are listed in Annex 4.

LCQ7: Measures to combat telephone fraud

Following is a question by the Hon Duncan Chiu and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Dr Bernard Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 18):

Question:

In recent years, the HKSAR Government has adopted diversified measures to actively combat telephone fraud, including introducing the Real-name Registration Programme for Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) Cards (RNR Programme) and the Hong Kong Police Force's "Scameter+" and requiring local telecommunications service providers (TSPs) to play a voice alert message for calls made from newly activated pre-paid SIM (PPS) cards and block suspicious calls, as well as strengthening co-operation with Mainland and international law enforcement agencies. However, there are views pointing out that local telephone fraud cases have not shown a decreasing trend, causing inconvenience and disturbance to the public in their daily lives. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of telephone fraud cases received by the Police from January to May this year, as well as the amount of money involved in such cases, the number of victims and their age distribution;

(2) of the total number of PPS cards which have been rejected as the clients failed to provide information in compliance with the registration requirements since the introduction of the RNR Programme; the total number of the registration records of non-compliant PPS cards which have been cancelled by the TSPs, together with a breakdown and percentage by reason for non-compliance;

(3) whether it has estimated the number of registered PPS cards resold in the market under the RNR Programme; of the authorities' countermeasures currently in place against the resale practice concerned, and how they follow up cases of members of the public purchasing and using PPS cards that have long been registered by other persons;

(4) as the 2024 Policy Address has mentioned that the Government would introduce a legislative amendment proposal into this Council to prohibit the resale of registered SIM cards with a view to further enhancing the RNR Programme, of the latest progress of such work and the legislative timetable;

(5) of the accumulated downloads of "Scameter+" since its launch by the Police in February 2023 and the respective numbers of call alerts issued to users and local and non-local suspicious telephone numbers which the TSPs have been required to block; of the details and outcome of the Police's follow-up actions in respect of such suspicious and blocked telephone numbers; and

(6) whether it has comprehensively reviewed the effectiveness of the various measures introduced by the Government to combat telephone fraud; if so, of the results, and the measures in place to cope with the situation where the number of telephone fraud cases has not decreased, including whether it will adjust the existing overall strategy for combating telephone fraud, as well as introduce relevant enhancement measures and new measures?

Reply:

President,

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) has been devising and implementing a series of preventive measures from the perspective of telecommunications services to assist the Hong Kong Police Force (Police) in combating phone deception at the source. In response to the question raised by the Hon Duncan Chiu, having consulted the Security Bureau, OFCA and the Police, our consolidated reply is as follows:

The Real-name Registration Programme for SIM Cards (RNR Programme) has been fully implemented since February 2023, requiring that all SIM cards issued and used locally (including SIM service plans and pre-paid SIM cards (PPS cards)) must complete real-name registration before service activation. Under the RNR Programme, OFCA has requested telecommunications service providers (TSPs) to conduct regular sampling checks on registered SIM card information, to step up verification of suspicious cases, and to refer cases suspected of violating the law to the Police for handling. If the users subject to sample checks are unable to verify their registered information in

accordance with the instructions of the respective TSPs, the relevant PPS cards will be deregistered and cannot be used thereafter. As at end-April this year, around 4.71 million PPS cards were rejected for registration as the clients failed to provide information in compliance with the registration requirements (including cases where registration was done using a copy of an identity document and the information provided was inconsistent with the identity document, etc). Besides, the registration records of about 3.4 million non-compliant PPS cards have been deregistered (including cases where users failed to verify their identities as required during the TSPs' sampling checks and were suspected of using forged documents for registration, etc). According to the information provided by the TSPs, the majority of deregistration was due to users failing to submit required identity documents for verification as required. OFCA does not maintain information on specific reasons for deregistration by breakdown.

To enhance the effective implementation of the RNR Programme, OFCA has required the TSPs to adopt "iAM Smart" as the default registration method for Hong Kong identity card (HKID) holders. For non-HKID holders, their real-name registration information will be manually verified. Currently, provision of false information and/or false documents under the RNR Programme may constitute a criminal offence. OFCA does not maintain information on the resale of registered PPS cards in the market.

In addition, the Police launched the mobile application "Scameter+" in February 2023 to help members of the public distinguish suspicious online platform accounts, payment accounts, phone numbers, email addresses, websites, etc, and to provide the public with anti-fraud tips. As at end-April this year, "Scameter+" had recorded over 960 000 downloads, 8.4 million searches in its search engine and 1 million alerts issued to members of the public. "Scameter+" has now been upgraded and is equipped with automatic detection functions. The Call Alert function and the Website Detection function within the mobile application will automatically identify scam calls and fraudulent websites. If potential fraud or cyber security risk is detected, "Scameter+" will issue a real-time notification, reminding users not to answer the call or browse the website. As at end-April this year, "Scameter+" had issued over 800 000 warnings about suspicious calls and websites to the public through its automatic function. Under OFCA's co-ordination, the Police and major TSPs have established a mechanism where the TSPs will, based on the fraud records provided by the Police, block the telephone numbers suspected to be involved in deception cases and intercept suspicious website links as soon as possible. As at end-April this year, more than 50 000 website links and about 9 000 local and non-local phone numbers have been successfully blocked. The Police will also actively investigate cases related to these suspected scam phone numbers.

Apart from the above-mentioned measures, OFCA has also required the TSPs to intercept suspicious calls starting with "+852", send voice alerts or text messages to all mobile users for overseas calls prefixed with "+852", and play voice alerts for newly activated PPS cards, as well as has launched the SMS Sender Registration Scheme to assist members of public in distinguishing the identity of the SMS senders. OFCA has also been conducting continuous

market surveillance and strengthening publicity activities, as well as has launched the District Anti-Phone Deception Ambassador Scheme in January this year, appointing over 300 District Council members and staff members of their ward offices as District Anti-Phone Deception Ambassadors. Starting from May this year, OFCA has collaborated with District Anti-Phone Deception Ambassadors through community activities to further promote anti-scam messages.

For telephone deception trends, the Police recorded a total of 1 816 telephone deception cases between January and April this year, averaging 454 cases per month and representing a significant 52.3 per cent decrease compared to the monthly average of 951 cases in the fourth quarter of 2024. The financial losses associated amounted to approximately HK\$320 million, involving a total of 1 759 victims aged between 15 and 97. For telephone deception cases involving impersonation of customer service emerged since early last year, after focused enforcement efforts by the Police, the monthly average for the first four months this year dropped to approximately 190 cases, recording a decrease of over 80 per cent from the peak of about 1 110 cases in July 2024. These trends highlight the effectiveness of measures implemented by the Government in combating phone deception.

The Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to combat phone deception and protect the interests of the public. Regarding anti-phone deception measures and the RNR Programme, with reference to the overall implementation experience and the Police's provision of scam trends on criminal groups using PPS cards, the Government is reviewing the implementation effectiveness of relevant measures and overall operation of the RNR Programme, including reviewing the limit on the number of PPS cards, the arrangement for prohibiting the sale of registered SIM cards or using information of others to conduct real-name registration for profit making, etc. The Government aims to consult relevant Legislative Council Panel within this year.

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 is conducting 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.

From noon on June 17 to noon today (June 18), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 232 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 144 654 samples of food imported from Japan (including 95 061 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 33 040 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

LCQ18: Bona vacantia properties

Following is a question by the Hon Doreen Kong and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (June 18):

Question:

There are views that along with the demographic changes in Hong Kong, it is expected that the number of bona vacantia properties will continue to increase, which could pose potential challenges to the allocation and management of social resources. It has been reported that in recent years, some gangs have exploited bona vacantia properties to obtain benefits illegally, such as by committing unlawful alienation of the properties, using

them for loans or even applying for adverse possession of them, indicating that there are gaps in the regulation of bona vacantia properties. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the specific number of bona vacantia properties currently under the management of the Lands Department (i.e. those properties originally held by a company that has been dissolved under the Companies (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 32) or the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622)); the details of the Government's disposal of such properties in the past five years (including the progress of disposal);

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of bona vacantia properties in Hong Kong which were once held in personal names; whether the Government has currently put in place a relevant mechanism to dispose of such properties; if not, whether it will consider introducing dedicated measures or mechanisms to prevent such bona vacantia properties from being used for unlawful acts; if so, of the details, and whether the Government will impose administrative charges in the process of disposing of such bona vacantia properties and set clear charging standards in this regard; and

(3) as there are views that the management of bona vacantia properties (including those bona vacantia properties which were once held by private individuals or companies) involves the powers and responsibilities of a number of government departments, whether the Government has put in place a cross-departmental co-ordination mechanism to enhance the efficiency of such work; if not, whether it has plans to further strengthen the cross-departmental collaboration on such work?

Reply:

President,

Bona vacantia properties (BVPs) generally refer to some real properties originally owned by individuals or companies, but the individual owners of properties subsequently dies and no one claims the estate, or the companies were liquidated and dissolved. In accordance with the prevailing laws, real properties owned by individuals or companies are handled by different ordinances to ensure that the rights and interests of the legal owners or successors of the properties will not be infringed and that the properties are properly handled when they become BVPs.

Regarding the properties owned by individuals, the Probate and Administration Ordinance (Cap. 10) provides the jurisdiction of the court to handle matters relating to probate and administration of deceased's estates, including the handling of unclaimed estates of a deceased person. If unclaimed estates involve property assets, the property will be disposed of in an appropriate manner, including sale.

For properties owned by companies, in the course of winding up and dissolution, liquidators will sell properties owned by the companies to pay off outstanding liabilities. If a company, pursuant to the Companies

Ordinance (Cap. 622) or the Companies (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 32), completes the procedures for winding up and is about to dissolve, every property and right (such as including some properties that are yet to be sold in the market) vested in or held on trust for the company immediately before the dissolution is vested in the Government as bona vacantia. If such bona vacantia property is a land property, it will be managed by the Lands Department on behalf of the Government.

In the past five years (from June 2020 to May 2025), records from the Land Registry show that the number of sales and purchase agreements for building units in Hong Kong was close to 260 000, while the Lands Department received about 50 new cases of BVPs. It can be seen that BVPs only account a very small portion of the overall property market.

In response to the question raised by the Hon Doreen Kong, our reply in consultation with the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau is as follows:

(1) As of now, the Lands Department has taken over 411 BVPs previously owned by companies, of which about 30 per cent cases are residential units, industrial units, shops and parking spaces. The remaining 70 per cent are the parts jointly owned with other property owners but inseparable, most of which have no market value and cannot be sold, such as external walls, rooftops, platforms, other common parts. As BVPs, especially the abovementioned 30 per cent cases, often involve unclear ownership, encumbrances or the need to first handle problems such as occupation of units, the Lands Department will carefully clarify the relevant legal rights and seek legal advice after receiving referrals from the Companies Registry, other government departments and the Court, etc. After confirming that the property is a BVP, the Lands Department will notify the Land Registry to add a remark that the property has been vested in the Government as bona vacantia, and choose the most appropriate means to dispose of the property. Generally speaking, if the BVPs are suitable for sale in the market (the appropriate cases among the abovementioned 30 per cent cases), the Lands Department will sell the property by tender. In the past five years (from June 2020 to May 2025), the Lands Department received about 50 new cases of BVPs. The Lands Department also sold 16 BVPs through tendering process in the past five years. As for the properties that cannot be sold (i.e. the abovementioned 70 per cent cases), these will continue to be managed by the Lands Department on behalf.

(2) Section 16 of the Probate and Administration Ordinance (Cap. 10) stipulates the cases in which the Official Administrator, assisted by the Probate Registry, is entitled to administer the unclaimed estate of a deceased person as granted by the Court. If the unclaimed estate concerned involves property asset, the property will be disposed of as appropriate. For any unclaimed balance of deceased's estate, including the money received from the sale of properties, the Official Administrator shall cause an advertisement to invite any claims to be made in accordance with section 23B of the Ordinance. If at the expiration of a period of five years from the date of first publication of such advertisement, the Official Administrator is of the opinion that no claim can reasonably be expected against the

estate, the balance of the estate will be transferred to the general revenue of the Government.

Regarding the property fraud issue that the Hon Doreen Kong is concerned about, the current number of cases is still at a low level. Nevertheless, in response to some past fraud cases, the Land Registry will continue to maintain contact and collaboration with the Hong Kong Police Force to exchange information on suspected fraudulent transactions to prevent registrations for properties suspected to have been acquired through fraudulent means. The Property Alert service of the Land Registry will also send email notifications to registered users when the instruments for the sale or mortgage of properties are delivered to the Land Registry for registration.

Besides, the Legislative Council is scrutinising the Registration of Titles and Land (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2025. Under the Land Titles Ordinance (Cap. 585), the title registration system will be implemented on newly granted land first and the Land Registry will be empowered to take measures to reduce the risk of property fraud. Adverse possession will also not be applicable to newly granted land.

(3) As mentioned above, it is not common for BVPs to arise. For BVPs previously owned by companies, the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) currently in force has clearly stipulated the circumstances under which the Government will take over BVPs, and the Lands Department, which is responsible for taking over BVPs, also has a well-established mechanism to properly handle these properties. Therefore, we believe that there is no need to set up an inter-departmental mechanism.