

# Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, June 14, 2023 is 103.9 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

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## LCQ10: Enhancing employment and promotion opportunities of civil servants

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Wendy Hong and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

It is learnt that the wastage rate of civil servants has increased in recent years. On the other hand, there are views that the large number of supernumerary staff employed by the Government has affected the promotion opportunities of civil servants. Regarding enhancing the employment and promotion opportunities of civil servants, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of staff employed by various government departments under the Post-retirement Service Contract (PRSC) Scheme who have served the same post for over five years, in each of the past three years;
- (2) of the respective numbers of staff employed by various government departments through outsourced service contracts in each of the past three years;
- (3) of the respective numbers of permanent and supernumerary directorate and non-directorate civil service posts in various government departments in each of the past three years, together with their respective strength;
- (4) of the number of civil servants who left the service and the wastage rate of the civil service in the past year, together with a breakdown by the reason for their departure;
- (5) as it is learnt that the Government has employed supernumerary officers under non-civil service contracts, PRSC Scheme and outsourced service contracts, and renewed their contracts repeatedly, resulting in the persistence of some supernumerary posts, and there are views that

Government's prolonged employment of supernumerary officers, instead of including such posts in the civil service establishment, hinders the promotion of serving civil servants and affects their motivation, whether the Government has reviewed the situation concerned and whether it has considered creating permanent civil service posts to replace such supernumerary posts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(6) as there are views that some grades of the civil service have shorter progression pathways and the progression pathways of grades are not inter-accessible, resulting in a lack of promotion prospects for quite a number of young and middle-aged civil servants who have attained the maximum pay points of their grades, whether the Government has studied how to broaden the promotion prospects of different grades, for example, opening up the application for transfer between different grades and enhancing the progression pathways of various grades, etc., so as to provide civil servants with better promotion prospect; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(7) whether it will consider employing long-serving supernumerary staff as permanent civil servants, so as to fill the vacancies arising from the wastage of civil servants, provide such supernumerary staff with better protection, improve the morale of the civil service as a whole, as well as avoid the situation of unequal pay for the same work?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the question raised by Dr the Hon Wendy Hong, our reply is as follows:

(1) The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) does not keep information on the length of service of Post-retirement Service Contract (PRSC) staff in individual positions. With a view to facilitating a healthy turnover of PRSC staff, the aggregate employment period of an employee serving in the same position/different positions under the PRSC Scheme should not exceed five years in general.

(2) The CSB does not keep information on the number of outsourced workers engaged by respective departments.

(3) Annex A and Annex B set out the breakdown by department on civil service directorate and non-directorate actual establishment and strength respectively in the past three years.

(4) The number of civil servants leaving the service in 2022-23 (up to December 31, 2022) was 8 178, representing a wastage rate of about 4.6 per cent. A breakdown of the figures by reason of wastage is set out below:

Reason of Wastage	Number of Civil Servants Leaving the Service in 2022-23 (up to December 31, 2022)
Retirement	4 815
Resignation	3 095
Completion of Agreement	55
Death	84
Dismissal	38
Termination of Service	33
Other Reasons	58
Total	8 178

(5) and (7) The engagement of contract staff (including Non-civil Service Contract (NCSC) and PRSC staff) will not affect the promotion prospects of civil servants.

The nature and purposes of engaging civil servants and contract staff are distinct. Allowing departments to employ contract staff enables them to flexibly deploy manpower resources to meet service needs. Under the NCSC Scheme, government departments may employ NCSC staff to flexibly adjust their staffing level and staff mix to cope with tasks that are time-limited, seasonal, subject to market fluctuation or under review. Under the PRSC Scheme, departments may have the flexibility to engage retired civil servants to undertake ad hoc, time-limited, seasonal or part-time tasks that require specific civil service expertise/experience. These contract staff do not occupy posts on the civil service establishment, and all civil service vacancies will only be filled by civil servants through promotion or recruitment. Hence, the engagement of such contract staff will not affect the promotion prospects of civil servants.

Government departments shall review, from time to time, the duration of employment required for their contract positions. If a department considers that a particular contract position has long-term operational needs and the work is suitable to be undertaken by a civil servant, the department may seek resources under the established mechanism to replace the contract position with a civil service post.

As regards the outsourced workers, they are not government employees. Outsourcing is one of the ways adopted by government departments to deliver public services. Individual departments shall decide whether to outsource their services having regard to their operational needs.

(6) There are hundreds of grades in the Government, covering a wide range of jobs of different professions and nature, and providing diverse career paths for officers who have joined the Government. It is not uncommon for serving civil servants to apply for other jobs within the civil service which better meet their aspirations and abilities and, after going through open recruitment or internal transfer, be appointed to another grade at the entry

rank. The Government will adjust the terms of appointment for an officer on in-service transfer as appropriate, for example, by shortening the probationary period of the officer in the new post as appropriate, in order to retain talents in the Government.

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## LCQ4: Attracting skilled talents

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Ngan Man-yu and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

There are views pointing out that as holding a university degree is the minimum threshold for various talent admission schemes in Hong Kong at present, students who come to Hong Kong for study generally will not choose to enrol in vocational education programmes at non-degree level, and such a situation is not conducive to attracting skilled talents to Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of non-local students enrolling in vocational education programmes offered by various higher education institutions in each of the past three years, with a breakdown by the type of skills involved in the programmes; the measures put in place by the authorities to encourage non-local students to enrol in vocational education programmes in Hong Kong;

(2) whether it will allow non-local students who have completed associate degree programmes in vocational education in institutions offering vocational education in Hong Kong (including the Vocational Training Council, corporate academies and schools of professional and continuing education of various institutions) to apply to work in Hong Kong without securing an employment, regardless of whether they have completed the relevant programmes on local campuses or branch campuses on the Mainland; and

(3) of the measures in place to ensure the work quality and professional qualifications of non-local students who have completed the aforesaid vocational education programmes when they join the local labour market, including whether it will promote the joint exploration and deepening of the training system for skilled talents by institutions offering vocational education locally and in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area?

Reply:

President,

The core mission of education is cultivating values and nurturing people, nurturing talents who are able and virtuous for society. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has been adopting the policy of supporting the parallel development of the traditional academic and Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) pathways, and promoting VPET at different levels through the strategy of fostering industry-institution collaboration and diversified development under a multi-pronged approach, with a view to providing diversified learning and employment opportunities for young people to develop and flourish. On grooming talents for Hong Kong's development, the Chief Executive set out a clear direction in his 2022 Policy Address, and relevant bureaux have been listening to the views of the relevant sectors and put forward solutions having regard to the situation of different industries. Looking ahead, each bureau will commence a new round of manpower projection to help the Government formulate appropriate strategies to address the overall manpower needs.

Our reply to Dr the Hon Ngan's question is as follows:

(1) VPET covers programmes up to degree level, among which many are specialised programmes on vocational skills or professional knowledge. Different post-secondary programmes may include VPET and generic learning elements, and hence the Education Bureau (EDB) does not keep complete information on the number of students pursuing VPET programmes. Nevertheless, the Vocational Training Council (VTC), as the largest VPET provider in Hong Kong, is committed to offering quality VPET programmes for both local and non-local students. According to the information provided by the VTC, the numbers of non-local students of post-secondary programmes (i.e. degree and Higher Diploma (HD) programmes) from the 2020/21 to 2022/23 academic years are 79, 65 and 86 respectively.

As regards HD programmes, which is a sub-degree qualification that has stronger applied and VPET elements, according to the information provided by different institutions to the EDB, the numbers of non-local students of full-time locally-accredited HD programmes from the 2020/21 to 2022/23 academic years are 362, 310 and 381 respectively. The breakdown by institutions is set out at Annex for reference. The EDB will continue to support and encourage institutions to recruit non-local students and attract talents for Hong Kong in accordance with the established mechanism in the future, and will review the relevant policies as appropriate to address the needs for the development of our talents and society.

(2) The Government has all along been listening to the different views from different sectors on how Hong Kong should address the manpower needs with an open mind, and has conducted in-depth analyses, so as to pursue the policy direction put forward by the Chief Executive in his 2022 Policy Address. We will continue to proactively discuss and study the matter with the relevant policy bureaux and departments and conduct planning in a holistic manner, thereby addressing society's needs appropriately.

(3) To assure the quality of different VPET programmes, the HKSAR Government

has put in place a mechanism as a safeguard, and defined through the Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) clear and objective standards and levels in four domains, i.e. Knowledge and Intellectual Skills; Processes; Autonomy and Accountability; and Communication, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Numeracy. As the statutory accreditation authority and Qualifications Register authority, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) assures that QF-recognised programmes meet the outcome standards of the corresponding QF Level. The learning outcomes of VPET programmes recognised under the QF can all meet the corresponding objective standards in the GLD. Taking HD programmes as an example, their graduates should meet the standards of QF Level 4, which are:

- in terms of Knowledge and Intellectual Skills, demonstrate and work with a broad knowledge base with some specialised knowledge and skills; and to evaluate information;
- in terms of Processes, perform skilled tasks; conduct routine data collection and analysis; as well as plan, select or present information, methods or resources;
- in terms of Autonomy and Accountability, undertake self-directed and some supervisory activities, as well as work contributing to group performance; and
- in terms of Communication, ICT and Numeracy, organise and synthesise information to convey complex ideas, as well as using ICT and data to measure progress.

We also specify, among other requirements, the learning outcomes, curriculum, and exit qualifications of HD programmes through the Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes (Common Descriptors), as well as the requirement to undergo accreditation to ensure the quality of HD programmes. This year, we concluded the Review of Sub-degree Education and updated the Common Descriptors which will come into effect in the 2024/25 academic year, unequivocally spelling out the requirements regarding HD education.

On the other hand, the VTC has been maintaining close communication and co-operation with the Government and the industries to understand the latest situation of Hong Kong's manpower market and job market, enabling it to develop and enhance its VPET programmes and ensuring its programmes can keep pace with the times and address the actual needs of society and the industries. With the support of the governments of the two places, the VTC and the Shenzhen Polytechnic signed a collaborative framework agreement in

2020 to pursue further collaboration in areas including offering joint programmes, providing workplace attachment and training and exchange opportunities, and research and development. In 2021, they signed an agreement on further collaboration to further pursue organising joint programmes and workplace attachment and training, so as to jointly cultivate talents. There are eight programmes jointly organised by the two parties that have successfully passed the accreditation of the HKCAAVQ and are recognised under the QF. The VTC will continue to expand its Mainland network proactively in the future.

Thank you, President.

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## **LCQ3: Promotion of national and national security education in higher education institutions**

Following is a question by the Hon Chow Man-kong and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

Regarding the promotion of national and national security education in higher education institutions (institutions) (especially the eight universities funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC)), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the numbers of academic staff members and students of various institutions who have been arrested, are awaiting trial and are convicted after trial for contravening the Hong Kong National Security Law since its implementation, with a breakdown by institution; whether the academic staff members involved in the cases still engage in the teaching and research work of their respective institutions at present;

(2) as it is learnt that various institutions have since the last academic year incorporated national and national security education into students' scope of learning, but since the authorities respect the autonomy of various institutions in curriculum design, the curriculum design standards vary among various institutions, and an institution has even publicly stated that the implementation of Western core value education in institutions is better than the teaching of the Hong Kong National Security Law, whether the authorities have drawn up codes or guidelines to assist various institutions in designing the relevant curriculum, and incorporated the relevant requirements into the statutes of institutions (such as the handbooks for academic staff members and the codes for students); if so, of the details; if not, whether the

authorities will draw up clear codes or guidelines in the new academic year for institutions to follow; and

(3) whether it will use the assessment outcomes of the performance of UGC-funded universities in implementing national and national security education as one of the indicators for allocating funds to such universities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

According to The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (NSL), any institution, organisation or individual in Hong Kong shall abide by it, and shall not engage in any act or activity which endangers national security. While post-secondary education institutions enjoy institutional autonomy and academic freedom under the Basic Law, they must also hold themselves accountable to the public, ensure good governance and proper use of public funds, and nurture talents with virtue and ability. Post-secondary education institutions are not above the law, as all staff members and students must abide by the law. The Government has communicated with the post-secondary education institutions through regular channels to remind them of their statutory obligations under the NSL in order to strengthen the prevention and suppression of activities on campus that may violate the NSL or other laws.

The fundamental mission of education is to nurture morality and foster talent. Post-secondary education institutions are duty-bound to nurture our new generations into citizens with a sense of social responsibility and national identity, an affection for Hong Kong as well as an international perspective. The NSL aims at preventing, suppressing and imposing punishment for acts and activities that endanger national security. It is the duty of the education sector to strengthen prevention through education. Among others, post-secondary education institutions shall offer their students national security education or activities in accordance with Article 10 of the NSL, with a view to raising staff members and students' awareness of national security and law-abidingness.

Our reply to Dr Hon Chow Man-kong's question is as follows:

(1) Student and staff affairs are within the autonomy of post-secondary education institutions. They have put in place mechanisms to ensure that students and staff members do not engage in conduct that is unlawful or damages their reputation. The Government does not maintain information on the number of students and staff members arrested or charged for violating the NSL. Nevertheless, according to the information provided by the Security Bureau, as at June 2, 2023, a total of 252 persons were arrested for suspected acts and activities that endanger national security since the implementation of the NSL. Among them, 155 persons and five companies were charged and 79 persons convicted or awaiting sentencing.

Currently, all post-secondary education institutions have put in place

student and staff disciplinary policies and mechanisms which are reviewed and updated in accordance with the latest developments in society, including the implementation of the NSL. Students and staff members shall abide by the respective conduct rules set by their institutions and shall not engage in conduct that is unlawful or damages the institutions' reputation. In the event of arrest, charge and conviction for suspected involvement in illegal activities and illegal acts, including offences under the NSL, the institutions will generally refer the matter to the relevant student or staff disciplinary committees for handling in accordance with the established procedures. The committees will decide whether disciplinary action is to be taken, having regard to the nature and severity of the case. Depending on the severity of a case, students may be suspended from their studies or expelled, and the employment of staff members may be terminated. The institutions also require job applicants to declare their conviction records.

(2) and (3) With the implementation of the NSL on June 30, 2020, post-secondary education institutions have taken a series of measures since the 2021/22 academic year to incorporate national and national security education into students' learning in fulfilment of their statutory duty under Article 10 of the NSL, through organising seminars, sharing sessions, workshops, forums and study tours, etc.

In further pursuance of the above-mentioned objectives, the Government has included whole-person development as one of the four strategic directions adopted in the 2022-25 triennium of the University Grants Committee (UGC), illustrating that instilling a strong sense of civic duty into students through values education at university level will help nurture graduates to become the future pillars of society, and that education on the Constitution, the Basic Law and the NSL should form an important part of the university curriculum with a view to nurturing students into law-abiding and responsible citizens. The said strategic direction was adopted as part of the assessment criteria in the Planning Exercise for the 2022-2025 triennium. The UGC reviewed the universities' proposals in accordance with the assessment criteria and submitted its funding allocation recommendation to the Government, which was eventually accepted and implemented.

In addition, the UGC signed University Accountability Agreements (UAAs) with the UGC-funded universities with a view to enhancing their accountability and performance transparency. The UAAs set out the overall development strategies of the UGC and the UGC-funded universities, as well as the basic principles on the use of the UGC's funding. In renewing the UAAs for applicability to the 2022-25 triennium, the UGC added a new provision to emphasise the aforementioned strategic direction of whole-person development. In this regard, the UGC-funded universities responded positively in their Planning Exercise Proposals (PEPs) for the 2022-25 triennium, setting out in detail their overall strategies and plans formulated on values education, and have been implementing the plans outlined in their PEPs since the 2022/23 academic year, including the introduction of relevant courses that carry credits or form part of the graduation requirements.

Post-secondary education institutions enjoy autonomy on curriculum design. In general, they provide diversified learning opportunities both

within and outside the curriculum to enhance students' awareness of our country's history, culture, constitutional order and the latest developments in various fields, thereby helping them gain a deeper understanding of our country, develop a stronger sense of national identity, and achieve an enhanced sense of national security, law-abidingness and civic duty. The institutions determine the course duration having regard to the teaching mode, content and requirements, and provide appropriate courses for students. Fit-for-purpose assessments, such as examinations and project studies are also conducted to assess students' understanding of important issues related to the NSL.

The Education Bureau (EDB) requires post-secondary education institutions to regularly review and report on the arrangements for courses and activities related to national and national security education. Information provided by them shows that they have taken into account their actual circumstances, such as their respective positioning, qualifications of the teaching staff, programme and course structure, in providing the series of courses and other learning activities on national and national security education. In addition to various topics under national security, the scope of coverage also includes Chinese culture, history and philosophy, the close ties between the country and Hong Kong, and the training of students' leadership qualities, etc. Relevant courses and learning activities delivered by faculty members or external experts are also arranged to help students gain sufficient knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of our country's developments. As reported by the institutions, the feedback from the teaching staff and students was positive. The institutions will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of their national and national security education-related courses and learning activities, and make appropriate adjustments as needed to ensure that they can effectively achieve the learning objectives of raising the awareness of students and staff members on national security and developing an enhanced sense of law-abidingness.

The UGC Secretariat will continue to maintain close communication with and provide feedback to the UGC-funded universities, and support them in implementing the strategic direction of whole-person development in the 2022-25 triennium. The EDB will continue to liaise with post-secondary education institutions (including self-financing institutions) on issues relevant to the promotion of national and national security education, and provide them with support.

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**[OGCIO launches new round of ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly to](#)**

## promote digital inclusion (with photos)

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) announced today (June 14) that a new round of the ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly was launched. Through a variety of information and communications technology (ICT) outreach activities, the Programme aims to continue cultivating the elderly's interest in technology and help them experience the convenience brought by ICT in their daily lives.

The OGCIO has earlier engaged six non-profit-making organisations (NPOs) through an open invitation to implement the new round of the ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly for two years. Under the Programme, ICT outreach activities will be organised for institutionalised elderly people, hidden elderly people, elderly people receiving day care centre and home care services, as well as elderly people with dementia. Apart from introducing digital products to the elderly, the Programme also incorporates technology elements such as robotics, virtual reality and augmented reality in the activities. For instance, robots are deployed in the elderly's fitness exercise; virtual reality devices are used for the elderly to explore the community remotely; and various gerontechnology products are introduced to the elderly with a view to encouraging them to exercise more and manage their health. In addition, over 300 sessions of mobile outreach booth activities will be organised by the NPOs across the territory to introduce commonly used mobile apps to the elderly and help address their questions on using smartphones.

The six funded projects and their implementing organisations under the new round of the Programme are listed below:

Project title	Funded organisation
Joyful Stimulation & Connection Project	The Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club
E-Joyful Motion – ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly	Hong Kong Children & Youth Services
Hi Touch Fun Fun Lot	Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service, LC-HKS
#lovin tech #lovin eld	The Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council
I Can Teach (ICT) – Elderly Learning Program for Technology	Tung Wah Group of Hospitals
Y Internet E-Force Outreach Program for the Elderly	Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service

A spokesman for the OGCI0 said, "We are very grateful for the support of the NPOs in the previous round of the ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly, and for their contribution to the promotion of digital inclusion. The Programme has been well-received by the elderly since its launch in 2014. To date, over 24 000 elderly people have benefited from the Programme. It is expected that the new round will serve more than 12 000 elderly people."

For details about the ICT Outreach Programme Programme for the Elderly, please visit the OGCI0 website ([www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our\\_work/community/ict\\_programmes\\_for\\_elderly/2023-2025/](http://www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our_work/community/ict_programmes_for_elderly/2023-2025/)).

