

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, May 21, 2021 is 100.7 (down 0.1 against yesterday's index).

WHO confirms Hong Kong's interruption of endemic rubella virus transmission

The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination in the Western Pacific (RVC) today (May 21) confirmed that Hong Kong has achieved the interruption of endemic rubella virus transmission.

Welcoming the WHO's verification that Hong Kong has achieved rubella-free status, the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan said, "The success is encouraging, but there is no room for complacency. We will remain vigilant and will continue to work on closing immunity gaps in the population".

The WHO considers a country/area to have eliminated rubella when there is no evidence of endemic transmission of the virus for at least 36 months, and a well-performing surveillance system is in place.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said that Hong Kong maintains a high-quality case-based surveillance system, with effective epidemiological and laboratory surveillance that allows rapid response to cases and outbreaks.

Rubella was once endemic in Hong Kong with occasional peaks observed in the early years. Rubella vaccination was introduced in 1978, following an epidemic in 1977 and the subsequent increase in congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) cases. With the introduction of the trivalent measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) immunisation for all one-year-old children since 1990, and a two-dose regime in 1996, there has been a substantial reduction in rubella cases. The two-dose MMR schedule was well established with high coverage achieved.

The National Verification Committee for Measles and Rubella Elimination in Hong Kong (NVC) was established in 2012 to monitor the progress towards measles and rubella elimination. Sustaining the elimination status remains an ongoing challenge, as sporadic cases and clusters will continue to occur from time to time until global eradication is achieved. In the current era of frequent international travel and population movement, pockets of unvaccinated individuals vulnerable to rubella may exist and the potential

for outbreaks following imported cases will continue. This underscores the importance of timely vaccinations for susceptible populations including young children, travellers, migrants and foreign domestic helpers who have not been fully vaccinated, the spokesman said.

Vaccination is the most effective measure to prevent rubella infection. Members of the public are reminded to undertake immunisation to protect themselves, their children, the family and the community from rubella. Women of childbearing age who are not immunised should check their immunity status before pregnancy and receive a rubella vaccine as required.

In the Western Pacific, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Macao, New Zealand and Korea also achieved rubella-free status.

For more information on rubella, the public may visit the CHP's thematic webpage of rubella (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/101027.html).

[Applications open for Online Summer Music Workshop](#)

The Online Summer Music Workshop organised by the Music Office of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will be held in July and August. The workshop, designed for participants aged 4 to 15 without any musical training, aims to encourage them to acquire music knowledge and explore their interest in learning music during the summer vacation. Applications are now open and will close on June 7.

Through the "Parent-child Jolly Music Time" interactive music lessons, children aged 4 to 6 will acquire basic music knowledge including music notation, note values and rhythms and develop their listening skills and sense of rhythm. A new workshop, "Musical Instrument Kaleidoscope", is open for children aged 6 to 9. This workshop will introduce students to the appearance, tone colours and characteristics of various Chinese and Western instruments with demonstrations from the Music Office instructors and get them prepared for future music classes. Participants of both workshops must be accompanied by adults. The tuition fees are \$320 and \$240 respectively.

Another new workshop, "iJam Music-making", is open for youths aged 10 to 15 at a tuition fee of \$400. Students should prepare their own iPad to experience the fun of music-making through tablet music software.

The workshop will be conducted online via Zoom in Cantonese. Participants are required to prepare their own electronic device equipped with a wireless or broadband data connection, a webcam and Zoom software in advance. A ballot will be held if the classes are oversubscribed. For classes

not fully taken up after the deadline, in-person applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from July 12. Students completing all lessons will be awarded a certificate of attendance.

Online applications are available at www.lcsd.gov.hk/musicoffice. Course information and application forms are also available at various performance venues and public libraries of the LCSD and music centres of the Music Office. For enquiries, please call 2158 6467 or 3842 7776.

In view of the latest situation of COVID-19, visitors to various performance venues and public libraries of the LCSD and music centres of the Music Office are required to scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR code or register their name, contact number and the date and time of the visit before being allowed to enter. They will also need to use hand sanitiser, wear their own masks and be subject to temperature checks.

Ma On Shan Sports Centre and Tsing Yi Sports Centre to reopen

Ma On Shan Sports Centre and Tsing Yi Sports Centre, managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), will reopen for public use on June 17 (Thursday). The sports centres were temporarily closed earlier for anti-epidemic purposes.

Members of the public can reserve the fee-charging facilities of Ma On Shan Sports Centre and Tsing Yi Sports Centre from 7am on June 11 via the Internet Booking Service of Leisure Link, counter booking and self-service kiosks at venues already reopened, or via the Booking Office of the District Leisure Services Offices from 8.30am that day. For enquiries, please call the venue staff at 2631 1597 (Ma On Shan Sports Centre) or 2495 4631 (Tsing Yi Sports Centre), or visit the LCSD website (www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/index.html).

Declaration requirement for government staff appointed on non-civil service terms on or after July 1, 2020

The Civil Service Bureau (CSB) issued a circular to all policy bureaux and departments today (May 21), promulgating the requirement for government

staff appointed on non-civil service terms on or after July 1, 2020, to sign a declaration.

"Non-civil service staff of the Government whose employment contracts commenced on or after July 1, 2020, are required to sign a declaration that they will uphold the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (Basic Law), bear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (HKSAR), be dedicated to their duties and be responsible to the HKSAR Government. They should duly sign and return their declaration within three weeks after the department issues the letter concerned. For prospective non-civil service appointees of the Government, they will be required to sign the declaration when accepting the offer of appointment," a spokesman for the CSB said.

"The requirement for non-civil service staff of the Government to sign the declaration is an open acknowledgement of the acceptance and a genuine manifestation of the responsibilities of and expectations on non-civil service staff of the Government, which will further safeguard and promote the core values that should be upheld by all government employees, and ensure the effective governance of the HKSAR Government. This requirement accords with the requirement stipulated in the relevant provisions of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (National Security Law)."

Article 6 of the National Security Law stipulates that a resident of the HKSAR who stands for election or assumes public office shall confirm in writing or take an oath to uphold the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and swear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China in accordance with the law.

It has consistently been the duty of public servants to be dedicated to their duties and be responsible to the HKSAR Government as stipulated under the Basic Law. An employee of the HKSAR Government appointed on non-civil service terms, like his/her civil service counterpart, is a public servant and should in no uncertain terms acknowledge and accept these duties.

"Negligence or refusal to duly sign and return the declaration by a non-civil service staff of the Government reflects the staff's refusal to comply with the requirement under Article 6 of the National Security Law and to acknowledge, accept and discharge the duties of public servants provided under the Basic Law, and a serious lack of commitment to adhere to the core values of government employees. The Government will, based on the facts of each case, consider whether action should be taken to terminate the employment of the non-civil service government staff concerned. The officer concerned will be given an opportunity to give an explanation in the process," the spokesman said.

"If a non-civil service government staff commits a misconduct which also involves a breach of the declaration, the Government will, as in other misconduct cases, having regard to the specific circumstances of the case,

take appropriate disciplinary action(s) against the staff for the misconduct committed in accordance with the employment contracts of the staff concerned. In determining the punishment in accordance with the relevant employment contracts, the Government will take into account the circumstances, nature and gravity of the case, etc, and will also take into consideration the fact that the misconduct is committed by the staff member even though he or she has signed a declaration to acknowledge the expectations and responsibilities brought by the official position on him or her."

The CSB had introduced, in October 2020 and January 2021 respectively, the arrangements for requiring new appointees to the civil service and serving civil servants to take an oath or sign a declaration to uphold the Basic Law, bear allegiance to the HKSAR, be dedicated to their duties and be responsible to the HKSAR Government. Civil servants appointed to senior positions such as Heads of Department are also required to take an oath.