

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 is 102.3 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

Notification arrangements on Secondary One discretionary places and distribution of school choice documents for Central Allocation

Parents of Primary Six students participating in the current (2021) cycle of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System who have made applications under the discretionary places (DP) stage will receive notifications from the secondary schools they have applied for tomorrow (March 31) if their children have been selected as successful applicants. Parents need not confirm with the schools concerned if they accept the DP offers, a spokesman for the Education Bureau (EDB) said today (March 30).

For parents who have also successfully applied for a school place in a non-participating Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary school (NDSS secondary school) for their children, they should decide whether to retain the offer from the NDSS secondary school. If they decide to retain the offer, they should disregard the notifications from the secondary schools which have selected their children at the DP stage. Their children will be allocated to the concerned NDSS secondary school according to the established mechanism. On the other hand, parents who have decided to decline the NDSS secondary school offer should notify the school concerned and retrieve the signed Parent's Undertaking and the original copy of the Primary 6 Student Record Form on or before April 12 in order to retain the school place successfully applied for at the DP stage.

"Students who have not been notified as successful DP applicants are required to participate in the Central Allocation (CA)," the spokesman said. Primary schools participating in the SSPA System have been informed to collect copies of the following documents on April 12:

- Secondary One Choice of Schools Form (Choice Form);
- Notes for Parents on Central Allocation (Notes for Parents);
- Secondary School List (SSL); and
- Handbook for Unrestricted School Choices (Handbook).

Parents of Primary Six students participating in the SSPA will each receive the Choice Form, the Notes for Parents and the SSL for the school net of the student from his or her primary school. Parents may ask for the Handbook from primary schools for reference or obtain the school lists in the Handbook through the EDB's homepage (www.edb.gov.hk) and the fax service of the EDB's automatic telephone enquiry system on 2891 0088.

In light of the development of the COVID-19 epidemic, to reduce the gathering of people and maintain social distancing, the EDB advised that primary schools should make flexible arrangements in providing support for parents in making school choices. For instance, instead of organising large-scale parents' briefings, schools could provide parents with information or advice by video conferencing, phone or email, and distribute the choice-making documents to parents of cross-boundary students by post or email.

"The Choice Form is divided into two parts (Part A and Part B). Parents should refer to the Handbook when filling in Part A 'Unrestricted School Choices' of the Choice Form and choose not more than three secondary schools from any school net (including the student's school net). As for Part B 'Restricted School Choices', parents should refer to their child's SSL and choose a maximum of 30 secondary schools according to their preference. Parents must not enter any school choices which are not in the SSL of the school net of the child in Part B since invalid school choices will not be processed," the spokesman said.

The spokesman reminded parents that prior to making school choices for their children, they should read carefully the Notes for Parents. Parents are encouraged to watch the DVD "Secondary School Places Allocation System 2019/2021 Cycle" distributed to them in October last year to understand in detail the SSPA System. Parents should also refer to the Secondary School Profiles 2020/2021 published in December last year by the Committee on Home-School Co-operation for information supplied by the secondary schools and visit the Secondary School Profiles homepage (www.chsc.hk/secondary/en) for the schools' latest developments.

"Parents must complete and return the Choice Form to their children's primary school for submission to the EDB on or before May 5. Should individual parents have genuine difficulties in returning the duly completed Choice Form to their children's primary school in person or through an authorised representative, he/she should contact the primary school in advance and return the Choice Form to the primary school by post," the spokesman said.

He added, "The results for SSPA 2021 (for both the DP and CA stages) will be announced on July 6. Parents wishing to receive the result of their children via SMS message on that day should provide a mobile phone number on the Choice Form to indicate their consent to receive the result via that phone number. Parents may refer to the Notes for Parents for more information."

Parents who have questions in completing the Choice Form are advised to consult their children's primary schools. Relevant information about the SSPA System and some frequently asked questions will be uploaded to the EDB's homepage (www.edb.gov.hk) on April 12 for parents' reference.

Parents may call the EDB's automatic telephone enquiry system on 2891 0088 for information by then. Further enquiries may also be directed to the School Places Allocation Section (SSPA) of the EDB on 2832 7740 and 2832 7700.

FEHD orders Kwun Tong food factory to suspend business for 14 days

The Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene has ordered a food factory in Kwun Tong to suspend business for 14 days as the operator repeatedly breached the Food Business Regulation (FBR) by operating an unlicensed restaurant.

The premises, Mila, located at Shop No. 45 on the ground floor of E Plaza, 7 Shing Yip Street, Kwun Tong, was ordered to suspend business from today (March 30) to April 12.

"In July and December last year, two convictions for the above-mentioned breach were recorded against the shop. A total fine of \$7,000 was levied by the court and 15 demerit points were registered against the licensee under the department's demerit points system. The contraventions resulted in the 14-day licence suspension," a spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said.

The licensee of the shop had a record of two convictions for the same offence in August and September 2019. A total fine of \$6,000 was levied and 15 demerit points were also registered. The breaches led to licence suspension for a total of seven days in May and July last year.

The spokesman reminded the licensees of food premises to comply with the FBR or their licences could be suspended or cancelled.

Licensed food premises are required to exhibit a sign, at a conspicuous place near the main entrance, indicating that the premises have been licensed. A list of licensed food premises is available on the FEHD's website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/index.html).

Latest arrangements of WFA Scheme and I-WITS Scheme

The Government announced today (March 30) that it will start implementing a time-limited special measure in June 2021, i.e. to reduce the working hour requirements of the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme from June 2021 to May 2022. Meanwhile, the Government will abolish the Individual-based Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (I-WITS) Scheme starting from June 2021.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has led to worsening employment and economic conditions. In order to provide additional support to working individuals and families with financial difficulties, the Government will reduce the WFA working hour requirements for non-single-parent households for the claim months from June 2021 to May 2022, which include substantially reducing the working hour requirement for Basic Allowance from 144 to 72 hours per month, as well as reducing the working hour requirement for Medium Allowance from 168 to 132 hours per month. This arrangement has been approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council as detailed below:

Types of allowance	Existing requirements of total monthly working hour (hours)	Total monthly working hour requirements from June 2021 to May 2022 (hours)
Basic Allowance	144 to less than 168	72 to less than 132
Medium Allowance	168 to less than 192	132 to less than 192
Higher Allowance	192 or more	Unchanged at 192 or more

The existing working hour requirements of 36, 54 and 72 hours per month for Basic, Medium and Higher Allowances respectively for single-parent households will remain unchanged.

The Government will also abolish the I-WITS Scheme starting from June 2021 to pool resources for implementing the time-limited reduction of WFA working hour requirements and handling the continued surge in WFA applications. The last claim month of the I-WITS Scheme will be May 2021. Applicants can submit their last I-WITS applications with claim month(s) up to May 2021 on or before August 31, 2021. The Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency will encourage and assist current I-WITS recipients to apply for the WFA.

Moreover, the Government will maintain the income and asset limits of

all types of households of the WFA Scheme as listed at the Annex. As for the I-WITS Scheme, the Government will freeze its income limit at \$11,000 per month, and maintain its asset limit at \$99,000 before the Scheme ends in June 2021.

For enquiries, applicants may call the WFAO's hotline (2558 3000) or visit its website (www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/wfao).

“Population and Household Statistics Analysed by District Council District 2020” report published

The Census and Statistics Department published today (March 30) the report "Population and Household Statistics Analysed by District Council District 2020".

The report contains statistics on a broad range of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population in 2020 at the District Council district level. Population characteristics like age, sex and marital status, and household characteristics like household size, household income, type and tenure of accommodation are included.

The statistics in the report are mainly based on data collected in the General Household Survey during January to December 2020, which may be regarded as referring to the average situation of the entire year of 2020. This survey covers the land-based non-institutional population of Hong Kong (which constitutes some 99% of the Hong Kong Resident Population). Some summary statistics published in the report are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 attached.

Users can download the report from the website of the Census and Statistics Department at (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp150.jsp?productCode=B1130301).

Enquiries about the contents of the report can be directed to the Household Statistics Analysis Section, Census and Statistics Department (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).