

# Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, February 4, 2021 is 100.8 (same as yesterday's index).

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## SCED speaks on RTHK

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, on matters relating to Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) at a media session after attending the Chief Executive's Question and Answer Session at the Legislative Council today (February 4):

Reporter: Is there any room for RTHK to make any mistakes at all, given that government officials make mistakes from time to time?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I have made myself very clear. As a media organisation, be it RTHK or others, I think the general principle is that there should be accurate and impartial reporting. It is a very fundamental principle that should be upheld by all news agencies. There should not be any exception for RTHK, being a media (organisation).

On the other hand, in the Charter (Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong), there is a requirement under Clause 7 asking RTHK, as a public service broadcaster, to uphold the highest professional standard of journalism in addition to being accurate and impartial (in reporting). I think this is a pledge that RTHK would need to uphold.

The Government's stance is very clear, as a government department, news agency or a public service broadcaster, RTHK should maintain this very important principle. If there is any sort of inadequacy or any error being made, I think they should have the responsibility to clarify, to make good and also to apologise. After investigation of any complaint, if they consider the complaint not justified, then of course, (they could) also come out to stand up to the public, explain and also articulate their explanation.

Of course, in addition to all those, RTHK is also subject to the scrutiny of the Communications Authority (CA) as far as complaints are concerned. There is also an established mechanism. In the past, we have seen the CA doing its job and RTHK giving appropriate responses.

Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

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## Tuen Mun Hospital announces passing away of COVID-19 patient

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Tuen Mun Hospital (TMH) today (February 4) announced that a patient confirmed with COVID-19 passed away today.

A 67-year-old male patient (case number: 5735) was admitted to TMH on November 23 last year due to fever and asthma. He subsequently tested positive for COVID-19. After treatment, the patient tested positive for antibodies and was released from isolation by the Department of Health on January 25. His condition continued to deteriorate and he eventually succumbed at 6.08am today.

The hospital is saddened by the passing away of the patient and will offer necessary assistance to his family.

Including the above patient, 180 COVID-19 confirmed patients have passed away in public hospitals so far.

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## Government finishes exercise on “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in Tuen Mun and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice

The Government yesterday (February 3) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 7pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tuen Mun (i.e. Tower 1, Goodview Garden, 7 Hoi Chu Road, Tuen Mun) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing were required to stay in their premises until

all such persons identified in the area had undergone testing and the test results were mostly ascertained. Moreover, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday, requiring persons who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from January 21 to February 3, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing by February 5. The Government announced the completion of the compulsory testing exercise at around 7am today (February 4) and carried out enforcement actions in the "restricted area" afterwards to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone compulsory testing. The Government announced that the enforcement operation ended at about 11am today.

In this exercise, the Home Affairs Department (HAD), the Tuen Mun District Office, the Sai Kung District Office, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Immigration Department, the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office of the Department of Health, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Auxiliary Medical Service mobilised around 270 staff to arrange for implementation of the declaration and enforcement actions for breaches of the compulsory testing notice issued earlier.

The Government provided simple food for persons subject to compulsory testing, including instant noodles, canned food, cup noodles, corn, soy milk and bottled water, so as to facilitate the dinner arrangements of some persons subject to compulsory testing. One box of masks and hand sanitiser, and more, were also provided to persons subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

The HAD also set up a hotline for people restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance.

The Government thanks persons subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With everyone's co-operation and efforts, coupled with the tireless efforts of the testing contractors, residents have been informed about their testing results by SMS notification. After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at about 7am today, the Government took enforcement action in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing according to the requirements of the declaration and the compulsory testing notice. Persons who could present an SMS notification containing a negative testing result as proof of having undergone the compulsory testing could leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer. The enforcement operation was completed at about 11am. Nobody was found to have not undergone compulsory testing. Taking into account the above situation, the Secretary for Food and Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

As at 2am today, 487 residents had undergone testing, among which a preliminary positive case was found and the relevant preliminary positive case has been sent to the Community Treatment Facility at AsiaWorld-Expo for

follow-up.

The Government hopes the some 20 households who have not answered the door will contact the Government for arrangement of testing as soon as possible after they read the notices put up by the Government, in the hope of eliminating the possible risk of further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government understands that residents in the district are worried and anxious because of the increase in confirmed cases in recent days. The Government hopes this temporary inconvenience will completely cut the local transmission chains in the district and ease residents' worries and fear, so that they will regain confidence in resuming social and business activities in the area, and return to a normal life.

The Government thanks all participating government staff and the testing agencies for their hard work. The Government also thanks the persons subject to compulsory testing again for their support and understanding, and their full co-operation during this period in undergoing testing and waiting for the result at home.

The Government as a whole is united in fighting against the virus despite all the difficulties, and provided testing for all the residents in the district within a short period of time in the hope of achieving zero cases in the district.

The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance situation of the compulsory testing notices and the "restriction-testing declaration" by persons subject to compulsory testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

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## **SED on COVID-19 testing for teachers and new core subject**

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, at a media session before attending the Chief Executive's Question and Answer Session in the Legislative Council today (February 4):

Reporter: First, some educators said it is not only their teachers who need to be tested regularly. So why are students not required to do so? It seems

like pushing responsibility towards the school. How do you respond to that? And secondly, why is the Liberal Studies subject having such massive changes in this certain period of time?

Secretary for Education: On the first question, I must say that in the school set-up, the school management and the teachers must have a bigger responsibility than the students because they are there to provide the service, to provide the education, for the students. As I said, I think as a government we would like to ask every citizen to do the test as much as possible because this is one of the measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic. But for this particular measure or initiative that we are now proposing, it is just an option. We are just allowing those schools whose teachers are very willing to do the testing another option and an opportunity for them to have the whole school back to resume face-to-face lessons at the earliest opportunity. Of course, teachers, as the educators as well as the carers of students, have to look at the interests of the students. If they are willing, we would appreciate it very much that they are willing to do the test just to offer more protection to the students.

On the second question about the new subject renamed from Liberal Studies, if you look at the curriculum framework carefully, you will notice that actually the curriculum framework and the previous one are very, sort of – I would not say similar, but most of the topics are extracted from the previous one. Because what we are doing now is not creating a new subject. We are trying to consolidate the current Liberal Studies subject with some reductions in content, because we want to give the teachers and also the students more space for development. For example, the students could make use of the time to study deeper in other subjects or to take another elective subject. So the whole idea, if you look at the consultation, the questionnaire that we sent out to the schools, we are talking about the four core subjects, we are talking about creating, through these reforms, more space for these students, to cater for their learning diversities. This is the objective of the whole exercise.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)