

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, January 14, 2021 is 100.7 (up 0.3 against yesterday's index).

Appointment of Chief Executive Officer of the Hong Kong Academy of Finance

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Academy of Finance (AoF) announced today (January 14) the appointment of Mr Kwok Kwok-chuen as Chief Executive Officer of the AoF for a two-year term with effect from January 18.

As Chief Executive Officer, Mr Kwok will oversee the operations of the AoF and the Hong Kong Institute for Monetary and Financial Research, the research arm and a subsidiary of the AoF (See Note). The biography of Mr Kwok is at Annex.

Chairman of the AoF and Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Mr Eddie Yue, said, "I am delighted that Mr Kwok is taking up the role as Chief Executive Officer of the AoF. With his extensive experience in both the public and private sectors and his knowledge in research and talent development, Mr Kwok is best suited to lead the AoF in nurturing future leaders of Hong Kong's financial industry and enhancing our applied research capability. I look forward to working with him closely to further strengthen the position of Hong Kong as a premier international financial centre through AoF's work."

Mr Kwok said, "We live in a world of accelerating changes and the AoF plays an important role in maintaining the competitiveness of Hong Kong as an international financial centre. I am honoured to be appointed and given the opportunity to contribute to financial leadership development and monetary and financial research in Hong Kong."

Note: These duties are currently assumed by Executive Director (Banking Policy), Mr Daryl Ho, and Executive Director (Research) of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Ms Lillian Cheung, respectively.

CHP follows up on COVID-19 confirmed cases at buildings on Reclamation Street in Jordan

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 14) said that as 27 confirmed cases of COVID-19 recently occurred at 20, 22 and 26 Reclamation Street in Jordan, which involved 13 units, the CHP decided to carry out additional prudent measures on infection control so as to stop the potential risk of a further spread of the virus.

Since 20, 22, 24 and 26 Reclamation Street are interconnected and the communal places are shared by some residents therein, subsequent to requesting the residents to undergo compulsory testing and arranging close contacts living on the same floor as confirmed cases to quarantine centres so as to cut the transmission chain in the buildings and the community as soon as possible, the DH has further issued quarantine orders to asymptomatic residents from remaining units on the first to the seventh floors of 20, 22, 24 and 26 Reclamation Street, and has transferred them to quarantine centres. For symptomatic residents, they will be sent to the hospital for treatment.

As at 9am today, the CHP had transferred 79 residents of the buildings to quarantine centres for compulsory quarantine, including close contacts living on the same floor, as with confirmed cases earlier.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations of the buildings are ongoing.

Meanwhile, the CHP reminds that the Government has exercised power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) on January 12, 2021, to require any person who had been present at 20, 22, 24 and 26 Reclamation Street for more than two hours at any time during the period from December 30, 2020, to January 12, 2021 (including but not limited to residents, visitors and workers), to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test by January 15, 2021.

Ombudsman probes into Government's regulation of boarding facilities for foreign domestic helpers

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Ms Winnie Chiu, today (January 14) announced the launch

of a direct investigation to examine the Government's regulation of boarding facilities for foreign domestic helpers (FDHs).

In late 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been extensive media coverage on FDHs being continuously infected in Hong Kong. An array of problems relating to boarding facilities for FDHs also unfolded, such as over-crowdedness, poor hygiene and suspected violations of building usage, etc. Some media reports brought to light the issue of possible illegal operations, as licensees of FDH employment agencies (or other parties) had allegedly failed to obtain from the Government a relevant licence or waiver before leasing out their premises as FDH boarding facilities.

It was pointed out that as FDHs are permitted to remain in Hong Kong for two weeks upon completion or premature termination of their employment contract, they have a need for boarding facilities during this period of stay in Hong Kong. However, there is currently no specific legislation for regulating FDH boarding facilities, nor have relevant government departments established any mechanisms for inspecting such facilities regarding their compliance with requirements for fire and building safety measures.

Ms Chiu noted, "Since the Government permitted the importation of FDHs into Hong Kong in the 1970s, FDHs have enjoyed statutory rights and have been protected by the Standard Employment Contract prescribed by the Government, including their entitlement to proper accommodation. However, as alleged, many FDH boarding facilities are located in over-crowded commercial or residential buildings. Whether such facilities comply with public safety requirements has aroused much concern. The Government has a duty to ensure a reasonable living environment for FDHs working in Hong Kong as well as public safety. Against this background, I have decided to initiate a direct investigation to examine the regulation of boarding facilities for FDHs by relevant government departments, including the Labour Department, the Home Affairs Department and the Immigration Department, and make recommendations for improvements where warranted."

The Ombudsman now invites members of the public, FDHs, concern groups and organisations across sectors to provide information and views on this topic. Written submissions should reach the Office of The Ombudsman by February 14, 2021:

Address: 30/F, China Merchants Tower, Shun Tak Centre
168-200 Connaught Road Central, Hong Kong

Fax: 2882 8149

Email: complaints@ombudsman.hk

Special sale arrangements for monthly parking tickets of seven government car parks managed by TD for February

The Transport Department (TD) said today (January 14) that in view of the latest situation of COVID-19, special arrangements will continue to be implemented at the seven government car parks under the management of the TD for the sale of monthly tickets for February to reduce the risk of virus spread in the community.

The existing holders of a monthly ticket for private car/van, motorcycle or taxi for January can purchase a monthly ticket for the same vehicle type for February with priority. These eligible monthly ticket holders have to complete the procedures for purchasing the monthly ticket for February by 9pm on January 22 at the shroff offices of the car parks concerned. Any such person who fails to purchase the monthly ticket before the above deadline will be regarded as having given up his or her right to purchase the monthly ticket for February. The unsold monthly tickets for private car/van for February will be sold at the shroff offices of the car parks concerned on first-come, first-served basis from 7.30am on January 23, while the unsold monthly tickets for motorcycle and taxi for February will be sold at the shroff offices from 7.30am on January 24.

The seven government car parks are Star Ferry Car Park, City Hall Car Park, Tin Hau Car Park, Shau Kei Wan Car Park, Aberdeen Car Park, Kwai Fong Car Park and Tsuen Wan Car Park.

The car park operators will put up notices in the car parks in advance to inform motorists of the above special arrangements.

Meanwhile, the TD is going to resume the original sale arrangements for monthly parking tickets upon the relaxation of the epidemic. In this connection, car park users are advised to pay attention to the announcements of the TD and the updated notices put up by the car park operators in the car parks.