

# Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, January 13, 2021 is 100.4 (down 0.3 against yesterday's index).

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## LCQ6: Traffic and transport studies

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 13):

Question:

The Government conducted three comprehensive transport studies in 1976, 1989 and 1997 respectively. Some members of the public have pointed out that it has been over 20 years since the last study was completed in 1999, and during this period Hong Kong has seen substantial changes in its population, the development of various districts, and transport-related situations such as the number of vehicles and cross-boundary transport. Moreover, problems such as inadequate public transport services and road congestion have also become increasingly serious in some districts (New Territories West in particular). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the past three comprehensive transport studies were conducted at irregular intervals, of the criteria adopted by the authorities for determining the timing for conducting such kind of studies;

(2) whether it will launch the fourth comprehensive transport study in the near future; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, what mechanism is in place to ensure that the public transport services and transport infrastructure in New Territories West can cater for the development of the district; and

(3) as the Chief Executive mentioned in the 2020 Policy Address that the Government would carry out a comprehensive traffic and transport strategy study, of the aspects covered by the study and the implementation timetable?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the respective parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Han-pan is as follows:

(1) Comprehensive Transport Studies (CTSs) aim to develop a timely transport

strategy for Hong Kong, cater for the needs of social development, and respond to changes such as demographic planning. In the 1970s, in view of the development of the New Town Development in New Territories, the Government conducted the first CTS, which covered provision of roads to connect the new towns and the urban areas, construction of the Mass Transit Railway, and the electrification and double tracking of the Kowloon-Canton Railway, etc. Later in the 1980s, the Government decided to construct a new airport at Chek Lap Kok and promote port development, and therefore conducted the second CTS. After the reunification, the Government conducted the third CTS in view of the population growth in Hong Kong and the upsurge in demand for cross-boundary traffic.

The first and the second CTS set out three principles for our transport policy: (i) improving transport infrastructure; (ii) expanding and improving public transport services; and (iii) managing road use. Based on these principles, the Government completed the third CTS. The third CTS also laid down five broad directions, including (i) better integration of transport and land use planning, (ii) better use of railway as the backbone of the passenger transport system, (iii) provision of better public transport services and facilities, (iv) wider use of advanced technologies in traffic management, and (v) implementation of more environmental-friendly transport measures. These broad directions remain applicable today.

(2) After completion of the third CTS, the Government has been conducting different studies for the various aspects of the CTS, including:

(i) planning of transport infrastructure, such as "Railway Development Strategy"; the Government also conducted regular internal reviews on the planning of strategic road projects in Hong Kong; and took forward major road projects including Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link, Central Kowloon Route, and Tseung Kwan O-Lam Tin Tunnel in an orderly manner;

(ii) the "Public Transport Strategy Study" which examined the roles and positioning of public transport services other than heavy rail; and

(iii) commencement of topical transport studies, such as "Congestion Charging" which adopted the principle of "Efficiency First".

The above studies on different transport topics can basically serve the purpose of a CTS. Moreover, we can have early promulgation of the findings of each study through progressive deployment of resources and completion of the studies in an orderly manner.

We have been planning and constructing various transport infrastructures in New Territories West, e.g. Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link commissioned in December 2020, Route 11 (between Yuen Long and North Lantau) and Tsing Yi-Lantau Link which are about to be implemented, and Tuen Mun Bypass, the feasibility study of which is planned to commence this year. Moreover, the Government plans to implement new major roads and railways under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision which will also relieve the current congestion situation at peak hours at West Rail and major roads linking Northwest New Territories and Hong Kong Island.

In the long term, we commenced the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030" to investigate the layout of railway and major roads infrastructures, such that the planning of large scale transport infrastructures can facilitate or even reserve capacity to satisfy Hong Kong's overall long term demand on land supply.

The Government will continuously enhance the public transport networks in the districts to meet passenger demands, having regard to the local developments, demographic changes, completion of transport facilities, and the operation and service levels of the existing public transport services in the districts, etc.

In taking forward land/housing development projects, the relevant departments or developers should conduct a traffic impact assessment (TIA) to suitably adjust the scale of development or implement suitable traffic improvement and mitigation measures to maintain smooth traffic flow in the district.

(3) At present, the TD is formulating the scope and the detailed arrangements for the traffic and transport strategy study (TTSS), and is planning to conduct a travel characteristics survey in order to enhance the CTS Model in 2024 based on the data collected from the survey; and makes use of the new information and models to complete the remaining sections of the TTSS, so as to formulate the blueprint on future traffic and transport policies.

The TTSS will make reference to and introduce suitable innovative transport models and technology to promote green transport and reduce emission, making Hong Kong a more livable city. Besides, it will also explore the enhancement of public transport services and encourage the public to use public transport, thereby relieving the traffic congestion situation in urban areas. Our goal is to set out a forward-looking long-term traffic and transport strategies for ensuring that Hong Kong can maintain a safe, reliable, environmentally friendly and efficient traffic and transport system in the future. This can not only satisfy the public's needs in terms of economy, social and leisure, but also support the sustainable development of Hong Kong and facilitate the flow of people and goods in the Greater Bay Area. Once the thorough plan is finalised, we will report the details to the Legislative Council.

Thank you, President.

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## **LCQ15: Public housing development projects and the transport**

# infrastructure in the Area 54 of Tuen Mun

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow Ho-ding and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 13):

Question:

The Government has planned to implement several public housing development projects in Area 54 of Tuen Mun to accommodate a population of about 50 000. However, some residents are worried that the transport infrastructure within the Tuen Mun District and that linking the District with urban areas can hardly meet the transport needs arising from the increased population. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective (i) peak hour vehicular flows and (ii) traffic capacities of the two new local distributor roads (i.e. L54A and L54D) in Area 54, which were commissioned in November last year; whether it has plans to build new roads in the Area; if so, of the details;

(2) given that the current Kowloon-bound road of the Lam Tei Interchange, which is adjacent to Area 54, accommodates single lane traffic only, and traffic congestion occurs every day during the morning peak hours, of the details and progress of the road improvement works to be carried out thereat by the Government;

(3) as it has been reported that the Government has recently decided to revise the alignment of the Tuen Mun Western Bypass which has been under planning for years but is still at the investigation stage, of the details of the latest alignment and the reasons for making that decision; and

(4) of the new transport infrastructure plans to cater for the population growth in Area 54 and to improve the traffic within the Tuen Mun District and that between the District and the urban areas?

Reply:

The President,

Having consulted the Civil Engineering and Development Department, my reply to the question raised by the Hon Holden Chow is as follows:

(1) and (2) According to the traffic impact assessment report (the assessment report) conducted by the Hong Kong Housing Authority for the housing and related developments in Tuen Mun Area 54, the design capacity of Road L54A (Yan Po Road) and Road L54D (Hing Kwai Street) is 3 600 and 1 800 passenger car units per hour respectively. These two roads were open to traffic in

November 2020. According to the survey conducted by the Transport Department (TD) on January 7, 2021, the peak traffic flows of extended Hing Kwai Street and Yan Po Road is less than 50 passenger car units per hour and 200 passenger car units per hours in each bound respectively. Since the relevant housing projects have not yet completed, the Government will arrange traffic survey at a later stage again to collect the traffic flow statistics of the above two new roads.

In order to support the housing and related developments in Tuen Mun Area 54, the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) will construct Road L54B and its connecting roads as well as the road improvement works at Lam Tei Interchange. The assessment report pointed out that after the construction of the roadworks, the transportation network would be sufficient to cope with the increased traffic flows arising from future housing and related development projects in Tuen Mun Area 54. The assessment report also predicted that the existing public transport services could meet the passenger demand generated after the completion of these new housing estates. In order to cope with the housing and related developments in Tuen Mun Area 54, the CEDD has arranged a number of road improvement projects, including widening the existing road junctions of Lam Tei Interchange and adjusting the road markings, to cater for the anticipated traffic growth arising from the developments in Tuen Mun Area 54. The CEDD expects that the relevant roadworks would start in 2021 for completion in 2022-23.

(3) and (4) The Government plans to consult the relevant District Councils and stakeholders early this year on the findings of the investigation study on Tuen Mun Western Bypass as well as the details of the proposed Tuen Mun Bypass (including its alignment and implementation timetable). The Government plans to commence the feasibility study of Tuen Mun Bypass this year, with a view to alleviating the traffic on the roads in Tuen Mun District.

In order to cope with the future housing developments and population growth in Tuen Mun Area 54, the TD has planned to introduce six new bus routes providing cross-district service and two new bus routes providing intra-district service, the latter of which would provide feeder service for residents to interchange at MTR Siu Hong Station for railway service, or at Tuen Mun Station Public Transport Interchange for other bus routes. The TD will continue to closely monitor the changes in passenger demand in the District and liaise with public transport operators in a timely manner to adjust or enhance the existing services so as to meet the transport needs of residents.

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**[US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender](#)**

## result

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

US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender result:

Tender date	:	January 13, 2021 (Wednesday)
Settlement date	:	January 14, 2021 (Thursday)
Repayment date	:	January 21, 2021 (Thursday)
Tenor	:	Seven Days
Amount applied	:	Nil
Amount allotted	:	Nil
Lowest interest rate accepted	:	Nil
Highest interest rate accepted	:	Nil

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## LCQ11: Impacts of Government's special work arrangement on construction industry

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (January 13):

Question:

To cope with the epidemic, the Government has implemented, for several occasions since early last year, a special work arrangement under which all government employees, save for those involved in the provision of emergency and essential public services, worked from home. Some members of the construction industry have relayed that such an arrangement has led to delays in the vetting and approval of a large number of works projects relating to land and housing developments. Consequently, the income and cash flow of contractors have been affected due to their failure to complete works projects by the contractual deadlines. The livelihood of their employees has

also been affected by the suspension of works. On the other hand, some government employees have relayed that as they lack relevant information technology (IT) equipment at home and have not been issued with relevant procedural guidelines, it is difficult for them to handle the vetting and approval work at home. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the criteria to be met by public services in order for them to be regarded as emergency or essential services; whether such criteria include: suspension of such services will (i) adversely affect the land and housing supply, (ii) seriously affect the operation of relevant industries, and (iii) deal a severe blow to the livelihood of the practitioners concerned;

(2) whether it will, in the light of the aforesaid situation, improve the special work arrangement, so as to avoid delays in or suspension of the relevant vetting and approval work;

(3) whether it has provided government employees who need to handle vetting and approval work at home with computers for processing documents and architectural/engineering drawings, as well as IT software and hardware for holding video conferences, etc.;

(4) whether it has formulated vetting and approval procedure and guidelines which are applicable to the special work arrangement, including (i) allowing applicants to make electronic submission of documents and architectural/engineering drawings for various kinds of applications, (ii) allowing the use of recorded footage or real-time images in place of onsite inspections, and (iii) adjusting the counting methods for relevant statutory deadlines and performance pledges; and

(5) whether it has consulted members of the construction industry on the vetting and approval procedure under the special work arrangement, in order to make appropriate arrangements and reduce the relevant impacts?

Reply:

President,

In view of the pandemic, the Planning Department (PlanD), the Lands Department (LandsD) and the Buildings Department (BD) under the Development Bureau, which are responsible for approving development projects, as with other departments, have implemented special work arrangements for employees to fight the pandemic collectively. A reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Implementing special work arrangements for employees includes allowing employees to work from home as far as practicable, so as to minimise their need for commuting. But if the maintenance of emergency and essential public services requires the presence of an employee in the office or an outdoor location (such as carrying out inspections for matters relating to public safety, providing counter services, receiving and issuing documents, etc.), the department concerned has a responsibility to deploy staff to

discharge such duties, as well as arrange their work schedules and provide support as appropriate. Meanwhile, departments will carry on with duties that can be performed at home as far as practicable (regardless of whether they are emergent and essential), so as to ensure the work related to land and housing supply will not be severely affected.

(3) The PlanD, LandsD and BD have all stepped up efforts in equipping their employees with appropriate information technology provisions, including laptops, webmail services and video-conferencing softwares, etc. The three departments will continue to provide information technology equipment to relevant officers as appropriate, so as to meet their needs when working from home.

(4) The aforementioned departments have adjusted their work arrangements based on past experience as far as practicable, so as to minimise the impact of working from home.

For the PlanD, since the phased introduction of video-conferencing arrangements from May 2020 onwards, the Town Planning Board (TPB) has managed to hold all its meeting as scheduled despite the subsequent implementation of special work arrangements for employees by the government for several times. Even with the special work arrangements, the TPB is committed to completing work such as plan making and processing of planning applications in accordance with the statutory timeframe under the Town Planning Ordinance without causing delays to development and works projects. Members of the public can put their planning applications and related documents into the drop-in box at the TPB Secretariat's reception counter on 15/F, North Point Government Offices during office hours, or submit them electronically. They can also make enquiries through the telephone hotline or email, as well as visit the TPB's website for information on statutory planning. The TPB will also announce the latest arrangements of its public services on its website. Moreover, the PlanD is reviewing the existing channel for electronic submission of planning applications, and will roll out the relevant enhancement measures within this year with a view to further facilitating submission of applications.

As for the LandsD, it has been handling land administration work relating to land and housing supply, including processing various land transaction applications, land disposal, and various submissions and applications under lease, as usual under the special work arrangements. During the process, LandsD officers will have deliberations through video-conferences instead of face-to-face meetings if necessary. Most of the department's services accept submission of applications and documents through electronic means by members of the public and the industry. For the convenience of the public and having regard to the fact that certain documents must be submitted in their original form or in certified copy due to statutory requirements or operational need, the LandsD has been maintaining a certain extent of counter service for receiving documents from the public and the industry. Moreover, telephone enquiry hotlines and online services remain in operation. Members of the public may continue to utilise the services provided by the LandsD through the aforementioned means.

The BD has similarly strived to provide emergency and essential public services to the public under the pandemic. These services mainly include handling public reports on building safety and unauthorised building works in progress, critical statutory submissions for new development projects, applications for registration of building professionals and contractors, etc. In order to minimise the possible impact on development and works projects arising from the implementation of special work arrangements, the BD has implemented a series of specific measures to facilitate the processing of statutory submissions, including priority processing of more critical statutory submissions of new development projects, such as the first submission of general building plans, foundation plans, excavation and lateral support plans and pile cap plans, and the amendment plans required for re-application of occupation permits or related to site works in progress, etc. If necessary, the BD may also accord priority to individual cases. In addition, the department has applied information technology and adopted streamlined and pragmatic approaches to process submissions. For example, depending on circumstances, plans may be approved first if only minor deficiencies are noted. The conditions will be listed in the approval letter such that the applicant can follow up in the subsequent amendment submission together with the application for consent to the commencement of the building works concerned. The BD will process these submissions concurrently for facilitating the industry.

(5) The relevant departments have issued press releases on their service arrangements during the implementation of the special work arrangements as appropriate. They have also uploaded such press releases to their websites to inform the public and the industries of the relevant details, and will continue to maintain close liaison with the relevant professional institutions and stakeholder organisations on the arrangements on a need basis.