

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, February 14, 2019 is 103.8 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

Operating company of Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong convicted for discharging substandard wastewater

The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong in West Kowloon discharged substandard wastewater into communal sewers and thereby violated the requirements of the wastewater discharge licence. Its operating company, Best Winners Limited, was fined \$15,000 by Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts today (February 14) for contravening the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO).

Environmental Protection Department (EPD) enforcement officers conducted an inspection at the hotel on August 10 last year and found that the wastewater at the discharge outlet from one of the grease traps of the hotel was turbid and greasy. It was suspected that the grease trap was not operating properly, resulting in the discharge of substandard wastewater into communal sewers. The EPD officers then collected wastewater samples for analysis and the result showed that the concentration of oil and grease exceeded the upper limits of the wastewater discharge licence by 3.8 times. The department prosecuted the operating company of the hotel in accordance with the WPCO. The operating company has subsequently taken improvement measures, including installing an automatic chemical dosing system for treatment of oil and grease in wastewater, and conducting regular cleaning of grease traps to ensure their proper operation.

A spokesperson for the EPD reminded all wastewater discharge licensees, including the hotel operating company, that they should arrange regular cleaning and maintenance of the grease traps and wastewater treatment facilities to ensure proper operation of these facilities. They should also strictly adhere to the discharge standards as stipulated in the licence to prevent the discharge of substandard wastewater into the sewers, which may lead to blockage of sewers downstream, or adversely affect the normal operation of the Government's sewage treatment plants.

Under the WPCO, anyone who discharges commercial or industrial wastewater into communal sewers not in compliance with the standard of the discharge licence commits an offence. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment.

Two contractors of Newport Theatre in Mong Kok convicted for illegally carrying out renovation works on holidays

The renovation works sub-contractor at Newport Theatre in Mong Kok, Ngai Keung Decoration Construction Company Limited, which illegally carried out renovation works on holidays, and the main contractor, Parks Decoration & Engineering Limited, were convicted today (February 14). They were fined a total of \$19,000 by Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts for contravening the Noise Control Ordinance (NCO).

A spokesperson for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said that the department conducted a blitz inspection in October last year and found that the sub-contractor concerned, when carrying out renovation works on holidays, used powered mechanical equipment and generated noise while conducting hammering works. No construction noise permit (CNP) was granted before the works commenced. After investigation and evidence gathering, the EPD prosecuted the sub-contractor in accordance with the NCO. The main contractor of the works concerned, who caused the illegal works being carried out by the sub-contractor, was also prosecuted.

The spokesperson explained that the NCO aims to protect the public from disturbance of rest. Members of the construction industry should carry out works during the daytime and non-general holidays as far as possible to minimise noise disturbance to the nearby residents. If any works procedures have to be conducted during the restricted hours (between 7pm and 7am on the following day, or at any time on a general holiday), a permit must be obtained from the EPD in advance. The construction works shall commence only when the CNP has been granted upon completion of assessment to support its compliance with regulatory requirements. The construction works granted with the permit must also strictly comply with the relevant requirements of the CNP, only specified powered mechanical equipment can be used for the construction works and noise mitigation measures should be implemented, including the erection of fences and noise barriers at the sites, etc. Otherwise, it constitutes an offence. The main contractor should also monitor the construction works carried out by its sub-contractors during restricted hours to ensure all relevant regulations are complied with, or it may also be held liable. Under the NCO, first-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000. A maximum fine of \$200,000 may be imposed on second or subsequent convictions.

[FSDC releases report on enhancing MPF system in Hong Kong](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Financial Services Development Council:

The Financial Services Development Council (FSDC) today (February 14) released a research report entitled "Mandatory Provident Fund System – The Way Forward". The report sets out key recommendations for enhancing the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) system in Hong Kong.

The Chairman of the FSDC, Mr Laurence Li, said, "The MPF system has been playing a vital role in protecting the financial well-being of Hong Kong's workforce when they reach retirement. After nearly 20 years since the establishment of the MPF, it is now an opportune time to explore enhancement measures to modernise the MPF system."

The report aims to identify some of the perceived major issues and challenges of the MPF system and to outline recommendations to address them. The report has made five recommendations to improve MPF members' engagement and to grow the level of MPF assets within the system: (i) establishing and implementing eMPF; (ii) encouraging MPF trustees/sponsors to provide more comprehensive advice and financial education; (iii) increasing independent governance and oversight of MPF schemes; (iv) updating the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance; and (v) increasing the level of contributions into the MPF system.

The full version of the report can be downloaded from the FSDC website: www.fsd.org.hk.

About the FSDC

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government established the FSDC in 2013 as a high-level, cross-sectoral advisory body to engage the industry in formulating proposals to promote the further development of Hong Kong's financial services industry and to map out the strategic direction for development.

The FSDC has been incorporated as a company limited by guarantee with effect from September 2018 to allow it to better discharge its functions through research, market promotion and human capital development with more flexibility.

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at a media session after attending a radio programme this morning (February 14):

Reporter: How effective do you think the overall e-cigarette ban will be when people can still be able to buy e-cigarette products online from other countries?

Secretary for Food and Health: For the legislative amendment this time, our intention, first of all, is to cut off the supply. Through the ban on import, manufacture, sale, distribution and promotion, the prohibition on these areas has already achieved our policy intention and objective of cutting the supply, so that it would not influence our younger generation. Often these new products are marketed attractively, so that these new products would attract a younger generation. The most important thing is to cut off the supply so that it would not further affect our next generation and our general public. Regarding whether we would ban the possession or use of these products, after the legislation has been enacted for a while, this should not be an issue because people would not be able to buy these products. Therefore, as time goes by, this worry would be less. But of course we would work together with the Police and the Customs to see if there are loopholes in the existing proposed legislation and see how best the way forward.

Reporter: Wouldn't it be more effective to just make vaping illegal?

Secretary for Food and Health: Our intention is not to criminalise e-cigarette or heat-not-burn cigarette users. Our main aim is to cut off the supply so that it won't affect further our next generation and the people in Hong Kong. Therefore, the current legislative framework would be the first step to stop these products from harming our people in Hong Kong.

Reporter: Some people said the penalty is too harsh, I mean the imprisonment and the fine. Why do you decide on such a penalty?

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all, after we have passed the law in the Legislative Council, we would have six months' (transitional period) before the law is commenced, so that people can adjust during this period, both for the trade and users. After the legislation is commenced, especially in the first few months after commencement, we would try our best to appeal to users or people not to bring in (alternative smoking products) from other countries or through import. We would try to facilitate those people, who are not aware of the legislation, to put these products in a drop box (upon arrival in Hong Kong) so that it would be more convenient and not to criminalise the users or people bringing in e-cigarettes.

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