

## Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, January 7, 2019 is 104.3 (down 0.1 against last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, January 5, 2019 was 104.4 (down 0.2 against last Friday's index).

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## New service point for Mobile Library 12

A spokesman for the Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (January 7) that a new service point for Mobile Library 12 will be set up at the carpark of Kam Tsin Village Ho Tung School in Sheung Shui from January 14 (Monday). The opening hours of the new service point will be from 10am to 1pm every alternate Monday (except public holidays).

In connection with the new service point, the visiting schedule of the existing service point located adjacent to Wah Min House, Wah Sum Estate in Fanling will be changed from January 14 with the new opening hours from 2.45pm to 6pm every alternate Monday (except public holidays).

In addition, the mobile library will undergo routine maintenance from January 21 to February 2, during which the service will be suspended. The affected service points are Kam Tsin Village in Sheung Shui; Cheong Shing Court, Wah Sum Estate and Ka Fuk Estate in Fanling; Kwong Fuk Estate in Tai Po; Lei Muk Shue Estate, Tsuen King Circuit Playground, Cheung Shan Estate, Bayview Garden and Sham Tseng Market Carpark in Tsuen Wan; Kwai Luen Estate and Tai Wo Hau Estate in Kwai Chung; and Fu Cheong Estate in Sham Shui Po.

Readers are welcome to use other public libraries and renew library materials by telephoning 2698 0002 or 2827 2833, or via [www.hkpl.gov.hk](http://www.hkpl.gov.hk). For enquiries about Mobile Library 12 services, please call 2479 1055.

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## Raising social security payments and

## adjusting eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 from February

The Government announced today (January 7) that the standard payment rates under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the rates of Old Age Allowance (OAA) (including those payable under the Guangdong Scheme and the Fujian Scheme), Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) and Disability Allowance (DA) under the Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme will be increased from February 1 this year. In addition, the eligible age for elderly CSSA will be adjusted from 60 to 65.

A spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said, "Based on the established adjustment mechanism, i.e. according to the movement of the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices, the Government earlier made a proposal to increase by 2.8 per cent the standard payment rates under the CSSA Scheme and the rates of OAA, OALA and DA under the SSA Scheme (see Annex I). The proposal was subsequently approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council and will take effect on February 1.

"An additional expenditure of \$1.253 billion per year will be incurred for the adjustment, benefiting some 1.26 million recipients of the two Schemes."

The spokesman added, "According to the established mechanism, the maximum rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme will also be adjusted upwards by 2.7 per cent on the same day (see Annex II) based on the movement of the Consumer Price Index (A) rent index for private housing."

In addition, in view of the improved life expectancy of the population of Hong Kong and the trend of extending the retirement age to 65, the Government announced in January 2017 that the eligible age for elderly CSSA would be raised from 60 to 65. Upon the adjustment of the computer system and completion of preparatory work, the Government will implement the arrangement on February 1 this year.

The spokesman said, "Persons aged between 60 and 64 who have received elderly CSSA before February 1 this year will be grandfathered and not be affected. The CSSA payments of persons with disabilities or persons in ill health will not be affected either. They will, regardless of age, continue to receive CSSA payments which are higher than those applicable to able-bodied adults."

According to the data released by the Census and Statistics Department, the labour force participation rate of persons aged 60 to 64 in Hong Kong has climbed continuously since 2004. The Government is committed to providing support to the employment of mature persons and its effort includes staging large-scale thematic job fairs and district-based job fairs on part-time employment. The Labour Department has also enhanced the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged which has become the Employment Programme for the Elderly

and Middle-aged to encourage employers to hire mature persons through the on-the-job training allowance. Furthermore, the Employees Retraining Board has been providing suitable courses for mature persons. Mature persons can also make use of the Continuing Education Fund for learning.

CSSA and SSA recipients who have enquiries may contact their respective social security field units or call the SWD hotline at 2343 2255.

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## **Speech by CS at Joint Opening Ceremony of HKTDC's HK Toys & Games Fair, HK Baby Products Fair and HK International Licensing Show 2019 (English only) (with photos/video)**

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the Joint Opening Ceremony of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC)'s Hong Kong Toys & Games Fair 2019, Hong Kong Baby Products Fair 2019 and Hong Kong International Licensing Show 2019 held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre this morning (January 7):

Mr Lawrence Chan (Chairman of the HKTDC Toys Advisory Committee), Associate Inspector Cai Jiacheng (Associate Inspector of the Department of Cultural and Tourism Industries of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism), Margaret Fong (Executive Director of the HKTDC), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning again. It is my great pleasure to officiate at this joint opening ceremony of the trio of fairs.

As the most popular industry events in the region, the trio of fairs manifest Hong Kong's leading position in these industries. In the first eight months of 2018, Hong Kong's total exports of toys and games and baby products reached US\$4.1 billion and US\$730 million respectively, representing year-on-year increases of 8.6 per cent and 13.4 per cent respectively. Hong Kong is also crucial in driving the development of licensing industry in Asia, the fastest-growing region in 2017 at a rate of 8.8 per cent, which is double the global average growth rate.

We owe the robust development of these industries to our sound regulatory and institutional framework, including but not limited to that on financial, legal and intellectual property. Our competitive advantage also

lies in our strategic position under the Belt and Road Initiative and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area which allow us to serve as the link between the Mainland and the rest of the world, and to best capture opportunities arising from rising demands and enhanced connectivity.

I am therefore most pleased to see that the well-established trio of fairs have been providing an invaluable avenue for entrepreneurs to showcase and debut a wide array of products in response to the latest market trends and demands. In this regard, I believe that many of you are aware that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is actively taking forward the initiative to promote STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education at schools. For those of you who are interested in exploring further, I am sure that you will benefit from visiting the Smart Tech Toys zone in the Hong Kong Toys & Games Fair this year which features various toys and games incorporated with the latest technologies.

The concurrent hosting of the trio of fairs facilitates cross-sectoral business opportunities. Take the rapidly developing licensing industry as an example. It provides unlimited opportunities for entrepreneurs from different sectors to meet potential licensees to explore possibilities for expansion to other markets including the Mainland, Asia and beyond.

In tandem with these cross-sectoral efforts, the HKSAR Government will continue to promote our unique advantages under "one country, two systems" and foster business ties on various fronts amidst the uncertainties in the global market. We are actively forging free trade agreements and investment agreements with our trading partners in order to provide better market access to Hong Kong businesses. We will also continue to play a major role in contributing to the development of the Greater Bay Area and seize opportunities arising from the Belt and Road Initiative. These initiatives will not only enhance our position as an international trade and sourcing centre, but also reinforce our unique role as the window for the Mainland market to go global and attract foreign investments.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am confident that you will continue to find Hong Kong an attractive and ideal place for developing and expanding your business, and the trio of fairs a valuable and inspiring event in particular. I would also like to take this opportunity to cordially invite you to explore further the exceptional qualities of Hong Kong through our "Connect and Excel" campaign.

For all exhibitors, buyers and participants of the fairs, I hope you have a wonderful, fruitful and pleasant time and wish you every success. Thank you.



## [CoI into Diaphragm Wall and Platform Slab Construction Works at Hung Hom Station Extension under Shatin to Central Link Project to resume substantive hearing on January 10](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Commission of Inquiry into the Diaphragm Wall and Platform Slab Construction Works at the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link Project:

The Commission of Inquiry into the Diaphragm Wall and Platform Slab Construction Works at the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link Project directs that the substantive hearing to take expert evidence shall commence at 10am on January 10 at the hearing room on the first floor of the former Tsuen Wan Law Courts Building, 70 Tai Ho Road, Tsuen Wan, New Territories, Hong Kong.