

Adjustment of the Base Rate

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (December 20) that the Base Rate was adjusted upward by 25 basis points to 2.75 per cent with immediate effect according to a pre-set formula. The increase in the Base Rate follows the 25-basis point upward shift in the target range for the US federal funds rate on December 19 (US time).

The Base Rate is the interest rate forming the foundation upon which the Discount Rates for repurchase transactions through the Discount Window are computed. The Base Rate is currently set at either 50 basis points above the lower end of the prevailing target range for the US federal funds rate or the average of the five-day moving averages of the overnight and one-month Hong Kong Interbank Offered Rates, whichever is the higher.

Non-destructive test result of the first opening up location in the second stage of holistic assessment strategy for Hung Hom Station Extension under Shatin to Central Link Project

In response to media enquiries, the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) said today (December 19) that THB was informed of the situation about the first opening up location in the second stage of the holistic assessment strategy for the Hung Hom Station Extension under the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) Project.

Based on the information provided by the coupler supplier, when a rebar is fully screwed into a coupler, there should be a maximum of two full threads exposed. Even if there are only two full threads exposed, a non-destructive test to determine the embedded length of the rebar in the coupler should also be conducted.

According to the preliminary inspection of the coupler connection at an opening up location at the platform slab in Area B of the East West Line, there are more than two full threads for all the three exposed coupler

connections. The test result does not comply with the coupler supplier's standard, which specifies a maximum exposed part of two full threads.

Moreover, according to the preliminary result of the non-destructive test, the embedded lengths of the three exposed threaded bars at the first opening up location are 29 millimetres, 34 millimetres and 34 millimetres respectively. The result can only be confirmed upon receipt of the formal test report from the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL).

According to the holistic assessment strategy of the MTRCL, upon completion of the opening up investigation under the second stage, in the third stage the MTRCL will consolidate test results of the first two stages, conduct a detailed structural analysis on the works for the Hung Hom Station Extension to ascertain if the overall structural integrity of the works is acceptable and determine if it is necessary to conduct strengthening works.

As regards the safety concerns during the opening up of concrete at the East West Line platform slab, the Government emphasises that site safety will not be compromised. In addition to the site walks conducted by the MTRCL, Government officers will also conduct site inspections to ensure strict enforcement of safety measures by all parties. As of today, there is no non-compliance with safety standards at relevant works sites. The Government and the MTRCL would continue to pay attention to and monitor the safety conditions at sites.

The Government will announce relevant work progress on a regular basis.

Suspect in connection with a robbery case returned to Hong Kong

Hong Kong Police received a suspect and the stolen goods in connection with a robbery case from the Shenzhen Public Security Bureau at the Lok Ma Chau Boundary Control Point today (December 19).

A local male, aged 26, was in suspected connection with a robbery case happened on September 30 this year in which a shop on Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui was robbed of three watches with value totalled \$600,000. The suspect fled to the Mainland after the case.

With the information of the suspect, Police sought the assistance of the Ministry of Public Security and Guangdong Provincial Public Security Department. The suspect was subsequently arrested in the Mainland.

Hong Kong Police were grateful for the invaluable assistance rendered by the Ministry of Public Security, Guangdong Provincial Public Security

Department, Shenzhen Public Security Bureau, Zhuhai Public Security Bureau and Macao Judiciary Police, which resulted in the arrest of the suspect. The arrest of the suspect in the Mainland demonstrated the determination of the Police of the three places in combating crimes jointly and to uphold the rule of law.

Active investigation by District Crime Squad of Yau Tsim District is underway.



[Hong Kong Customs combats unfair trade practices at fitness centre](#)

Hong Kong Customs today (December 19) arrested four male staff members of a fitness centre suspected of engaging in aggressive commercial practices in the course of selling fitness service, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Customs earlier received information alleging that staff members of a fitness centre with two branches in Mong Kok and Yau Ma Tei were suspected of falsely claiming that customers had not fully paid for their procured fitness service plans and, by imposing undue influence, requested four customers to pay additional sum of money. The customers were forced to pay a total of \$10,800, \$16,200, \$48,800 and \$246,000 respectively.

After investigation, Customs officers today arrested four men, aged between 21 and 23.

Investigation is ongoing and the arrested men have been released on bail pending further investigation.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to procure services at reputable shops. Before making any purchase decision, consumers should be cautious in providing their identity cards or

credit cards to a salesperson. Consumers should firmly refuse signing any documents if they do not clearly know the content and price of the service to be provided, or have no intention to purchase the service.

Under the TD0, any trader commits an offence of engaging in aggressive commercial practices if harassment, coercion or undue influence is used to impair consumer's freedom of choice or conduct, causing the consumer to make a transactional decision. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TD0 to the Customs 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Correctional officers intercept smuggling of suspected dangerous drugs into Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre

Correctional officers at Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre today (December 19) intercepted a male remand person in custody smuggling suspected dangerous drugs into the centre by concealing them inside his body.

The 54-year-old person in custody was remanded in the institution for the offence of possession of dangerous drugs on December 15. After undergoing X-ray body scanning, he was suspected to have swallowed suspected dangerous drugs before admission and was therefore separated and put under close monitoring.

By 1.45pm today, he had discharged six packs of suspected dangerous drugs wrapped in plastic sheet. The case has been reported to the Police for follow-up.

A spokesperson for the Correctional Services Department said, "The department takes every measure to stop the introduction of dangerous drugs or unauthorised articles into correctional institutions in order to maintain good order and discipline and a drug-free environment for all persons in its custody."