

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, October 31, 2018 is 106.1 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

CFS announces food safety report for September

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (October 31) released the findings of its food safety report for last month. The results of about 11 200 food samples tested were satisfactory except for nine samples which were announced earlier. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent.

A CFS spokesman said about 1 100 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, some 3 100 samples were taken for chemical tests and the remaining 7 000 (including about 6 700 taken from food imported from Japan) were collected to test radiation levels.

The microbiological tests covered pathogens and hygienic indicators, while the chemical tests included pesticides, preservatives, metallic contaminants, colouring matters, veterinary drug residues and others.

The samples comprised about 3 000 samples of vegetables and fruit and their products; 700 samples of meat and poultry and their products; 1 600 samples of aquatic and related products; 800 samples of milk, milk products and frozen confections; 700 samples of cereals, grains and their products; and 4 400 samples of other food commodities (including beverages, bakery products and snacks).

The nine unsatisfactory samples comprised three vegetable and fruit samples detected with pesticide residues exceeding the legal limits; a grass carp sample and a grass carp fish maw sample detected with trace amounts of malachite green; two popsicle samples found to contain coliform bacteria exceeding the legal limit; a blue crab sample detected with chloramphenicol; and a packed milk drink sample found to contain excessive *Bacillus cereus*.

The CFS has taken follow-up action on the unsatisfactory samples, including informing the vendors concerned of the test results, instructing them to stop selling the affected food items and tracing the sources of the food items in question.

Since the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (Cap 132CM) came into

effect on August 1, 2014, as of September 30 this year, the CFS has taken over 156 000 food samples at the import, wholesale and retail levels for testing for pesticide residues. The overall unsatisfactory rate is less than 0.2 per cent.

The spokesman added that excessive pesticide residues in food may arise from the trade not observing Good Agricultural Practice, e.g. using excessive pesticides and/or not allowing sufficient time for pesticides to decompose before harvesting. The maximum residue limits (MRLs) of pesticide residues in food set in the Regulation are not safety indicators. They are the maximum concentrations of pesticide residues to be permitted in a food commodity under Good Agricultural Practice when applying pesticides. In this connection, consumption of food with pesticide residues higher than the MRLs will not necessarily lead to any adverse health effects.

The spokesman reminded the food trade to ensure that food for sale is fit for human consumption and meets legal requirements. Consumers should patronise reliable shops when buying food and maintain a balanced diet to minimise food risks.

Postal services to Japan return to normal

Hongkong Post announced today (October 31) that, as advised by the postal administration of Japan, mail delivery services that were previously affected by severe weather, typhoon and earthquake have returned to normal.

Auction of traditional vehicle registration marks to be held on November 17

The Transport Department today (October 31) announced that the auction of traditional vehicle registration marks will be held on November 17 (Saturday), in Meeting Room S421, L4, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wan Chai.

"A total of 300 vehicle registration marks will be put up for public auction. The list of marks has been posted at the department's website, www.td.gov.hk," a department spokesman said.

Applicants who have paid a deposit of \$1,000 to reserve a mark for auction should also participate in the bidding (including the first bid at the reserve price of \$1,000). Otherwise, the mark may be sold to another bidder at the reserve price.

People who wish to participate in the bidding at the auction should take note of the following important points:

(a) Successful bidders are required to produce the following documents for completion of registration and payment procedures immediately after the successful bidding:

- (1) the identity document of the successful bidder;
- (2) the identity document of the purchaser if it is different from the successful bidder;
- (3) a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation if the purchaser is a body corporate; and
- (4) a crossed cheque made payable to "The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" or "The Government of the HKSAR". (For an auctioned mark paid for by cheque, the first three working days after the date of auction will be required for cheque clearance confirmation before processing of the application for mark assignment can be completed.) Successful bidders can also pay through the Easy Pay System (EPS). Payment by post-dated cheques, cash or other methods will not be accepted.

(b) Purchasers must make payment of the purchase price through EPS or by crossed cheque and complete the Memorandum of Sale of Registration Mark immediately after the bidding. Subsequent alteration of the particulars in the memorandum will not be permitted.

(c) A vehicle registration mark can only be assigned to a motor vehicle which is registered in the name of the purchaser. The Certificate of Incorporation must be produced immediately by the purchaser if a vehicle registration mark purchased is to be registered under the name of a body corporate.

(d) Special registration marks are non-transferable. Where the ownership of a motor vehicle with a special registration mark is transferred, the allocation of the special registration mark shall be cancelled.

(e) The purchaser shall, within 12 months after the date of auction, apply to the Commissioner for Transport for the registration mark to be assigned to a motor vehicle registered in the name of the purchaser. If the purchaser fails to assign the registration mark within 12 months, allocation of the mark will be cancelled and arranged for re-allocation in accordance with the statutory provision without prior notice to the purchaser.

For other auction details, please refer to the Guidance Notes – Auction of Vehicle Registration Marks, which can be downloaded from the department's

LCQ8: Sexual harassment in employment field

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, in the Legislative Council today (October 31):

Question:

It has been reported that the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) received a total of 233 complaints about sexual harassment in the past three years and, among them, over 190 were in the employment field. Under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (Cap 480), acts of sexual harassment in the employment field is unlawful. Not only is the harasser required to bear legal liability, his employer may also be held vicariously liable. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the names of the policy bureaux, government departments and subvented organisations which have at present formulated (i) policies on eliminating sexual harassment and (ii) mechanisms for handling sexual harassment complaints, as well as the details of the policies and mechanisms concerned;

(2) whether it has assessed if the various policy bureaux, government departments and subvented organisations have formulated appropriate measures to eliminate sexual harassment in the employment field; if it has, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it knows if EOC will step up publicity and educational efforts targeting at employers so as to eliminate acts of sexual harassment in the employment field; if EOC will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it will expeditiously present to this Council the Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill which seeks to outlaw sexual harassment between participants in the workplace who have no working relationship with each other; of the effectiveness the authorities expected of the legislative amendments concerned in curbing acts of sexual harassment in the employment field?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), the consolidated reply to the question raised by Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat is as follows:

Under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Cap 480), employers are responsible for preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. The CSB has drawn up a set of general guidelines to assist bureaux/departments (B/Ds) in handling sexual harassment complaints in the civil service. According to the guidelines, staff of B/Ds must ensure that the workplace is free from sexual harassment, and all officers should treat each other with respect. The guidelines stipulate that in dealing with sexual harassment complaints, B/Ds should appoint officers at appropriate levels to handle the complaints, uphold the principle of confidentiality and ensure that the complainants and the witnesses are duly protected. B/Ds should ensure that such complaints are handled seriously, objectively and expeditiously, and that the parties involved are treated fairly. The guidelines also require B/Ds to hold briefing sessions or seminars as and when required so as to raise staff awareness of the proper procedures for handling cases of sexual harassment. In addition to making reference to the relevant guidelines issued by the CSB, B/Ds may also draw up their own procedures that suit their needs for dealing with sexual harassment complaints, taking into account their individual circumstances and operational requirements.

All new recruits are required to read the guidelines on handling sexual harassment complaints, which are also circulated by B/Ds to their staff on a regular basis. The CSB and departments organise thematic seminars and provide relevant training to enhance staff's knowledge and skills in handling sexual harassment complaints.

For Government-subsidised bodies, the EOC currently does not keep records of the mechanism of those bodies on prevention and handling sexual harassment complaints related to employees. The EOC has all along adopted a sectoral approach in promoting the importance of developing anti-sexual harassment policies and measures. In this regard, the EOC has collaborated with the education sector, the business sector (in particular the service industry), the social service sector, and the sports sector to promote anti-sexual harassment. In view of the special circumstances of these sectors, the EOC has formulated a series of "Framework for Sexual Harassment Policy" and organised a number of seminars, talks and workshops to enable stakeholders to better understand what sexual harassment is and the preventive measures they should take.

With regard to stepping up publicity and educational efforts targeting at employers, the EOC will continue to provide training and hold seminars for employers in various sectors. For example, the EOC has provided 200 training sessions on anti-discrimination ordinances and sexual harassment for over 8 000 participants from private and public organisations from January to June 2018. Among the participating organisations were Government departments, public organisations, non-governmental organisations, airlines, banks, hotels, retailers, property management companies, insurance companies and manufacturing companies.

On public education and publicity programmes, the EOC will continue to promote the messages of protection of citizens against sexual harassment under the SDO, the elimination of sexual harassment in the workplace and employers' responsibilities of preventing sexual harassment in the workplace through a series of activities. The series of public education and publicity programmes include a weekly radio programme partnership with RTHK Radio 2, Community Participation Funding Programme on Equal Opportunities, drama performances for schools, op-ed articles on equal opportunities issues in various newspapers, exhibitions, Generation i Youth Project, comics and video production competition, and multi-media promotional campaign, to promote a friendly working environment that is free from discrimination and sexual harassment.

On legislation, the Government plans to introduce the Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2018 (the Bill) by the end of this year to implement the eight prioritised recommendations in the Submissions on Discrimination Law Review submitted by the EOC to the Government in 2016, which include thereat the expansion of legislative protection from sexual harassment under the SDO to persons working in a common workplace. Upon the passage and commencement of the Bill, an employee, an employer, a contract worker, a principal, a commission agent and a partner in a firm will be protected from sexual harassment of the aforementioned parties at a workplace of them both, with a view to ameliorating the situation of sexual harassment in the workplace.