

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, May 18, 2018 is 99.4 (same as yesterday's index).

Twenty-five immigration offenders arrested

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations, including an operation codenamed "Twilight" and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Labour Department codenamed "Champion" and "Powerplayer" from May 14 to 17. A total of 21 illegal workers and four suspected employers were arrested.

During operation "Twilight", ImmD Task Force officers raided 45 target locations including a factory, a fruit stall, a garage, recycling shops, recycling yards, residential flats, restaurants, commercial buildings, garbage collect depots and an industrial building under renovation. Sixteen illegal workers and three employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised 11 men and five women, aged 26 to 62. Among them, two men were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. Furthermore, a man and a woman were also suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards. Meanwhile, three men, aged 42 to 56, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

During operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided three target restaurants in Central. Two illegal workers and an employer were arrested. The illegal workers comprised two men, aged 29 and 38 respectively. Among them, a man was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits him from taking any employment. Meanwhile, a man, aged 50, was suspected of employing an illegal worker.

Furthermore, during operation "Powerplayer", enforcement officers raided 16 target locations in Kowloon East district including restaurants and industrial buildings. Three illegal workers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised two men and a woman, aged 28 to 56. Among them, a man was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits him from taking any employment.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon

conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman also warned that it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

Red tide sighted

A red tide has been sighted over the past week, an inter-departmental red tide working group reported today (May 18).

The red tide was spotted by staff of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department on May 12 at Silverstrand Beach, Sai Kung. A red flag was hoisted immediately.

The red tide has dissipated. No associated death of fish has been reported.

A spokesman for the working group said, "The red tide was formed by *Noctiluca scintillans*, which is commonly found in Hong Kong waters and non-toxic."

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) urged mariculturists at Ma Nam Wat fish culture zone to monitor the situation closely and increase aeration where necessary.

Red tide is a natural phenomenon. The AFCD's proactive phytoplankton monitoring programme will continue monitoring red tide occurrences to minimise the impact on the mariculture industry and the public.

Update on number of dengue fever cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 18) reported the latest number of cases of dengue fever (DF), and again urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From May 4 to 17, the CHP recorded two confirmed DF cases and the patients had been to Thailand and Vietnam during the incubation period respectively.

As of yesterday (May 17), 21 cases had been confirmed this year, all of which were imported cases. The cases were mainly imported from Thailand (eight), the Philippines (six), Cambodia (two) and Vietnam (two).

DF remains endemic in some areas in Asia. In Guangdong, there were 17 cases this year as of May 14. The latest figures for 2018 reveal that 10 446 cases have been recorded in Thailand, 979 in Singapore (since December 31, 2017) and 34 in Japan. In the Americas, the latest figures indicate that 90 858 and 7470 cases have been filed in Brazil and Mexico respectively in 2018.

The public should take heed of the following advice on mosquito control:

- Thoroughly check all gully traps, roof gutters, surface channels and drains to prevent blockage;
- Scrub and clean drains and surface channels with an alkaline detergent compound at least once a week to remove any deposited mosquito eggs;
- Properly dispose of refuse, such as soft drink cans, empty bottles and boxes, in covered litter containers;
- Completely change the water of flowers and plants at least once a week. The use of saucers should be avoided if possible;
- Level irregular ground surfaces before the rainy season;
- Avoid staying in shrubby areas; and
- Take personal protective measures such as wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or uncovered areas of the body when doing outdoor activities.

To reduce the risk of infections spread by mosquitoes, apart from [general measures](#), travellers returning from affected areas should apply insect repellent for 14 days (DF) or at least 21 days (Zika virus infection) upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to the doctor. DEET-containing insect repellents are effective and the public should take heed of the tips below:

- Read the label instructions carefully first;
- Apply right before entering an area with risk of mosquito bites;
- Apply on exposed skin and clothing;
- Use DEET of up to 30 per cent for pregnant women and up to 10 per cent for children*;
- Apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent; and
- Re-apply only when needed and follow the instructions.

* For children who travel to countries or areas where mosquito-borne diseases are endemic or epidemic and where exposure is likely, those aged 2 months or above can use DEET-containing insect repellents with a concentration of DEET of up to 30 per cent.

The public may refer to the CHP's [tips for using insect repellents](#) for details.

[CFS announces results of seasonal food](#)

surveillance on rice dumplings (first phase)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (May 18) announced that the test results of about 50 rice dumpling samples collected under a recently completed seasonal food surveillance project on rice dumplings (first phase) were all satisfactory.

Rice dumplings are a popular festive food for the Tuen Ng Festival. The project aims to provide information on the safe consumption of rice dumplings to consumers and the trade in a timely manner.

"The CFS collected samples of rice dumplings from different food premises such as restaurants, food factories and other retail outlets for chemical and microbiological analyses. The chemical analyses included tests for colouring matters (such as red 2G), preservatives (such as boric acid), metallic contamination (such as lead, arsenic, cadmium, mercury and copper) and pesticides. The microbiological analyses covered pathogenic bacteria including Salmonella, coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms, Clostridium perfringens and Bacillus cereus," a spokesman for the CFS said.

The spokesman reminded members of the public to observe the following food safety tips in purchasing, preparing, storing and consuming rice dumplings:

Buying rice dumplings

- * Buy rice dumplings from reliable retail outlets;
- * When purchasing non-prepackaged rice dumplings, choose those that are securely wrapped in wrapping leaves; and
- * When purchasing prepackaged rice dumplings, check the expiry date and whether the packaging is intact.

Home-made rice dumplings

- * Buy wrapping leaves from reliable suppliers and avoid leaves that are unnaturally bright green or with chemical smells; and
- * Choose healthier ingredients as fillings (e.g. dry beans, lean meat and mushrooms) by following the "3 Low 1 High" dietary principle of low fat, low sugar, low salt and high fibre.

Storing and preparing rice dumplings

- * Consume rice dumplings as soon as possible and avoid prolonged storage;
- * Store rice dumplings at 4 degrees Celsius or below, or store them properly according to the instructions on the package;
- * Keep cooked rice dumplings that are not consumed immediately in a covered container and put them in the upper compartment of the refrigerator. Keep raw

food in the lower compartment to prevent cross-contamination;

* Reheat rice dumplings thoroughly until the core temperature reaches 75 degrees Celsius or above before consumption;

* Do not reheat leftover rice dumplings more than once; and

* Consume reheated rice dumplings as soon as possible.

Consuming rice dumplings

* Before eating, wash hands with running water and liquid soap and dry them with a dry towel or paper towel; and

* Reduce seasonings such as soy sauce or granulated sugar during consumption.

The spokesman said, "Rice dumplings in general are relatively high in energy, fat and salt. During the festival, people should maintain a balanced diet, and consume rice dumplings moderately, with due consideration of their health condition. People are recommended to share rice dumplings with their family members and friends, as this not only enhances the festive atmosphere, but also allows them to taste rice dumplings of different flavours and avoid over-consumption. People are also advised to make use of nutrition labels on prepackaged food to compare their nutritional contents for healthier food choices."

He also reminded food manufacturers to purchase food ingredients from reliable suppliers, adhere to Good Manufacturing Practice for preparation of food products and comply with legal requirements when using food additives.

The CFS will continue to conduct surveillance on rice dumplings and the second phase results (including nutrition content analyses) will be released in a timely manner to ensure food safety.