

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, June 4, 2024 is 106.0 (down 0.2 against yesterday's index).

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on June 3 to noon today (June 4), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 142 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 56 370 samples of food imported from Japan (including 36 438 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 14 138 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

FEHD cancels licence of restaurant in Tokwawan

The Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene today (June 4) cancelled the licence of a general restaurant in Tokwawan, as the licensee repeatedly breached the Food Business Regulation (FBR) by changing the type of fuel used for its heating equipment without permission. The restaurant concerned has had to cease operation with immediate effect.

The restaurant is located on the ground floor of 86C and 86D Lok Shan Road.

"Two convictions for the above-mentioned breach were recorded against the restaurant licensee last September and October. A total fine of \$5,500 was levied by the court and 15 demerit points were registered against the licensee under the department's demerit points system. The contraventions resulted in the cancellation of the licence," a spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said.

The licensee concerned had a record of four convictions for the same offence between July 2022 and June last year. A total fine of \$6,600 was levied and 30 demerit points were also registered, resulting in a seven-day and 14-day licence suspension from January to February and October last year respectively.

The spokesman reminded the licensees of food premises to comply with the FBR and other relevant regulations, or their licences could be suspended or cancelled.

Licensed food premises are required to exhibit its licence and a sign at a conspicuous place of the premises, indicating that the premises have been licensed. A list of licensed food premises is available on the FEHD website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/licence-foodPremises-search.html).

Land Registry releases statistics for May

The Land Registry today (June 4) released its statistics for May 2024.

Land registration

* The number of sale and purchase agreements for all building units received for registration in May was 7 361 (-25.5 per cent compared with April 2024 but +39.3 per cent compared with May 2023)

* The 12-month moving average for May was 4 820 (3.7 per cent above the 12-month moving average for April 2024 but 8.4 per cent below that for May 2023)

* The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements of building units in May was \$62.3 billion (-25.8 per cent compared with April 2024 but +39.8 per cent compared with May 2023)

* Among the sale and purchase agreements, 5 546 were for residential units (-35.1 per cent compared with April 2024 but +38.5 per cent compared with May 2023)

* The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in respect of residential units was \$53.4 billion (-31.1 per cent compared with April 2024 but +45.2 per cent compared with May 2023)

Statistics on sales of residential units do not include sale and purchase agreements relating to sales of units under the Home Ownership Scheme, the Private Sector Participation Scheme, the Tenants Purchase Scheme, etc, unless the premium of the unit concerned has been paid after the sale restriction period.

Figures on sale and purchase agreements received for the past 12 months, the year-on-year rate of change and breakdown figures on residential sales have also been released.

As deeds may not be lodged with the Land Registry until up to 30 days after the transaction, these statistics generally relate to land transactions in the previous month.

Land search

* The number of searches of land registers made by the public in May was 405 058 (+3.4 per cent compared with April 2024 but -2.0 per cent compared with May 2023)

The statistics cover searches made at the counter, through the self-service terminals and via the Integrated Registration Information System Online Services.

CHP reviews local HIV/AIDS situation in first quarter 2024

A total of 105 cases of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection were reported to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) in the first quarter of 2024, taking the cumulative total of HIV infections reported locally to 12 143 since 1984.

Of the 105 additional cases involving 83 males and 22 females, 61 (58.1 per cent) acquired the infection via homosexual or bisexual contact, 24 (22.9 per cent) via heterosexual contact. The routes of transmission of the remaining 20 cases have yet to be determined due to incomplete information.

The new cases were mainly reported by three sources: public hospitals, clinics and laboratories (51 cases); AIDS service organisations (18 cases); the AIDS Unit under the DH (13 cases), and the Social Hygiene Clinics under the DH (13 cases). Also, 79 of the 105 newly reported cases have already received HIV specialist services at the DH or the Hospital Authority.

Regarding cases of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), 24 new cases were reported in this quarter, of which 11 cases (45.8 per cent) were attributed to homosexual or bisexual contact, and 11 cases (45.8 per cent) were related to heterosexual contact. The route of transmission of the remaining two cases has yet to be determined due to incomplete information. In this quarter, the most common AIDS-defining illness remained to be Pneumocystis pneumonia. Since 1985, a cumulative total of 2 507 confirmed AIDS cases has been reported in Hong Kong.

Reviewing the latest HIV/AIDS situation in Hong Kong, a spokesman for the CHP said, "Sexual transmission remained the major mode of HIV transmission. Members of the public should use condoms consistently and properly to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV.

"HIV is the cause of AIDS. Early HIV treatment with antiretroviral drugs effectively prevents progression to AIDS and other complications. Lifelong antiretroviral treatment is indicated for all people with HIV, and the treatment remarkably improves their health and possibility of survival. Moreover, infected people who achieve sustained viral suppression to an undetectable level with treatment will not transmit the virus through sex, i.e. Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U).

"Members of the public with a history of unsafe sex should take an HIV

antibody test early. Key populations with a higher risk of infection should undergo regular HIV screening, while people who had sex but do not belong to these key populations should consider getting tested at least once. Members of the public can reserve a free, anonymous and confidential HIV antibody test via the DH's HIV Testing Service website (www.hivtest.gov.hk) or AIDS Hotline (2780 2211). They can also order HIV self-test kits (oral fluid-based and blood-based (fingerprick) testing kits) on the HIV Testing Service website, and collect the self-test kits at various pick-up locations in Hong Kong. People with HIV should seek specialist care and HIV treatment as soon as possible," said the spokesman.

The public may visit the following pages for more information on HIV/AIDS: the Virtual AIDS Office (www.aids.gov.hk), the Red Ribbon Centre (www.rrc.gov.hk), the HIV Testing Service website (www.hivtest.gov.hk) and the Gay Men HIV Information website (www.21171069.gov.hk).