

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, May 30, 2018 is 100.1 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

LCQ6: Ticketing arrangements for Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link

Following is a question by the Hon Tanya Chan and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (May 30):

Question:

The Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link is expected to be commissioned in September this year and it will be connected to the national high-speed rail network on the Mainland. It has been reported that the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) will sell, at the West Kowloon Station (WKS), only tickets for the high-speed rail routes plying between WKS and 18 high-speed rail stations on the Mainland (HK routes). Since MTRCL has not been authorised to sell tickets for the other high-speed rail routes (Mainland routes), passengers who wish to change to trains along the Mainland routes after travelling on trains along the HK routes have to buy, in advance, tickets for the Mainland routes at the counters operated by a ticketing agent at WKS or through other means. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government or MTRCL has taken part in the selection of the Mainland ticketing agent that will operate at WKS; whether it knows the way in which the selection was conducted, as well as its procedure, timetable, outcome and criteria, and whether the selection criteria include the level of service fees to be charged and the payment methods for tickets;

(2) whether it knows why MTRCL has not been authorised to sell tickets for the Mainland routes, and the details of the discussion between MTRCL and the China Railway Corporation (CRC) about the ticketing arrangements; the estimated monthly number of passenger trips on trains along the HK routes, the estimated monthly number of passenger trips changing to trains along the Mainland routes after travelling on trains along the HK routes, the estimated service fees for tickets to be charged by the ticketing agent at WKS, and its related monthly income; and

(3) whether it knows if CRC and the ticketing agencies have to obtain the authorisation of MTRCL to sell tickets for the HK routes; if they have to, of the details, and whether the former will charge service fees for tickets; whether MTRCL will set up counters at the high-speed rail stations on the Mainland to sell tickets for the HK routes; if MTRCL will, of the details?

Reply:

Acting President,

My consolidated reply to the Hon Tanya Chan's question is as follows:

The national high-speed rail network, currently 25 000 kilometres in length, accounts for over 60 per cent of the total length of high-speed railways around the world. The well-connected rail network has helped create a new mode of commuting and given impetus to the economic development of our country. The Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL), with its major works having been completed, is targeted for commissioning in September 2018. The 26 kilometre Hong Kong Section of XRL will connect to the national high-speed rail network, and will significantly reduce the journey time from Hong Kong to Shenzhen, Guangzhou or other cities in the Pearl River Delta region, thus contributing to the promotion of connectivity between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Therefore, both cross boundary journey tickets and Mainland journey tickets can be purchased at the West Kowloon Station (WKS).

According to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Arrangements for Preparation of Key Operational Issues for the Hong Kong Section of the XRL signed between the Transport and Housing Bureau and the China Railway Corporation (CR) on January 29, 2018, the plan will be to operate 127 train pairs daily at the early stage of commissioning, comprising 114 pairs of short haul trains daily during peak periods. The actual number of train pairs will depend on the passenger volume; and 13 pairs of long haul trains daily. The short haul trains will run directly between the WKS and four short haul stations, namely Futian, Shenzhen North, Humen and Guangzhou South stations. There will be direct long haul trains to 14 stations, namely Beijing, Shanghai, Kunming, Guilin, Guiyang, Shijiazhuang, Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Changsha, Hangzhou, Nanchang, Fuzhou, Xiamen and Shantou stations. Both parties also agreed that the train schedule could be adjusted subject to discussion on the actual operational needs. After the commissioning of the Hong Kong Section of XRL, we will continue to explore with the Mainland authorities additional direct train services to more Mainland cities, and to enhance the ticketing arrangements.

The Government is in discussion with the CR on the financial and related matters of the Hong Kong Section of XRL and will inform the Panel on Transport of the Legislative Council and the public of the outcomes of the discussion and details of operating arrangements at the appropriate time. The actual operational arrangements and ultimate financial conditions of the Hong Kong Section of XRL will depend on the outcomes of discussion with the CR. The Government will update the related figures based on the outcome of

the discussions with CR, including the passenger forecast of the Hong Kong Section of XRL.

At the same time, the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) is discussing with the Mainland high-speed rail operator on the actual operational arrangements, including ticketing matters, of the Hong Kong Section of XRL. According to the arrangement agreed by both sides, through the Hong Kong ticketing system, passengers may buy cross boundary journey tickets, viz. tickets for high-speed trains that start or terminate at the WKS and run to or from the aforesaid four short haul stations or 14 long haul stations. Passengers may, by producing their Hong Kong and Macao Residents Entry and Exit Permits (i.e. Home Return Permits), buy tickets through the Hong Kong ticketing system, including Hong Kong ticketing website, Hong Kong ticketing hotline, ticket office at B1 Level of the WKS, ticket vending machines at the WKS, as well as local travel agencies. Passengers may then collect their tickets at the ticket office or ticket vending machine at the WKS by producing their Home Return Permits and booking number. The ticket office at the WKS, with 28 counters, will handle cross boundary journey ticketing matters, including buying, collecting, changing and returning of tickets for passengers. There will also be 39 ticket vending machines for passengers to buy and collect their tickets. No service fee will be charged when buying or collecting cross boundary journey tickets in Hong Kong.

For added convenience for passengers, in addition to accepting payment by traditional means such as cash, credit card and Octopus, the MTRCL will consider introducing electronic means of payment popular with passengers in recent years. The MTRCL is also planning to set up service counters for cross boundary journey ticketing at major rail stations in Hong Kong. Details will be announced upon confirmation.

In the future, the Mainland high-speed rail operator will also sell cross boundary journey tickets on the Mainland, and will do so through the existing sales channels and arrangements. As far as we understand, no service fee will be charged for purchases of train tickets at Mainland stations or through the Mainland website and ticketing hotline, and for the subsequent pick-up at ticketing counters or ticket vending machines in Mainland stations.

Mainland journey tickets, i.e. tickets for journeys that start and terminate at Mainland stations, are in fact already available for purchase in Hong Kong. They are sold at ticket outlets operated by agents in Hong Kong under the authorisation of the Mainland high-speed rail operator. Since the provision of such service involves certain costs, the agents have been charging service fees.

Apart from using such local agents, Hong Kong passengers may, with their Home Return Permits, purchase Mainland journey tickets at ticketing counters in Mainland stations, or at ticket vending machines compatible with the Permit at these stations. Passengers who have a Mainland-registered mobile phone number may also register an account and purchase tickets on the Mainland's official ticketing website (i.e. the "12306" website of the China

Railway Customer Service Center). Further, passengers may order their tickets through the Mainland's ticketing hotline. Ordering/purchasing tickets through the aforesaid means and the subsequent pick-up at ticketing counters or ticket vending machines in Mainland stations are not subject to service fees. According to the latest initial understanding from the Mainland high-speed rail operator, the Mainland is progressively extending automatic ticket vending and issuing service for Hong Kong and Macao residents to more stations. In the future, the 18 stations reachable by direct trains from the WKS will all be installed with ticket vending machines compatible with the Home Return Permit to facilitate the travel of Hong Kong and Macao residents on the Mainland by means of high-speed rail.

As far as we understand, the MTRCL has reserved five ticketing counters at the ticket office of the WKS to facilitate the provision of service by the agent authorised by the Mainland high-speed rail operator to sell Mainland journey tickets in the future. This will allow passengers to purchase both cross boundary journey tickets and Mainland journey tickets in one go in Hong Kong. Discussion on these matters, including the level of service fees, is still in progress. The Government will urge the MTRCL to discuss with the Mainland high-speed rail operator with a view to lowering the service fees to a minimum as far as possible, and will join the discussion as and when necessary.

LCQ18: Policy Holders' Protection Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Jimmy Ng and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Joseph Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 30):

Question:

The Government is currently drafting a legislative proposal for establishing a Policy Holders' Protection Scheme (PPS), which aims to protect policy holders' interest by compensating policy holders or securing the continuity of insurance contracts in case an insurer becomes insolvent. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will put in place measures to reduce the moral hazards (e.g. insurers successively launching insurance products with high expected returns but high risks while members of the public being willing to take out such products as they ignore the related risks and focus on returns only) which may potentially arise from PPS; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that under the relevant protection scheme implemented by the

Singapore authorities, claims for non-life policies are completely covered without an upper limit, whether such an arrangement will be adopted for PPS; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that under the relevant protection scheme implemented by the Singapore authorities, a post-funding arrangement has been put in place to empower the authorities to charge a levy from insurers in the event that the total amount of funds is insufficient to settle all claims, whether such an arrangement will be adopted for PPS; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether PPS will cover policies under the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme, which will be implemented shortly; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

Our response to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) In the Consultation Paper on the "Proposed Establishment of a Policyholders' Protection Fund", the Government has already pointed out that one of the principles in formulating the proposals on the Protection Fund is to enhance market stability while minimising the risk of moral hazard. In this regard, we have proposed to set a compensation limit under the Policy Holders' Protection Scheme (PPS), i.e. the compensation is 100% for the first HKD100,000, plus 80% of the balance, and the total amount is subject to a limit of HKD1 million. As consumers have to bear certain degree of risk of not being compensated in full, they still need to select the suitable insurers and insurance products. On the other hand, the Insurance Authority will continue to exercise prudential monitoring of insurers' financial position, and will not compromise the regulatory standards and requirements on insurers under the Insurance Ordinance (Cap. 41) because of the PPS.

(2) The PPS seeks to provide a safety net for affected policy holders in case of insurer's insolvency. To strike a reasonable balance between the cost and benefit of the PPS and to minimise moral hazard as far as practicable, we consider that there should be a compensation limit for the PPS.

(3) We propose that in case an insurer becomes insolvent and the liquidity of the Fund is insufficient to settle the total amount of claims provided by the PPS, the PPS may borrow from a third party, or collect additional levy from insurers. We propose that the rate of additional levy should require the approval of the Legislative Council.

(4) As policies under the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme are all personal policies, policy holders under that scheme will be protected by the PPS. When an insurer becomes insolvent, the PPS will meet the claims arising from policies subject to a limit of HKD1 million per claim, whether the insured incident occurs before or after the insolvency, and whether the claim is submitted before or after the insolvency, subject to the time limit specified in the insurance policy (if any).

[Appeal for information on missing woman in Wong Tai Sin \(with photo\)](#)

Police today (May 30) appealed to the public for information on a woman who went missing in Wong Tai Sin.

Yeung Man-wai, aged 22, went missing after she was last seen at a shopping centre on Chuk Yuen Road on February 17. Her family made a report to Police on May 22.

She is about 1.6 metres tall, 50 kilograms in weight and of medium build. She has a round face with yellow complexion and long straight black hair. She was last seen wearing a pair of black framed glasses.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing woman or may have seen her is urged to contact the Regional Missing Person Unit of Kowloon East on 3661 0316 or 9886 0060, or email to rmpu-ke-2@police.gov.hk, or contact any police station.



[FSDC publishes annual report for](#)

2017-18

The following is issued on behalf of the Financial Services Development Council:

The Financial Services Development Council (FSDC) today (May 30) released its fifth annual report for the period from April 2017 to March 2018.

In 2017-18, the FSDC published six reports covering a wide range of financial services industry topics including the listed structured products market, financial technology (FinTech) and the use of distributed ledger technology, aircraft leasing and financing, tax exemption for offshore private equity funds and group tax loss relief.

In addition, the FSDC played an active role in promoting Hong Kong as a leading financial centre through organising and participating in a number of overseas and local promotional events, including "Think Asia, Think Hong Kong" in London; Hong Kong Financial Seminars held in Osaka, Tokyo and Seoul; the "In Style•Hong Kong" Symposium in Kuala Lumpur; the Belt and Road Summit and the Asian Financial Forum in Hong Kong; and forums covering various topics held in Fuzhou and Hong Kong.

Talent development continued to be another key area of the FSDC's work. The Practitioner Speakers Series was well received by the young generation and seen as a good opportunity to be enlightened by the views and insights shared by expert market practitioners. The Career Day and the FSDC Career Website (www.career-fsdc.org.hk) also served as effective mediums for young talents to obtain job market information from various segments in the financial services industry.

The Chairman of the FSDC, Mrs Laura M Cha, said, "We are glad to see remarkable progress on the implementation of the FSDC's previous recommendations with regard to the strategic directions of the development of the financial services industry in Hong Kong by the Government. This includes the issuance of green bonds by the Government, as well as the promotion and establishment of green bond certification schemes.

"In view of the dynamic economic atmosphere and intensified challenges from neighbouring financial markets, Hong Kong will have to continue its effort in sharpening its strengths and seize the opportunities ahead. This will include maintaining its leading status in offshore Renminbi business, and its strategic position in relation to the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area, as well as spearheading the growing development in green finance and FinTech."

Mrs Cha added, "With the plans set out by the Government in the Policy Address to provide the FSDC with additional resources to strengthen its capacity, the FSDC is committed to stepping up its efforts in promoting the

development of the financial services industry of Hong Kong."

The report and an updated version of the "Overview of Hong Kong Financial Services Industry" can be downloaded from the FSDC website: www.fsd.org.hk.

About the FSDC

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government established the FSDC in 2013 as a high-level, cross-sectoral advisory body to engage the industry in formulating proposals to promote the further development of Hong Kong's financial services industry and to map out the strategic direction for development.

The FSDC set up five committees, namely the Policy Research Committee, the Mainland Opportunities Committee, the New Business Committee, the Market Development Committee and the Human Capital Committee, as the five streams of its work.