

# Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, January 10, 2024 is 104.4 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

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## 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 January 9 to noon today (January 10), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 193 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](http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html)).

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](http://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](http://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 24 389 samples of food imported from Japan (including 16 225 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 6 916 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

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## **LCQ5: Recruitment of police officers**

Following is a question by the Hon Edmund Wong and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (January 10):

Question:

On May 5 last year, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) relaxed the entry requirements for recruit police constables, probationary inspectors and auxiliary police constables, including the removal of the minimum height and weight requirements and the introduction of the Recruit Police Constable Written Examination (Written Examination) to provide applicants who do not have Level 2 or above in English Language and Chinese Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination or equivalent an alternative way to meet the language proficiency requirements. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of applicants for recruit police constables, probationary inspectors and auxiliary police constables each month since the relaxation of the aforesaid entry requirements and, among them, the respective numbers of applicants who were required to attend the Written Examination and those who had a pass;

(2) whether, after the removal of the height and weight requirements, it has observed a decline in the physical fitness of the trainees trained at the Hong Kong Police College as compared with past trainees; if so, whether HKPF will make adjustments to the physical training programmes to enhance the physical performance of the trainees; and

(3) as it has been reported that HKPF has recently sent two delegations to Beijing and Shanghai to conduct recruitment activities to solicit applications from Hong Kong students in the Mainland who are interested in joining the Police Force, of the response to the recruitment; whether HKPF will consider sending staff to overseas regions to conduct recruitment; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) has been adopting proactive recruitment strategies to attract high calibre candidates who have the competence to become a police officer, the affection for the Motherland and Hong Kong, and the passion to serve the public, so that the Force can continue to demonstrate its professional capability and maintain Hong Kong as one of the safest cities in the world.

The HKPF regularly reviews its recruitment policy to ensure that the entry requirements are up-to-date while the HKPF's competitiveness in the human resources market is maintained. For example, since the design of gas mask has been improved to enable spectacled police officers to use it, frontline officers can now carry out their duties with their spectacles without affecting their operational fitness. In fact, after reviewing most of the posts in the HKPF, it is confirmed that police officers who need to wear spectacles or contact lenses can discharge their duties without compromising their operational effectiveness.

With effect from May 5, 2023, the HKPF has adjusted the entry requirements. For the positions of police constable (including auxiliary police constable) and probationary inspector, the minimum height and weight requirements have been removed to align with other disciplined services. Applicants are also allowed to pass the visual acuity test with the use of spectacles or contact lenses, while the requirement for colour perception test remains unchanged. Moreover, for the position of police constable (including auxiliary police constable), applicants may choose to sit for a Recruit Police Constable Written Examination (Written Examination) newly introduced by the HKPF.

After consulting the HKPF, my reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) There is no change in the language proficiency requirements for the recruitment of all police officers. Applicants applying for the position of police constable (including auxiliary police constable) should have Level 2 or above in Chinese Language and English Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSEE) or the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), or equivalent, and should be able to read and write Chinese and speak fluent Cantonese. To provide police constable (including auxiliary police constable) applicants with an additional means to meet the language proficiency requirements, the Written Examination was introduced on May 5, 2023. Also benchmarked against Level 2 in Chinese Language and English Language in the HKDSEE, the Written Examination has incorporated more tailor-made assessment content to suit the police officers' practical needs in communication and comprehension when performing their day-to-day duties.

For the position of probationary inspector, no adjustment has been made to the language proficiency requirements. Applicants are required to attain Level 1 in the two language papers (Use of Chinese and Use of English) in the Common Recruitment Examination; or Level 2 or above in Chinese and English in the HKDSEE or HKCEE, or equivalent. Applicants should also be able to read and write Chinese and speak fluent Cantonese.

As at December 31, 2023, the numbers of candidates sitting for the General Chinese Test and General English Test in the Written Examination were 87 and 623 respectively. Among them, 14 candidates took both tests. The passing rates for the General Chinese Test and General English Test were 49.4 per cent (43 candidates) and 27.6 per cent (172 candidates) respectively.

After the adjustment of the entry requirements in May 2023, the monthly average numbers of applicants for the positions of police constable, probationary inspector and auxiliary police constable in the eight months that followed were 644, 478 and 283 respectively, representing a significant increase of more than 80 per cent, 90 per cent and 55 per cent over those in the eight months prior to the adjustment. The monthly numbers of applicants for police constable, probationary inspector and auxiliary police constable in 2023 are at Annex.

(2) Notwithstanding the removal of the minimum height and weight requirements, the selection and training standards of the HKPF, and the requirements for physical fitness and professional skills of police officers remain unchanged. All applicants for the positions of police constable (including auxiliary police constable) and probationary inspector must pass the Physical Fitness Test to ensure they are physically capable for the job before they are recruited. All recruits would undergo training at the Hong Kong Police College, where they have to go through physical development training and pass the Final Examination (including knowledge in policing, foot drill, physical fitness and weapons handling) before graduating and serving the public as a member of the HKPF.

(3) Apart from local publicity and recruitment campaigns, the HKPF has launched the Police University Recruitment Express (Mainland) since November 2022 in view of the rising number of Hong Kong students studying in the Mainland in recent years, which aims to recruit them and facilitate early commencement of foundation training upon their graduation and return to Hong Kong. Besides Beijing and Shanghai, the HKPF sent delegations to Wuhan, Guangdong, Fujian and Chengdu to deliver recruitment talks, provide recruitment related information and conduct on-site selection processes for Hong Kong students studying in universities thereat. A total of 2 898 Hong Kong students studying in the Mainland participated in the activities, amongst which 852 students applied and participated in the on-site selection processes. In total, 266, 551 and 35 applications for the positions of probationary inspector, police constable and auxiliary police constable were received respectively. As at December 31, 2023, 23 applicants have joined the HKPF as police constables through the Police University Recruitment Express (Mainland), whilst 746 applicants are in various stages of the recruitment process.

In addition, the HKPF has been conducting publicity and recruitment campaigns in overseas cities, such as London, Toronto and Sydney. Since 2018, the HKPF has extended the Police Mentorship Programme (PMP) to include Hong Kong students from overseas universities, with a view to enhancing their understanding of policing work and encouraging them to join the HKPF upon graduation. Since the launch of the PMP, 281 overseas students have participated and 40 of them have joined the HKPF. In the past 12 months, the HKPF has recruited 93 graduates from overseas universities. With relaxation of travel restrictions and social distancing measures after the pandemic, the HKPF will progressively resume the overseas recruitment campaign to attract high calibre candidates to become police officers and facilitate their participation in the recruitment process. It is the HKPF's initial plan to resume publicity and recruitment campaigns overseas later this year.

The HKPF will continue to keep in view its manpower needs, implement an effective mechanism for overall manpower planning and assessment of the future manpower situation, and regularly review its staff establishment to meet the community's demand for the HKPF's services.

Thank you, President.

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## [LCQ14: Measures to enhance dental services](#)

Following is a question by Revd Canon the Hon Peter Douglas Koon and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (January 10):

Question:

It has been reported that the current waiting time for public dental services is long and private dental clinics charge exorbitant fees which the grass-roots can hardly afford. Regarding measures to enhance dental services, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider extending the School Dental Care Service of the Department of Health to cover secondary school students and regularising the Jockey Club Children Oral Health Project; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as there are views pointing out that each eligible elderly person is allotted health care vouchers with a value of \$2,000 each year and the cumulative value of health care vouchers is capped at \$8,000 only, which is just a drop in the bucket for many elderly people who need to receive dental treatment, whether the authorities will consider introducing "dental care

vouchers" for eligible elderly people and extending the scope of application of such vouchers to the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and study the introduction of elderly dental care services to allow elderly people who are aged 65 or above and do not reside in residential care homes for the elderly to receive regular dental check-ups; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme of the Community Care Fund only covers people who are aged 65 or above and are recipients of the Old Age Living Allowance, whether the authorities will consider lowering the age threshold of target beneficiaries to 60 years old and further expanding the scope of the subsidised items (to cover, for example, dental implant); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as there are views pointing out that at present, there are only 11 dental clinics providing general public dental services in Hong Kong, and with insufficient general public dental service sessions, such clinics only provide pain relief and extraction services, whether the authorities have plans to (i) set up additional government dental clinics and subsidise non-governmental organisations to operate mobile dental clinics, so that each of the 18 districts across the territory will have at least one government dental clinic and one mobile dental clinic, and (ii) improve general public dental services, including extending the service hours and expanding the service scope to cover services such as dental filling, fitting of dentures and root canal treatment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) whether it will, by drawing reference from practices in overseas regions and the findings of the territory-wide Oral Health Survey 2021, expeditiously review the oral health goals and set more appropriate oral health goals for members of the public (particularly elderly people) and formulate the relevant feasible measures; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Chief Executive announced in the 2022 Policy Address to conduct a comprehensive review of the dental services provided or subsidised by the Government. The Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care (Working Group) was subsequently established in end 2022. The review covers policy objectives, implementation strategies, service scopes and delivery models of oral health and dental care. The Working Group just released an interim report to summarise the work progress in 2023. Making reference to the recommendations of the Working Group, the Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address a series of measures to enhance the dental services for different age groups and target groups.

The Government noted the suggestion of the Working Group that the future development of dental services should be in line with the strategies of the Primary Healthcare Blueprint with the goal of retention of natural teeth and

enhancing the overall level of citizens' oral health. The Government agreed with the advice of the Working Group that when considering the provision of government-funded curative dental services, the long-term financial sustainability must be taken into account. It is more cost-effective to put the emphasis on preventive dental services to achieve the goal of enhancing the overall level of citizens' oral health. At the same time, targeted assistance should be provided to individual underprivileged groups who had difficulties in obtaining dental services.

The Government will strive to develop and promote primary dental services to assist citizens to manage their own oral health and to put prevention, early identification and timely intervention of dental diseases into action. The Government will also explore how to continue to develop appropriate and targeted dental services to the underprivileged groups defined by the Working Group.

The reply to the various parts of the questions raised by the Revd Canon the Hon Peter Douglas Koon is as follows:

(1) As announced in "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address", the Government plans to launch the Primary Dental Co-care Pilot Scheme for Adolescents in 2025 as an interface with the School Dental Care Service for primary school students by providing partial subsidies for private dental check-up services for adolescents aged between 13 and 17, so as to foster the establishment of a long-term partnership between the adolescents and the dentists in the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or the private sector and to promote the adolescents' life-long habit of regular dental check-ups for prevention of dental diseases.

The Faculty of Dentistry of the University of Hong Kong launched the Jockey Club Children Oral Health Project in 2019 with the support of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust. The Working Group reviewed the data collected by the Faculty of Dentistry of the University of Hong Kong and noted that the Project was effective in slowing down tooth decay among preschool children. The Project will be supported by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust up to the 2025/26 academic year. The Working Group will continuously monitor the effectiveness of this Project to determine the way forward for dental services for preschool children.

(2) The Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme subsidises eligible Hong Kong elders aged 65 or above with an annual voucher amount of \$2,000 to use private primary healthcare services, including dental services. In 2019, the accumulation limit of the voucher amount was raised to \$8,000. Under the existing arrangement, the elderly can flexibly use the vouchers to receive private primary healthcare services that best suit their health needs. In 2022, the voucher amount claimed by the elderly for private dental services was about \$343 million, represented 13 per cent of the total voucher amount claimed, which was the third highest among the 10 types of healthcare services in that period. The average amount per claim transaction for dentists was \$1,190, which was the second highest among the 10 types of healthcare services.

To make better use of resources to promote primary healthcare, the Department of Health (DH) launched the Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Reward Scheme from November 13, 2023 for three years. For each year during this period, elderly persons only need to accumulate the use of vouchers of \$1,000 or more on designated primary healthcare purposes such as disease prevention and health management services (including dental check-ups, scaling, filling, extraction) within the year, and they will be automatically allotted a \$500 reward into their voucher account, which can be used on the same designated primary healthcare purposes. This measure would incentivise the elderly to use the voucher for regular dental check-ups.

Furthermore, eligible elderly may also use the voucher to pay for services provided by the University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital, including dental services. As announced in "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address", the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme will be rolled out this year to extend the coverage of the Elderly Health Care Vouchers (EHCV) to suitable medical institutions in the Greater Bay Area, including individual designated medical institutions providing dental services in places such as Shenzhen. The Health Bureau (HHB) and the DH have already commenced work to take forward the Pilot Scheme.

The HHB will include oral health information into the Life Course Preventive Care Plan promulgated by the Primary Healthcare Office to promote the habit of regular dental check-ups among different age groups, including the elderly.

The Government currently subsidises elderly to use private healthcare services including dental services through EHCV. At the same time, the Government provides subsidies covering dental services to elderly persons with financial difficulties, including the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme (EDAP) funded by the Community Care Fund (CCF) and the dental grant under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. At this stage, the Government does not have any plan to introduce an EHCV designated for dental services. However, the Government will explore how to incentivise elderly persons to receive regular dental check-ups by various measures, such as the Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Reward Scheme and the promotion of dental check-ups in collaboration with the dental profession.

(3) The EDAP funded by the CCF was launched in September 2012. The EDAP aims to provide free removable dentures and related dental services to low-income elderly who are users of home care services subvented by the Social Welfare Department and recipients of the Old Age Living Allowances (OALA) aged 65 or above (i.e. all OALA recipients). The number of eligible elderly of EDAP is now over 710 000, representing about 44 per cent of the population of elderly at the age of 65 or above. The spending on this Programme was close to \$300 million in 2022-23.

The Government will enhance the EDAP in the third quarter of 2024 to lift the essential requirement of fixing removable dentures, so as to enable eligible elderly to receive services such as dental check-ups, scaling, extraction and filling without applying for removable dentures, with a view to encouraging elderly to identify and treat dental diseases in an early



stage and to retain natural teeth as far as possible. Taking into consideration the priority in the allocation of resources, there is no plan to lower the minimum eligible age of 65 under the Programme at this stage.

(4) The Government currently provides or subsidises limited dental services, which mainly include the management of dental emergencies for the public, the implementation of measures catering for persons with special dental care needs, especially the elderly and families with financial difficulties or persons who have difficulties in accessing general dental services. Services provided for persons with special dental care needs include special care dental services for persons with intellectual disability and the Healthy Teeth Collaboration, as well as dental care support for the elderly under the Outreach Dental Care Programme for the Elderly and the EDAP funded by the CCF. Also, elderly may use health care vouchers to receive dental services in the private sector, and persons with financial difficulties may apply for dental grant to cover dental treatment expenses under the CSSA Scheme.

At present, general dental services are provided mainly by the private sector and the NGOs. The Government provides dental services limited to the management of dental emergencies to the public. Free emergency dental service (generally referred to as General Public (GP) Sessions) are provided by the DH through designated sessions each week in its 11 government dental clinics. Dental service under the GP Sessions only include treatment of acute dental diseases, prescription for pain relief, treatment of oral abscess and teeth extraction. The dentists will also provide professional advice based on individual needs of patients. Under the civil service terms of appointment, the Government is obliged to provide dental benefits for civil servants/pensioners and their eligible dependents. Dental clinics under the DH are established primarily for fulfilling this obligation. That said, the Government uses a small fraction of the service capacity of the dental clinics to provide supplementary emergency dental service to the general public.

The Working Group considered that the current mode of service of GP Sessions was not effective in targeting underprivileged groups in need. Taking into consideration the dentist manpower shortage in the DH, the Working Group considered that it is more appropriate to increase the service capacity in collaboration with the NGOs. As announced in "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address", the Government will collaborate with the NGOs to increase the emergency dental services targeting at the underprivileged groups with financial difficulties in 2025 through expansion of service capacity, service points and service scope. The HHB is exploring the details and will announce the details in due course.

(5) Hong Kong established the oral health goals to be achieved by year 2010 and 2025 in 1991. The Report No. 68 of the Director of Audit published in 2017 on provision of dental services has recommended the review of oral health goals.

Before formulating policies and oral health goals in Hong Kong, the DH needs to collect the most recent information on the oral health status and related behaviour of the people in Hong Kong. The first community-wide Oral

Health Survey (OHS) conducted by the DH was conducted in 2001, undertook to carry out an OHS every 10 years. The OHS 2011 was therefore conducted, and the following round of OHS already commenced in November 2021. Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the survey work was delayed and was completed in end 2023. The DH will release the survey report and will set oral health goals for people of different age groups in Hong Kong within this year. The Government will also invite the Working Group to provide comments on the oral health goals.

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## Transcript of remarks by SHYA at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, at a media session after attending the Legislative Council meeting today (January 10):

Reporter: About the Care Teams, what's your comment, because some teams stopped operation because they didn't have a seat in the District Council?

Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs: It is always a challenging task for the Care Team members to serve the community. As we can see that they have resources, but resources are always limited. We can't always have unlimited resources, right? With limited resources, Care Team members will have to think about how to solicit resources in the community and how to mobilise more volunteers to serve the community. It is always a challenging task for the Care Team members and I think they should have our respect and support. I hope through this incident, people will understand more about challenges or problems faced by the Care Team members and give them more support and assistance.

I must say that for anyone who has failed in any elections, it shouldn't be a factor for someone to consider whether they should still serve the community and serve in the Care Teams. I can see several candidates who have lost in the District Council Elections still insist to serve the community. They still insist to join and participate in the service of the Care Teams, and deliver very high-quality community services to our community. So I pay tribute to those who serve the community and do not ask for their own social status and anything for themselves. They just give their unconditional support and service to the community.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)