

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, December 1, 2023 is 104.4 (up 0.3 against yesterday's index).

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (December 1) released the latest grading of water quality for four gazetted beaches that are open all year round for swimming.

Four beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach	Golden Beach
Deep Water Bay Beach	Silverstrand Beach

Compared with the grading released last week, Deep Water Bay Beach and Silverstrand Beach have been upgraded from Grade 2 to Grade 1.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades, namely Good (Grade 1), Fair (Grade 2), Poor (Grade 3) and Very Poor (Grade 4), according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

While the ratings represent the general water quality at the beaches, an EPD spokesman reminded members of the public that water quality could be temporarily affected during and after periods of heavy rain. Bathers should avoid swimming at beaches for up to three days after a tropical cyclone or heavy rainfall.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the EPD's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666. Members of the public can also obtain the latest daily water quality forecast information for all beaches that are open for swimming through the Beach Water Quality Forecast mobile application (available for download from: www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQApp) or the dedicated beach water quality forecast page (www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQForecast) on the EPD's beach thematic

website.

[Joint meeting of Joint Regulatory Alliance of the Tourism Market of 9+2 Cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area held in Hong Kong](#)

The joint meeting of the Joint Regulatory Alliance of the Tourism Market of 9+2 Cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (JRA) was held in Hong Kong today (December 1). Representatives from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Department of Culture and Tourism of Guangdong Province, the Macao Government Tourism Office, tourism regulatory departments of nine cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), namely Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing, gathered in Hong Kong for the meeting.

The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, was pleased to learn that the meeting has achieved fruitful results. He said that all representatives unanimously agreed to continue strengthening co-operation and enhancing the professionalism of tourism regulatory personnel in the GBA, in order to jointly make the GBA a world-class tourism destination.

During the joint meeting held today, members reported on the latest operation and law-enforcing aspects of respective tourism markets and exchanged views on achievements of the joint regulation this year. Members also set working goals for the co-operation plan in the coming year, which included providing more training and collaboration opportunities for law-enforcing officers, establishing channels for data and information sharing, and setting the future regulatory direction.

Representatives of the JRA arrived in Hong Kong yesterday (November 30) for on-site visits and research. They visited the Ngong Ping 360 and Hong Kong Disneyland to understand the latest developments of these attractions, including enhancements and updates of their facilities as well as supporting services, and also the crowd management plan, etc.

The JRA was jointly established by the tourism authorities of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Macao Special Administrative Region, and nine cities in the GBA based on the agreement on joint regulation of the tourism market signed in 2020. It is committed to improving and strengthening the supervision of the tourism market and jointly maintaining a good market

order, with the goal of promoting the healthy development of the tourism market in the GBA. The JRA's joint meeting is held once a year, with the participating cities taking turns to host and serve as the chairman of the joint meeting. Hong Kong is the rotating chairman of the 2023 joint meeting.

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 November 30 to noon today (December 1), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 177 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 17 538 samples of food imported from Japan (including 11 613 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 4 912 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

[Speech by FS at Salvation Army Charity Christmas Luncheon 2023 \(English only\) \(with photos\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Salvation Army Charity Christmas Luncheon 2023 today (December 1):

David (the Chairman of the Advisory Board, Salvation Army Hong Kong and Macau Command, Dr David Li), Colonels Philip (the Territorial Commander of the Salvation Army Hong Kong and Macau Command, Colonel Philip Maxwell) and Deslea Maxwell (the Territorial President of Women's Ministries of the Salvation Army Hong Kong and Macau Command, Colonel Deslea Maxwell), soldiers of the Salvation Army, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you all for the Salvation Army Charity Christmas Luncheon. Congratulations to the Salvation Army on organising this event to celebrate the festive season and raise funds for a worthy cause.

The Salvation Army has been serving Hong Kong for over 90 years. All along, it has demonstrated a deep commitment to transforming lives and caring for the community, bringing help – and hope – to those who need it most.

Famous author and humanitarian Helen Keller, who visited Hong Kong in 1955 and has a house named after her at St Paul's Convent School, said this: "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement; nothing can be done without hope."

The Salvation Army creates hope for members of our community through its various services, with more than 100 social service units, schools, and education centres in Hong Kong and Macao. With subventions from the Social Welfare Department since 1958, the Salvation Army has expanded its reach to becoming ever more deeply rooted in our society.

In this financial year, the Salvation Army received more than \$600 million subvention allocation. The sum supports a spectrum of social welfare services covering different target groups such as family and children, young

people, individuals with rehabilitation needs, and offenders.

All this good work helps the Government in building a caring and inclusive society.

Among your recent efforts, one of them is partnering with the Government on transitional housing. Indeed, providing short-term accommodation for those who need it is a priority.

To date, sites for building over 21 000 transitional housing units have been identified. And about 9 000 units are already in service, with the remaining 12 000 units (to be) available over the next two years.

The Sam Shing Transitional Housing Project, involving conversion of a seven-storey school building into 123 accommodation units for 400 tenants, is run by the Salvation Army. With your dedicated efforts, all 123 units were occupied by June this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, Christmas is about love and a season of giving. Look at the world at large which is filled with complexities, challenges and conflicts. Cliffhangers are everywhere. But Hong Kong has remained a safe and peaceful city. Our economy is bouncing back, and tourists and businesses are returning. So let us count our blessings and have a grateful heart.

The festive season reminds me of Acts 20:35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive". Let's share our joy, peace and blessings with our family, friends and colleagues, and let our blessings be the blessings to others too.

Once again, my heartfelt appreciation goes to the Salvation Army, to all of you, for your dedication to transforming lives and caring for the people in need.

And being part of that effort, I appeal to you all to vote in the DC election on December 10. Let us vote for those who are dedicated to serving the community and making Hong Kong a better home.

Finally, I wish you and your families a blessed Christmas filled with happiness, peace and love of family and friends. Thank you.

