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Front office to 'bear the brunt' of Hong Kong's trading hours push

Bourse considers scrapping one-hour lunch break and introducing evening trading

By Simran Vaswani, Sinyi Au | July 24, 2026

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Sales and client-facing teams at Hong Kong asset managers will be the hardest hit by the Hong Kong bourse's proposal to extend trading hours and eliminate lunch breaks, industry experts have warned.

Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing is reportedly considering starting equities trading 30 minutes earlier at 9am, scrapping the one-hour lunch break that starts at noon altogether and adding an after-hour session potentially between 8pm and midnight.

Duncan Cheng, councilor at the **Hong Kong Securities & Futures Professionals Association**, told Ignites Asia that the move had "clear operational and cultural consequences" for fund managers.

"Larger firms may be able to rotate coverage, but many Hong Kong market participants operate with lean teams, meaning the burden of extended hours may fall repeatedly on the same individuals," he said.

Cheng, who is also executive director and partner at **Linkways Asset Management Limited**, added that front-office staff would "bear the brunt" of the change.

Forgoing lunch breaks, which have traditionally been an important window for meetings and relationship building with investors, coupled with a trading window that goes on until midnight risks creating fatigued teams with reduced concentration, he said.

Middle-office functions, such as operations, risk, compliance and settlement support, would face increased pressure as well.

"In many ways, this already reflects reality: Hong Kong financial professionals frequently work long days and coordinate with overseas teams across time zones," said Cheng.

"The difference is that evening coverage would become a structural requirement, not just an occasional response to market events," he added.

Fund industry veteran **Sally Wong** said that if extended trading hours were implemented, basic working assumptions would have to be revisited and processes would have to be rewired.

Fund managers will also have to factor in client demands, where investors might expect managers to capitalise on investment opportunities "around the clock" for them, she added.

"What is important is that when the HKEX launches [extended trading hours], it should not be made mandatory for market participants," Wong said.

Instead, that decision should be left to individual companies to determine whether they wish to partake in the extended trading hours based on their business model, resources and target client base.

A fund company executive in Hong Kong said he supported the potential changes as they would be "more in line with global market practices" but had objections around having to potentially sacrifice lunch hours that he would have otherwise used to meet clients.

"I know people who are against this argue about [losing] the lunch break [and] overtime work, but I honestly think the impact is going to be manageable," said the executive, who declined to be quoted by name.

While US and Europe exchanges operate continuously throughout the day, Hong Kong stands out alongside Shanghai, Shenzhen and Tokyo as one of the few major global markets that observe a midday trading break.

To view the graphic, click here or go to https://www.ignitesasia.com/c/5212564/745494?referring_content_id=5212564&referring_issue_id=745494

Taiwan's stock exchange is also exploring an extension to its session but the financial regulator said it would not be implemented for now, while Korea is set to extend its trading hours to 12 hours from 6.5 hours in September.

Earlier this month, the **London Stock Exchange** unveiled plans to allow round-the-clock trading. The new night-time trading venue will operate separately from the LSE's main market and initially offer access to exchange traded funds.

The HKEX told Ignites Asia that its current focus was on the "proposed enhancement of derivatives market trading hours", subject to further market engagement and regulatory approval.

Any potential "enhancements" to cash market trading still remains at a "very early" and "exploratory" stage, the HKEX added, and would require "careful assessment of market implications, stakeholder feedback and connectivity arrangements".

The changes are part of ongoing efforts to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness as an international financial centre, according to the HKEX, but Cheng said extended trading hours would not automatically translate to more value.

"The best outcome would be a phased approach, with robust consultation, clear staffing expectations and proper controls around coverage, compensation and wellbeing," said Cheng.

"Otherwise, Hong Kong risks lengthening its trading day without strengthening the market that truly matters."

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