

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (November 30) released the latest grading of water quality for nine gazetted beaches. Other beaches have been closed to swimmers from November 1 for the winter season.

Seven beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1) and two as Fair (Grade 2).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach*	Repulse Bay Beach
Deep Water Bay Beach#	Silverstrand Beach
Golden Beach	Stanley Main Beach^
Middle Bay Beach#	

Grade 2 beaches are:

Big Wave Bay Beach^	Silver Mine Bay Beach^
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* The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today that Clear Water Bay Second Beach will reopen on December 1.

^ For Silver Mine Bay Beach, Stanley Main Beach and Big Wave Bay Beach, lifeguard services are suspended from December 1, 2018, to February 28, 2019.

Deep Water Bay Beach and Middle Bay Beach remain closed until further notice due to the severe damage brought about by Typhoon Mangkhut earlier.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades 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.

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 department's websites on Beach Water Quality (www.beachwq.gov.hk and www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

Third round results of Public Policy Research Funding Scheme 2018-19 announced

The Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (PICO) announced today (November 30) the results of the third round applications to the Public Policy Research (PPR) Funding Scheme in 2018-19.

The PPR Funding Scheme aims to promote public policy research and provide evidence-based research to facilitate public policy discussion. Applications are accepted throughout the year. For the third round exercise in 2018-19, PICO received 21 applications. On the advice of an assessment panel, PICO has decided to support five projects with a total funding of about \$3 million.

Applications to the PPR Funding Scheme are assessed by an assessment panel, chaired by and comprising experienced academics, who will take into account comments of reviewers who are academics and experts outside the panel in considering the applications. Each application is considered on its merits and relevance to public policy development in Hong Kong. A declaration of interests system is in place to ensure that the assessments are fair and impartial.

Details of the funded projects have been uploaded to PICO's website (www.pico.gov.hk/en/PRFS).

Monetary statistics for October 2018

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

According to statistics published today (November 30) by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, total deposits with authorised institutions grew by 0.2% in October 2018. Hong Kong-dollar deposits decreased by 0.5% during the month, as the decline in savings deposits exceeded the increase in demand and time deposits. Overall foreign-currency deposits picked up by 0.9% in October. Renminbi deposits in Hong Kong rose by 2.8% to RMB617.3 billion at the end of October. The total remittance of renminbi for cross-border trade settlement amounted to RMB335.8 billion in October, compared with RMB348.8 billion in September.

Total loans and advances declined by 0.2% in October. Among the total, loans for use in Hong Kong (including trade finance) edged down by 0.1% from

a month ago, while loans for use outside Hong Kong declined by 0.6%. The Hong Kong-dollar loan-to-deposit ratio edged up to 85.3% at the end of October from 85.0% at the end of September, as Hong Kong-dollar deposits decreased at a faster pace than Hong Kong-dollar loans.

On a seasonally-adjusted basis, Hong Kong-dollar M1 declined by 0.9% in October and dropped by 4.7% year-on-year. Seasonally unadjusted Hong Kong-dollar M3 decreased by 0.4% during the month and fell by 2.1% from a year earlier.

Red tide sighted

A red tide has been sighted, an inter-departmental red tide working group reported today (November 30).

The red tide was spotted by staff of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) at the Yim Tin Tsai fish culture zone today.

The red tide still persists and no associated death of fish has been reported.

A spokesman for the working group said, "The red tide was formed by *Prorocentrum balticum*, which is not commonly found in Hong Kong waters and is non-toxic."

The AFCD urged mariculturists at the Yim Tin Tsai, Yim Tin Tsai (East), Yung Shue Au and Lo Fu Wat fish culture zones to monitor the situation closely and increase aeration where necessary.

Red tide is a natural phenomenon. The AFCD's proactive phytoplankton monitoring programme will continue monitoring red tide occurrences to minimise the impact on the mariculture industry and the public.

Provisional statistics of retail sales for October 2018

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released the latest figures on retail sales today (November 30).

The value of total retail sales in October 2018, provisionally estimated

at \$39.7 billion, increased by 5.9% over the same month in 2017. The revised estimate of the value of total retail sales in September 2018 increased by 2.4% over a year earlier. For the first ten months of 2018 taken together, it was provisionally estimated that the value of total retail sales increased by 10.6% over the same period in 2017.

After netting out the effect of price changes over the same period, the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales in October 2018 increased by 5.2% over a year earlier. The revised estimate of the volume of total retail sales in September 2018 increased by 1.4% over a year earlier. For the first ten months of 2018 taken together, the provisional estimate of the total retail sales increased by 9.1% in volume over the same period in 2017.

Analysed by broad type of retail outlet in descending order of the provisional estimate of the value of sales and comparing October 2018 with October 2017, the value of sales of jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts increased by 3.3%. This was followed by sales of electrical goods and other consumer durable goods, not elsewhere classified (+16.1% in value); commodities in department stores (+3.5%); wearing apparel (+2.3%); medicines and cosmetics (+14.9%); other consumer goods, not elsewhere classified (+12.7%); motor vehicles and parts (+13.6%); fuels (+10.3%); footwear, allied products and other clothing accessories (+9.3%); books, newspapers, stationery and gifts (+5.8%); furniture and fixtures (+0.8%); Chinese drugs and herbs (+0.6%); and optical shops (+3.2%).

On the other hand, the value of sales of commodities in supermarkets decreased by 0.9% in October 2018 compared with a year earlier. This was followed by sales of food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (-2.0% in value).

Based on the seasonally adjusted series, the provisional estimate of the value of total retail sales decreased by 2.2% in the three months ending October 2018 compared with the preceding three-month period, while the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales decreased by 1.8%.

These retail sales statistics measure the sales receipts in respect of goods sold by local retail establishments and are primarily intended for gauging the short-term business performance of the local retail sector. They cover consumer spending on goods but not on services (such as those on housing, catering, medical care and health services, transport and communication, financial services, education and entertainment) which account for over 50% of the overall consumer spending. Moreover, they include spending on goods in Hong Kong by visitors but exclude spending outside Hong Kong by Hong Kong residents. Hence they should not be regarded as indicators for measuring overall consumer spending.

Users interested in the trend of overall consumer spending should refer to the data series of private consumption expenditure (PCE), which is a major component of the Gross Domestic Product published at quarterly intervals. Compiled from a wide range of data sources, PCE covers consumer spending on both goods (including goods purchased from all channels) and services by Hong Kong residents whether locally or abroad. Please refer to the C&SD

publication "Gross Domestic Product (Quarterly)" for more details.

Commentary

A government spokesman indicated that growth in retail sales picked up somewhat in October after a deceleration in the preceding month, supported by the faster increase in visitor arrivals and continued income growth.

The spokesman commented further that, looking forward, strong inbound tourism and favourable job and income conditions should continue to support the retail sector in the near term. Yet, consumer sentiment could increasingly be affected by the external uncertainties and weaker asset markets. The Government will closely monitor the situation.

Further information

Table 1 presents the revised figures on value index and value of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for September 2018 as well as the provisional figures for October 2018. The provisional figures on the value of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet as well as the corresponding year-on-year changes for the first ten months of 2018 taken together are also shown.

Table 2 presents the revised figures on volume index of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for September 2018 as well as the provisional figures for October 2018. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the first ten months of 2018 taken together are also shown.

Table 3 shows the movements of the value and volume of total retail sales in terms of the year-on-year rate of change for a month compared with the same month in the preceding year based on the original series, and in terms of the rate of change for a three-month period compared with the preceding three-month period based on the seasonally adjusted series.

The classification of retail establishments follows the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification (HSIC) Version 2.0, which is used in various economic surveys for classifying economic units into different industry classes.

More detailed statistics are given in the "Report on Monthly Survey of Retail Sales". Users can download this publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD

(www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp320.jsp?productCode=B1080003).

Alternatively, the historical series of retail sales statistics can be downloaded in the form of a statistical table at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp320.jsp?productCode=D5600089).

Users who have enquiries about the survey results may contact the Distribution Services Statistics Section of C&SD (Tel: 3903 7400; email: mrs@censtatd.gov.hk).