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 December 10 to noon today (December 11), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 246 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, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 104 703 samples of food imported from Japan (including 67 732 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 23 666 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

LCQ5: Application of drones in police system

Following is a question by the Hon Tang Fei and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

It is learnt that patrolling with drones has become an important tool used in western countries and on the Mainland for enhancing the management of public safety and response to emergencies. There are views that against the background of promoting the development of low-altitude economy in Hong Kong, drone technology shows great potential of application in the police system. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has plans to promote the application of drone technology in the police system and other disciplined services, especially for beat patrolling, crime prevention and traffic management; if so, whether there is a specific timetable and sufficient operating staff;

(2) whether it will conduct differentiated assessment of the effectiveness of patrolling with drones and set the relevant criteria of assessment in view of different environments and safety requirements; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will, by drawing reference from the experience of other places, further improve the relevant rules and regulations on the application of drones for patrolling in Hong Kong, so as to promote technology advancement and protect the privacy and safety of members of the public at the same time?

Reply:

President,

The Security Bureau (SB) has been actively encouraging and supporting the application of various new technologies in its disciplined services and auxiliary services to enhance service efficiency and quality. In particular, in view of the growing popularity of drone technology around the globe, the departments are using drone technology as appropriate through adopting different strategies and assessing the situation, in order to facilitate and enhance the delivery of various tasks.

The reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The disciplined services and auxiliary services are, having regard to

their operational needs, equipped with drones of different sizes, weights and models, as well as various types of instrument systems that can be mounted on drones. The drones are deployed where applicable to enhance efficiency and better utilise manpower resources. The use of drone technology is increasingly common in the departments and are serving various functions in different situations, including:

1. Crime detection and investigation: In carrying out operations, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), the Customs and Excise Department and the Immigration Department (ImmD) use mounted high-resolution cameras on drones to assist in investigation and evidence collection at crime scenes, especially in the countryside and at the sea. Such video footage can be used as evidence in court when necessary.
2. Beat patrolling and crime prevention: The HKPF uses drones to conduct high-rise patrols at crime black spots. For instance, mounted thermography and infrared detection systems are used to detect the presence of suspicious persons lingering or hiding at remotely located places or at difficult terrains.
3. Maintaining public safety and order, crowd and traffic management: Drones are used by the HKPF to monitor crowd and traffic flow in largeâ€‘scale events. Through real-time images, potential safety hazards are promptly identified and dealt with. The HKPF is planning to introduce a system under which drones will be hovered at designated locations for a long period of time for illumination and broadcasting, sending messages to remind members of the public to stay vigilant.
4. Rescue operations: The HKPF, the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Civil Aid Service use drones to surmount dangerous and harsh conditions, such as cliffs and mountains, and quickly reach the scenes to assist in the search for missing persons. Throughout the rescue process, drones can also conduct aerial surveillance to ensure safety at the site. In major and special incidents where the scenes are complicated, drones can take high resolution photographs of collapsed and deformed debris for the production of three-dimensional models, thereby facilitating the assessment and planning of rescue operations by the ground rescue party. If necessary, the airdrop system installed at the drones will be used to drop necessities to persons in need of rescue.
5. Firefighting: The FSD uses drones equipped with thermal detectors to monitor temperature changes of various locations at the fire scene from multiple angles in the air. Based on such data, incident commanders can devise the routes of entry into and evacuation from the fire scene and work out firefighting strategies, hence enhancing operational efficiency and safety.
6. Management of prisons and detention facilities: To strengthen security of these facilities, drone technology is employed by the Correctional Services Department and the ImmD to assist in the inspection of security facilities by analysing the deteriorating conditions of boundary fencing and detecting anomalous objects at roof-tops of buildings, as well as in emergency response operations involving correctional institutions and detention facilities.

The application of drone technology is a specialised skill and the departments attach great importance to the training of relevant personnel. In 2017, the FSD established the Unmanned Aircraft System Team which uses drones in firefighting and rescue tasks. In October this year, the HKPF formally established the Force Drone Cadre to assist all Regions in performing flight missions. As at November this year, there are a total of about 800 drone operators under the disciplined services who have been recognised by the Civil Aviation Department (CAD) with Advanced Rating and are qualified to conduct advanced drone operations (including the use of drones weighing more than seven kilogrammes and up to 25 kilogrammes). The disciplined services will, based on operational needs, continue to train sufficient qualified operators to tie in with the development in the future.

(2) As drone technology matures, drones have become more versatile in terms of their functions. At present, in using drone technology, the disciplined services will conduct assessments and take various factors (including nature of operation, location, terrain and weather) into full account before deciding on the most suitable model of drones and the corresponding instrument systems to be used, so as to optimise the performance of different duties and functions. The disciplined services will periodically review the effectiveness of drone technology application in their operations and will keep in view the technological development, so as to devise strategies continuously for the use of drones in the long run.

(3) To further enhance the regulation of the application of drones, the Transport and Logistics Bureau and the CAD have commenced reviewing the existing civil aviation and other relevant legislation and regulatory regime. In the process, reference will be made to similar legislation and standards imposed by the civil aviation authorities of other major regions (including the Mainland China, Australia and Canada), with due consideration given to Hong Kong's present needs and long-term development. As a first step, the CAD will relax the existing restrictions on "beyond-line-of-sight flying activities" under the Small Unmanned Aircraft Order. Meanwhile, the Government will update the civil aviation legislation in phases, starting with amending the existing Small Unmanned Aircraft Order to cover drones weighing more than 25 kilograms and up to 150 kilograms. The Government will also consider the enactment of a new dedicated legislation for various types of Advanced Air Mobility weighing more than 150 kilograms.

The disciplined services will, under Hong Kong's legislative framework, draw on the experience of other regions and apply drone technology where appropriate and feasible. In particular, the HKPF is exploring the introduction of an automatic patrol system, subject to the relaxation of "beyond-line-of-sight flying activities", to conduct automated aerial mission by allowing drones to fly according to default routes and analysing the images using artificial intelligence. This can lead to greater operational effectiveness and higher work quality. While developing drone technology, various departments will exercise stringent control and supervision in the course of enforcing the relevant legislation to ensure that the operation of the drone is safe and complies with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, so as to protect the privacy of the public.

LCQ11: Digital Herbarium for Chinese Medicines

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kwong and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

The Digital Herbarium for Chinese Medicines (DHCM), a dedicated website established by the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute of the Department of Health, has been officially launched since March 26 this year. The public, Chinese medicine industry and scientific research institutions may use relevant information for purposes of identifying Chinese herbal medicines, testing and education. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the details of the digitalised information on Chinese medicines recorded in DHCM so far;

(2) of the number of public page views as well as the usage of and feedback on DHCM since its launch; and

(3) how the authorities will step up efforts to promote and enhance DHCM in the future?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Department of Health (DH), the consolidated reply to the question raised by Professor the Hon Chan Wing-kwong is as follows:

Managed by the DH, the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute (GCMTI) specialises in the testing of and scientific research on Chinese medicines. It employs state-of-the-art technology to develop and establish internationally recognised reference standards for the safety, quality and testing methodology of Chinese medicines. With continuous efforts in promoting the standardisation and internationalisation of Chinese medicines, the GCMTI will help the Chinese medicines industry strengthen quality control of its products through transfer of technology, with a view to establishing the brand image of Hong Kong Chinese medicines and developing the city into an international hub for Chinese medicines testing and quality control.

The Digital Herbarium for Chinese Medicines (DHCM) (www.cmherbarium.gov.hk) established by the GCMTI is the first online

herbarium in the world that provides comprehensive digital information on Chinese medicines. It includes high-resolution images and related data of 220 commonly used Chinese materia medica (CMM) and their origin plant specimens, with chemical information, microscopic slides and DNA sequence data available for some CMM. The DHCM users may use the name of CMM or plants, their medicinal uses, collection locations, or medicinal parts, etc, as keywords to search for information of the Chinese medicines. Information on uses, precautions on proper use as well as storage methods, etc, is provided for each CMM. At present, the total number of data field entries in the DHCM have already exceeded 10 000, which is conducive to the promotion of innovative application of Chinese medicines data and resources.

The DHCM is also the first in the world using photogrammetry to produce three dimensional (3D) images on traceable CMM specimens. Currently, it contains 3D images of a total of 27 CMM specimens.

Besides, the DHCM uses virtual reality (VR) technology to provide users with a virtual tour of the GCMTI's Chinese Medicines Herbarium currently located in the Hong Kong Science Park. Users will be able to view the precious CMM specimens donated by the National Medical Products Administration through the National Institutes for Food and Drug Control.

Since its launch in March 2024, the DHCM has recorded more than 700 000 page views. In the past few months, the DHCM was showcased at multiple major and international events including the InnoEX 2024, the World Health Organization's Expert Group Meeting on the Development of an International Herbal Pharmacopoeia, the kick-off event for the first Hong Kong Chinese Medicine Culture Festival, and received acclaim from international experts.

The Advisory Committee of the GCMTI (the Committee) is an advisory body set up for the GCMTI with members comprising representatives from the Government, Chinese medicine practice, Chinese medicines industry and academia, as well as the international experts of the Hong Kong Chinese Materia Medica Standards project. All along, the Committee has been providing advice for the GCMTI, bringing the DHCM on par with international standards. It has not only highly recognised the contents and functions of the DHCM since its launch, but also offered valuable advice on the DHCM's continuous development and on how to further leverage its functions of facilitating Chinese medicines testing, scientific research, education, culture promotion, etc. The GCMTI is actively following up on such advice to make continuous improvements to the contents and functions of the DHCM, such as showcasing the outcome of the National Survey of CMM Resources (Hong Kong Region) in the DHCM, as well as producing a new batch of 3D images of 30 kinds of CMM including those derived from animals and minerals.

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Monitoring Network results for 2023 released

Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao jointly released today (December 11) a report on air quality in 2023 under the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Monitoring Network (the Network) which indicates a long-term and significant downward trend of various air pollutants, namely sulphur dioxide (SO_2), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), carbon monoxide (CO), respirable suspended particulates (RSPs, PM_{10}) and fine suspended particulates (FSPs, $PM_{2.5}$) concentrations.

The report reveals that 2023 annual average concentrations for these parameters have declined between 17 per cent and 86 per cent from their peak levels (shown in Annexes 1 and 2). The decline well demonstrates the effectiveness of emission reduction measures implemented across the three places in improving air quality in the Pearl River Delta region. However, ozone (O_3) annual average concentrations have remained stagnant in recent years, indicating the need for alleviation of the regional photochemical pollution. In response, the study on "Characterization of photochemical ozone formation, regional and super-regional transportation in the Greater Bay Area" was carried out accordingly and concluded in early 2024, providing scientific data for further understanding on the causes and regional and super-regional transport characteristics of ozone within the region.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has continued to implement various air pollutant emission control measures covered in the Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles (EVs), the Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong 2035 and Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 on marine and land transport, power plants and non-road mobile machinery to enhance air quality. Since 2019, Hong Kong has collaborated with Greater Bay Area cities to establish a domestic marine emission control area in the Pearl River Delta, requiring all vessels to use compliant fuel within Hong Kong waters while sailing or at berth. Ocean-going vessels are also required to use cleaner fuel while at berth. Furthermore, the HKSAR Government is preparing to amend the Air Pollution Control (Marine Light Diesel) Regulation and tighten the cap on the sulphur content of locally supplied marine light diesel from 0.05 per cent to 0.001 per cent.

For vehicles, the HKSAR Government is committed to phasing out approximately 40 000 Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles progressively by the end of 2027 through a subsidy scheme. The Government deploys roadside remote sensing equipment to control exhaust emissions from vehicles. New registrations of fuel-propelled private cars including hybrids will cease in 2035 or earlier, and approximately 700 electric buses and 3 000 electric taxis will be introduced by end-2027. The HKSAR Government has been actively

implementing various measures to promote green transformation of vehicles, and is striving towards zero vehicular emissions by 2050. These efforts have produced early results, with the number of EVs in Hong Kong increasing roughly sevenfold in five years, from about 14 000 in 2019 to over 102 000 in September 2024.

Guangdong Province published and implemented the "Notice on Implementation of Monitoring Requirements on Fugitive Emission of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from Factories Issued by Department of Ecology and Environment of Guangdong Province", the "Notice on Strengthening Control of VOCs Emissions in Storage and Transportation of Oil Depots and Petrochemical and Chemical Enterprises", the "Notice on Further Reduction of Nitrogen Oxides from Stationary and Mobile Sources issued by Department of Ecology and Environment of Guangdong Province", and the "Notice on Strengthening Environmental Control on Diesel Trucks of Key Vehicle-using Enterprises", as well as promulgating the local standard "Integrated Emission Standard of VOCs for Stationary Pollution Source" (DB44/2367-2022). Guangdong Province launched the hierarchical management of VOCs-related enterprises, enhanced the total VOCs management, advanced the control of industrial boilers and furnaces, upheld a co-ordinated approach across vehicle regulations, fuel standards, roadway management, and enterprise compliance to strengthen emissions regulations for diesel trucks operated by key enterprises, conduct compliance checks on new vehicles, improve emissions management for non-road mobile machinery and carry out regular sampling and inspection of the fuel quality and emissions of engineering machinery.

The Macao Special Administrative Region (Macao SAR) Government has been committed to improving air quality. In 2023, the Government of the Macao SAR announced the Long-Term Decarbonization Strategy of Macao and a related specific plan, the Electric Vehicle Promotion Plan of Macao. By promoting the implementation of these strategies and plans, significant reductions in air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions are expected. The Macao SAR Government also continues to advance various measures on vehicular tailpipe emissions, the promotion of environmentally friendly vehicles, and the control of VOCs. These measures include reviewing and optimising tailpipe emission standards for both newly imported and in-use vehicles, encouraging vehicle owners to phase out high-polluting old vehicles through the Subsidy Scheme for Phasing out Old Motorcycles with Replacement of New Electric Motorcycles and the Subsidy Scheme for Phasing Out Old Diesel Vehicles, promoting the use of electric vehicles and enhancing related ancillary facilities, implementing import controls on high-VOC automotive repair paints and varnishes, and continuously advancing the study on regulation of other products containing VOCs at a high level.

The Network comprises a total of 23 air monitoring stations in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. The Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Centre of Guangdong, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) of Hong Kong, the Macao Environmental Protection Bureau and the Macao Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau are responsible for the co-ordination, management and operation of the monitoring stations in the respective places and the release of quarterly and annual monitoring results. The relevant reports are

available at the following websites:

- The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Regional Air Quality Monitoring Information System (gdeem.cn:20047/#/);
- The Department of Ecology and Environment of Guangdong Province (gdee.gd.gov.cn);
- The EPD of Hong Kong (www.epd.gov.hk); and
- The Macao Environmental Protection Bureau (www.dspa.gov.mo) or the Macao Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (www.smg.gov.mo).

Launch ceremony of "Window of Shenzhen" at Hong Kong Central Library held today

A "Window of Shenzhen" dedicated bookshelf will be set up in the General Reference department on the ninth floor of the Hong Kong Central Library (HKCL) in the first quarter of 2025, featuring over 200 publications selected and donated by the Shenzhen Library to enable members of the public to learn more about Shenzhen. The launch ceremony of "Window of Shenzhen" was held today (December 11) at the HKCL, and an exhibition titled "Window of Shenzhen" is being held from today to January 7, 2025, at the Cultural and Historical Resources Corner on the eighth floor of the HKCL.

Through the exhibition, book display and a dedicated bookshelf, the HKCL aims to enable patrons to gain a deeper understanding of the history, culture and development of Shenzhen in "Window of Shenzhen", which also marks a further strengthening of cultural interaction and exchange between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

With photos and texts, the exhibition briefs visitors on the history, reform and opening up, cultural integration, nature and ecology of Shenzhen, as well as shared heritage between Shenzhen and Hong Kong, showcasing the richness, openness and innovations of Shenzhen. Selected landmark works in various fields donated by the Shenzhen Library are also on display at the exhibition.

The publications in the upcoming "Window of Shenzhen" dedicated bookshelf cover a wide range of topics that showcase the characteristics of Shenzhen, including history, political and economic development, folk culture, natural environment, tourism resources, and the Shenzhen-Hong Kong relationship. There are also books published by the Shenzhen Library and the Culture, Media, Tourism and Sports Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality for public reading and research reference.

Addressing the ceremony, the Director of the Shenzhen Library, Ms Zhang Yan, said that libraries have an integral role to play in promoting cultural exchange between the two places. The HKCL is the largest library with the greatest range of services in the Hong Kong Public Libraries network. The "Window of Shenzhen" dedicated bookshelf at the HKCL can further facilitate public understanding of Shenzhen's culture, history and development through the publications.

The Chief Librarian of the HKCL, Miss Melinda Lee, said at the ceremony that the establishment of the "Window of Shenzhen" dedicated bookshelf at the Hong Kong Central Library is not only a showcase of culture but also a symbol of friendship between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. It is hoped that public libraries in both places will continue to maintain close ties and create more opportunities for collaboration in the future to jointly promote cultural exchange and development between the two cities.

For details of the exhibition "Window of Shenzhen", please visit: www.hkpl.gov.hk/en/extension-activities/event-detail/267865/window-of-shenzhen.