

Civil Service College and Peking University's joint programme holds lecture on "Urban-rural Relationship and Urbanisation in Contemporary China" (with photos)

The Civil Service College (CSC), in collaboration with the Institute for Hong Kong and Macau Studies, Peking University, launched an in-depth programme on "one country, two systems" and contemporary China. As part of the programme, a lecture on the topic of "Urban-rural Relationship and Urbanisation in Contemporary China" was delivered by the Dean of the Department of Sociology of Peking University, Professor Zhou Feizhou, at the CSC today (April 23).

The country upholds the philosophy of people-centred development, acting on the principle that a city should be built by and for its people. It emphasises the need to maintain a people-centred approach, focusing on the public's needs and prioritising liveability in urban development.

Addressing the lecture, the Head of the CSC, Mr Oscar Kwok, said that the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has long been upholding the country's people-centred governing philosophy, emphasising serving the public in a pragmatic manner to make Hong Kong a better place for living and working. The mission of the CSC is to strengthen training to build a civil-service team that is patriotic, loves Hong Kong, has good morals and integrity, and is competent and people-oriented. The CSC has infused the people-first and "one government" service ethos into various programmes, building a service culture driven by the needs of the people and the overall interests of the country and Hong Kong, which exemplifies the implementation of the country's governance philosophy and gives full play to the power and value of "patriots administering Hong Kong".

Around 70 civil servants at the rank of Directorate Pay Scale Point 1 and 2 attended the programme. In addition, about 90 politically appointed officials and other directorate officers enrolled and sat in on the lecture via video conferencing.

The programme was organised to further strengthen training for senior officials and directorate civil servants. It consists of 12 monthly lectures covering a wide range of topics, such as the Communist Party of China and contemporary China, socialism with Chinese characteristics, the theory and practice of "one country, two systems", as well as developments in contemporary Chinese society, economy, national defence, technology, and more. Distinguished scholars from the Mainland will deliver the programme and engage in in-depth discussions with participants.



[Development Bureau imposes regulating actions on contractors involved in fatal industrial incident at sewer cleansing works](#)

A spokesman for the Development Bureau (DEVB) said today (April 23) that the Government attaches great importance to construction site safety. In response to the fatal industrial incident at the sewer cleansing worksite in Sha Tin today, the DEVB, being the party to procure services for public works, has suspended the contractors concerned from tendering for public works contracts pursuant to the regulating regime.

The spokesman said that the contractors concerned were under the List of Approved Contractors for Public Works (the List). The DEVB issued notifications to the contractors concerned today to suspend them from

tendering for public works contracts in the roads and drainage category with immediate effect. The contractors concerned have to conduct an independent safety audit to review their safety management system. Taking cognisance of the outcome of the independent safety audit, the contractors are required to submit an improvement action plan and implement improvement measures, with a view to demonstrating that they have an effective safety management system before uplifting of the suspension from tendering can be considered. The suspension from tendering is not only confined to future tender exercises, but is also applicable to tender exercises with procedures initiated but not concluded.

Relevant government department is investigating this industrial incident and will handle it in accordance with the law. Subject to the investigation findings, the DEVB will impose further regulating actions on the contractors concerned later on, including extension of the period of suspension from tendering for public works contracts and even removal from the List.

Consumer Price Indices for March 2024

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (April 23) the Consumer Price Index (CPI) figures for March 2024. According to the Composite CPI, overall consumer prices rose by 2.0% in March 2024 over the same month a year earlier, slightly larger than the average rate of increase in January and February 2024 (1.9%). Netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures, the year-on-year rate of increase in the Composite CPI (i.e. the underlying inflation rate) in March 2024 was 1.0%, also slightly larger than the average rate of increase in January and February 2024 (0.9%). The comparison to the average rate of increase in January and February is to neutralise the effect caused by different timing of the Lunar New Year between two years, which occurred in February this year but in January last year.

Comparing March 2024 with February 2024, the year-on-year rate of increase in the Composite CPI in March 2024 (2.0%) was smaller than the corresponding increase in February 2024 (2.1%). Netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures, the year-on-year rate of increase in the Composite CPI in March 2024 (1.0%) was also smaller than the corresponding increase in February 2024 (1.2%).

On a seasonally adjusted basis, the average monthly rate of change in the Composite CPI for the 3-month period ending March 2024 was 0.0%, the same as that for the 3-month period ending February 2024. Netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures, the corresponding rates of change were both 0.0%.

Analysed by sub-index, the year-on-year rates of increase in the CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) were 2.3%, 1.9% and 1.7% respectively in March 2024, as

compared to the average rates of increase of 2.2%, 1.8% and 1.8% respectively in January and February 2024, and 2.3%, 2.0% and 2.0% respectively in February 2024. Netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures, the year-on-year rates of increase in the CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) were 0.8%, 1.1% and 1.3% respectively in March 2024, as compared to the average rates of increase of 0.6%, 1.0% and 1.3% respectively in January and February 2024, and 0.8%, 1.2% and 1.6% respectively in February 2024.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, for the 3-month period ending March 2024, the average monthly rates of change in the CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) were 0.0%, 0.0% and -0.1% respectively. The corresponding rates of change for the 3-month period ending February 2024 were -0.1%, 0.0% and 0.1% respectively. Netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures, the average monthly rates of change in the seasonally adjusted CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) for the 3-month period ending March 2024 were 0.0%, 0.0% and -0.1% respectively, and the corresponding rates of change for the 3-month period ending February 2024 were 0.0%, 0.0% and 0.1% respectively.

Amongst the various components of the Composite CPI, year-on-year increases in prices were recorded in March 2024 for alcoholic drinks and tobacco (17.7%), meals out and takeaway food (3.3%), housing (3.1%), miscellaneous services (2.9%), transport (2.2%), miscellaneous goods (1.2%), and clothing and footwear (0.3%).

On the other hand, year-on-year decreases in the components of the Composite CPI were recorded in March 2024 for electricity, gas and water (-8.7%), durable goods (-1.5%), and basic food (-0.5%).

In the first quarter of 2024, the Composite CPI rose by 1.9% over a year earlier, while the CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) rose by 2.2%, 1.8% and 1.8% respectively. The corresponding increases after netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures were 1.0%, 0.7%, 1.0% and 1.3% respectively.

For the 12 months ending March 2024, the Composite CPI was on average 2.1% higher than that in the preceding 12-month period. The respective increases in the CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) were 2.3%, 2.0% and 2.0% respectively. The corresponding increases after netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures were 1.5%, 1.4%, 1.4% and 1.7% respectively.

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that underlying consumer price inflation was modest in March. While prices of meals out and takeaway food continued to rise relatively fast, prices of basic food edged down from a year earlier. Prices of energy-related items fell further. Price pressures on other major components remained broadly in check.

Looking ahead, overall inflation should stay contained in the near term. Domestic costs may face some upward pressures as the Hong Kong economy continues to grow. External price pressures should remain on a broad downward

trend, though heightened geopolitical tensions will bring uncertainties. The Government will continue to monitor the situation.

Further information

The CPIs and year-on-year rates of change at section level for March 2024 are shown in Table 1. The time series on the year-on-year rates of change in the CPIs before and after netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures are shown in Table 2. For discerning the latest trend in consumer prices, it is also useful to look at the changes in the seasonally adjusted CPIs. The time series on the average monthly rates of change during the latest 3 months for the seasonally adjusted CPIs are shown in Table 3. The rates of change in the original and the seasonally adjusted Composite CPI and the underlying inflation rate are presented graphically in Chart 1.

More detailed statistics are given in the "Monthly Report on the Consumer Price Index". Users can browse and download this publication at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1060001&scode=270).

The reference period of the expenditure weights currently used for compilation of CPIs is the 12-month period from October 2019 to September 2020. The C&SD plans to update it to the whole year of 2023 starting from the next reference month (i.e. the CPIs for April 2024), primarily to better reflect changes in consumption patterns brought by resumption to normalcy after the COVID-19 epidemic. The updating is technical in nature in full conformity with international recommendations, and will not involve revision to CPIs already released. More details of the updating will be provided in the next release of CPIs to be published on May 23, 2024.

For enquiries about the CPIs, please contact the Consumer Price Index Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7374 or email: cpi@censtatd.gov.hk).

Red flag lowered at Silverstrand Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department said today (April 23) that the red flag at Silverstrand Beach in Sai Kung District has been lowered.

The red flag was hoisted earlier due to inclement weather.

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 April 22 to noon today (April 23), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 184 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 45 019 samples of food imported from Japan (including 29 481 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 12 032 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.