

Postal services to Italy return to normal

Hongkong Post announced today (February 28) that, as advised by the postal administration of Italy, mail delivery services previously impacted by a local strike at the destination have returned to normal.

Communications Authority Press Release

The following is issued on behalf of the Communications Authority:

This press release summarises the decision of the Communications Authority (CA) following its 132nd meeting held in February 2024.

Further amendments of network and service rollout obligations for spectrum assigned in the 26 GHz and 28 GHz bands (26/28 GHz bands) for provision of large scale public mobile services

The CA, having considered the requests jointly submitted by the three spectrum assignees in the 26/28 GHz bands for the provision of large scale public mobile services, namely China Mobile Hong Kong Company Limited, Hong Kong Telecommunications (HKT) Limited and SmarTone Mobile Communications Limited (Spectrum Assignees), decided to further amend the network and service rollout obligations imposed on them by postponing each of the three network and service rollout milestones by two years from 2024-26 to 2026-28. After the amendments, the Spectrum Assignees will be required to install and put into use 20 per cent of the minimum number of radio units (i.e. 500 radio units) by April 24, 2026, an addition of 30 per cent (i.e. 750 radio units) by April 24, 2027, and an addition of the remaining 50 per cent (i.e. 1 250 radio units) by April 24, 2028. Thus the periods of the relevant performance bonds for guaranteeing compliance with the network and service rollout obligations will be amended accordingly.

With the supply of the network equipment and handsets supporting the 26/28 GHz bands remaining in shortage, the CA decided to accede to the request of the Spectrum Assignees having regard to the latest situation. The requirement imposed on the Spectrum Assignees to install and put into use no less than 2 500 radio units within the specified period following the spectrum assignment remains unchanged.

LCQ12: Operation of the community recycling network GREEN@COMMUNITY

Following is a question by the Hon Edward Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (February 28):

Question:

Regarding the operation of the community recycling network GREEN@COMMUNITY, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Secretary for Environment and Ecology indicated earlier on that the contractors of the community recycling network GREEN@COMMUNITY (the contractors) would not be required to pay disposal fees for the non-recyclable waste collected in their daily operation, whether the authorities will issue guidelines to the contractors on the ways to dispose of such waste or provide the contractors with an appropriate quantity of designated bags (DBs); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it is learnt that at present, the authorities will disburse performance pay according to the percentage by which the quantity of recyclables handled by the contractors is greater than the target handling quantity each month, of the various contractors' percentages of attaining the target handling quantity since the establishment of the relevant performance pay mechanism, as well as the number of times the authorities disbursed the performance pay and its amount, with a breakdown by GREEN@COMMUNITY Recycling Stores; whether the authorities have plans to raise the ceiling on the amount of the aforesaid performance pay in the light of the implementation of Municipal Solid Waste Charging (MSW charging), so as to encourage the contractors to raise the handling quantity of recyclables; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as some of the contractors have told me that following the implementation of MSW charging, it is believed that members of the public will have greater incentive to deliver styrofoam to them for recycling, but since styrofoam is in general larger in size whereas many shops provided under GREEN@COMMUNITY are small in area, they are worried that it will be difficult for those shops to cope with the relevant demand, of the corresponding measures put in place by the authorities in this regard;

(4) as there are views that at present, the opening hours of GREEN@COMMUNITY Recycling Stores are generally from 9am to 7pm, making it difficult for the working people to deliver waste to them for recycling on working days, whether the authorities will consider allocating additional resources so that the contractors can extend the opening hours of various Recycling Stores; if

so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) as the authorities have already signed operating contracts with many of the contractors before the implementation of MSW charging, whether the authorities have examined afresh the terms of those contracts and allocated additional resources in the light of the expected changes in the demand of members of the public following the implementation of MSW charging; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(6) as the authorities indicated earlier on that members of the public could redeem DBs through the GREEN\$ Electronic Participation Incentive Scheme in the future, whether the authorities have plans to include DBs in the relevant gift redemption list before the implementation of MSW charging in government departments and some buildings under an "early and pilot implementation" approach on April 1 this year; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(7) given that the current GREEN\$ Mobile App only has Chinese and English versions and is not available in languages such as Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu which are common among ethnic minorities (EMs), whether the authorities will consider adding these language versions to incentivize EMs to participate in recycling and support them in recycling; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has rolled out a number of waste reduction and recycling schemes to improve the community recycling network progressively, thereby helping the public practise waste reduction at source. For example, the Promotion Programme on Source Separation of Waste provides waste separation bins for free to over 2 700 housing estates / residential buildings and 1 200 commercial and industrial buildings, as well as providing about 1 100 sets of roadside recycling bins to rural areas to assist the public in recycling plastics, waste paper and metals. Besides, the EPD is continuously expanding GREEN@COMMUNITY, which is a community recycling network covering over 180 public collection points comprising 11 Recycling Stations, 40 Recycling Stores and over 130 Recycling Spots, to specifically support residents living in the clusters of residential buildings (including single-block buildings and "three-nil" buildings) that are lacking the space for setting up recycling facilities on their own to participate in separation at source and clean recycling. The EPD is also setting up 50 small-scale Recycling Stores in public rental housing (PRH) estates progressively and a total of 76 sets of smart recycling bins have been installed at various application points for trial use by the public under the pilot programme for a smart recycling system. The recycling network comprising the above schemes has already covered over 80 per cent of the population in various districts of Hong Kong.

â€‹The reply to the question raised by the Hon Edward Leung is as

follows:

(1) Currently, all public collection points of GREEN@COMMUNITY collect nine common types of recyclables (including plastics, glass containers, small electrical appliances, regulated electrical equipment, fluorescent lamps/tubes, rechargeable batteries, beverage cartons, waste paper and metals), and, at the same time, explain to the public through publicity and education on how to practise clean recycling. At present, most of the recyclables handed in by the public to GREEN@COMMUNITY are suitable for recycling, and only a small amount is not recyclable and needs to be disposed of.

The EPD anticipates that the incentives for the public to practise recycling will continue to increase. The operators of GREEN@COMMUNITY have already enhanced the promotion of municipal solid waste (MSW) charging in the community, as well as making use of their dedicated social media pages to issue posts and organising educational activities from time to time to educate the public on how to differentiate between recyclables that can or cannot be received. Moreover, based on the community needs, the Green Outreach of the EPD has also been organising different types of waste reduction and recycling promotional activities, thereby educating and encouraging the public to practise waste separation at source properly and integrate clean recycling into their daily lives.

As the waste sorted out from the recyclables is not generated by the operators of GREEN@COMMUNITY, the EPD will not require the operators to pay the relevant MSW charges and is discussing with the operators on how to handle such waste.

(2) The operators of Recycling Stores are required to provide the specified services during the contract period and meet the pre-determined performance targets, including the contractual monthly recycling quantity. The recycling targets specified in the operating contracts of respective Recycling Stores are set with reference to the community conditions of the districts in which they are located (e.g. population, the number of buildings participating in the Promotion Programme on Source Separation of Waste and the number of "three-nil" buildings, etc). The operators are subject to deduction of operational fees if they fail to meet the targets as required by the contracts. On the other hand, if the quantity of recyclables collected by the operators exceeds the recycling target to a specified level for a particular month, the EPD would grant performance payment to the operators so that they can make use of these additional resources to further promote recycling work in the community. According to EPD's preliminary figures for the third quarter of 2023, all operators of Recycling Stores could meet the contractual monthly recycling targets and over 90 per cent of operators received performance payment. As at mid-February this year, the EPD has granted about 200 times of performance payment totalling \$22 million to the operators concerned on a monthly basis in 2023-24, accounting for about 16 per cent of the total operating expenditure of the contracts. As the amount of performance payment received by individual operator involves sensitive information on contractual terms, we are unable to provide the relevant

details. Based on EPD's preliminary figures for the third quarter of 2023, the recycling performance of each Recycling Store is tabulated below:

Recycling Store	Plastics	Designated Recyclables other than Plastics
	Rate of Reaching the Recycling Targets	
GREEN@QUARRY BAY	119%	231%
GREEN@ABERDEEN	147%	146%
GREEN@TIN HAU	180%	247%
GREEN@SAI YING PUN	181%	175%
GREEN@SHEUNG WAN	156%	124%
GREEN@TO KWA WAN	165%	268%
GREEN@HUNG HOM	274%	248%
GREEN@WALLED CITY	196%	320%
GREEN@YUE MAN SQUARE	174%	233%
GREEN@CHEUNG SHA WAN	108%	150%
GREEN@TAI KOK TSUI	119%	226%
GREEN@SAN PO KONG	143%	227%
GREEN@MUI WO	127%	163%
GREEN@FANLING	218%	245%
GREEN@SHEK WU HUI	194%	237%
GREEN@PO LAM	232%	249%
GREEN@TAI WAI	235%	223%
GREEN@TAI PO MARKET	122%	145%
GREEN@LO TAK COURT	186%	247%
GREEN@SAN HUI	123%	159%
GREEN@YUEN LONG HUI	101%	164%
GREEN@LONG PING	277%	501%
GREEN@SAI KUNG TOWN	168%	484%
GREEN@KIN SANG	271%	378%
GREEN@YI PEI SQUARE	405%	651%
GREEN@JORDAN	161%	557%
GREEN@KENNEDY TOWN	355%	1040%
GREEN@HAPPY VALLEY	162%	556%
GREEN@LUEN WO HUI	348%	617%
GREEN@AP LEI CHAU	378%	739%
GREEN@TAI WO	335%	557%

All the operating contracts of Recycling Stores will expire in 2025 successively. The EPD will, based on the overall recycling situation during the current contractual period, comprehensively review the contractual

clauses on operational arrangement and performance payment, etc when preparing the tender documents of the follow-on operating contracts.

(3) Currently, the public can hand over styrofoam to GREEN@COMMUNITY for passing on to downstream recyclers approved by the EPD for proper treatment. Each GREEN@COMMUNITY facility has a workshop for temporary storage of recyclables. If the public needs to hand over styrofoam that is relatively bulky in size to GREEN@COMMUNITY, they are advised to contact the relevant facility to make prior arrangements.

The EPD has been encouraging the public and the business sector to avoid using single-use styrofoam products as far as possible and to promote the use of more environmentally friendly substitutes (such as durable containers that are reusable). Upon the implementation of the first-phase regulation of disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products on April 22 this year, the sale of expanded polystyrene (EPS) tableware will be totally banned and the provision of EPS tableware to dine-in and takeaway customers at catering premises will be prohibited, thereby reducing the use of styrofoam at source and reducing the quantity of styrofoam requiring handling.

(4) and (5) Currently, all Recycling Stores are basically open from 9am to 7pm or from 10am to 8pm all year round, including Sundays and public holidays (except for the Christmas holidays, the Lunar New Year holidays and on their eves, as well as the New Year's Eve, the Mid-Autumn Festival and the Winter Solstice, which are subject to separate arrangements). In response to the service demand of the public, the EPD has also adjusted the operating hours of most of the Recycling Stores in PRH estates to until 8pm. The opening hours of Recycling Stations are from 8am to 8pm.

The EPD will keep reviewing the operation of all GREEN@COMMUNITY facilities and the specific needs of individual districts for recycling facilities, and will proactively explore various measures with the operators such as increasing the number of Recycling Spots and extending their service hours, etc before the implementation of the MSW charging, so as to cope with possible increase in the amount of recyclables and to improve the services of the community recycling network.

When drawing up the existing services contracts in 2021 and 2022, the EPD had already taken into account the increase in incentives for the public to participate in recycling during the initial stage of implementation of MSW charging. We will closely monitor the operation of GREEN@COMMUNITY and maintain close communication with the operators. The EPD will consider allocating additional resources to the operators if necessary.

(6) To complement the implementation of MSW charging and continue attracting the public to participate in recycling actively, the EPD will introduce several types of designated bags for MSW charging as rewards for the GREEN\$ Electronic Participation Incentive Scheme. In addition, the EPD is considering to allow the public to redeem the designated bags with fewer GREEN\$ points at the initial stage of implementation of MSW charging in order to encourage the public to practise recycling. The details will be announced

on the Hong Kong Waste Reduction Website, the GREEN\$ mobile app, and the dedicated pages of the various GREEN@COMMUNITY facilities on social media in due course.

(7) The interface of the GREEN\$ mobile app adopts a design of infographic paired with simple text to provide users an intuitive, easy-to-understand, and user-friendly experience. The staff of GREEN@COMMUNITY will also provide immediate on-site assistance to the public (including ethnic minorities) when they are using the GREEN\$ mobile app or whenever necessary. Currently, the users of the GREEN\$ mobile app comprise many ethnic minorities. They are generally able to complete the recycling process smoothly. We will keep evaluating the users' feedback to continuously optimise the GREEN\$ mobile app.

DH continues interdepartmental operation against distribution of smoking product advertisements in public housing estates (with photos)

â€œTo step up enforcement actions to combat the distribution of smoking product leaflets in public housing estates, the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 28) continued to carry out a joint operation with the Police and the Housing Department (HD) at two public housing estates in Sham Shui Po District to conduct inspections and carry out publicity. In addition to patrolling at the estates, officers from TACO provided estate security personnel and residents with information on what to do when a suspected violation is found. Three members of the Sham Shui Po District Council also joined today's operation and reminded the residents not to defy the law.

In accordance with the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) (the Ordinance), no person shall distribute any smoking product advertisement (including any promotion leaflets). Any person who contravenes the regulation is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000. In 2023, TACO received about 21 130 complaints related to the Ordinance, including about 1 070 complaints (accounting for approximately 5 per cent of the total) involving the distribution of smoking product advertisements. TACO will continue to carry out relevant interdepartmental operations, and follow up and investigate every complaint regarding the distribution of smoking product advertisements, as well as refer any suspected cases of illicit cigarettes that involve violations of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) to the relevant department for further investigation.

Since January this year, TACO has already carried out joint operations with the Police and the HD in a total of 29 housing estates in various districts across Hong Kong. Another four joint operations have also been conducted with the Customs and Excise Department in February to combat the sale of illicit cigarettes and related promotional activities at public housing estates. Additionally, TACO, the Police and the HD have established a co-operation mechanism targeting the distribution of smoking product leaflets at public housing estates. When any smoking product leaflet distribution is detected at public housing estates, the housing estate staff will contact the Police for assistance and subsequently refer the case to TACO for further investigation. Since 2021, TACO has successfully prosecuted 12 offenders (involved in 13 cases) for distributing smoking product leaflets. The highest penalty for these convicted cases was a fine of \$8,000.

A spokesman for the DH stressed that the department has always been closely monitoring and taking stringent enforcement actions against violations of the Ordinance (including the distribution of smoking product advertisements). The spokesman reiterated that all tobacco products, regardless of whether they are duty paid or not, pose significant health risks. Smokers should quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. Information on smoking cessation can also be obtained from www.livetobaccofree.hk.





[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 February 27 to noon today (February 28), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 199 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 33 168 samples of food imported from Japan (including 22 228 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 9 274 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.