

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.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, February 28, 2024 is 105.1 (same as yesterday's index).

LCQ17: Promoting waste reduction and recycling

Following is a question by the Hon Dennis 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 promoting waste reduction and recycling, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has plans for extending the service hours of Recycling Stores of the community recycling network GREEN@COMMUNITY to 8pm across the board, and for Recycling Stations, Recycling Stores and Recycling Spots of GREEN@COMMUNITY to open on all public holidays in order to facilitate delivery of waste for recycling by members of the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) prior to the implementation of Municipal Solid Waste Charging in August this year, whether it has plans to increase the number of Recycling Stations, Recycling Stores and Recycling Spots of GREEN@COMMUNITY; if so, of their numbers;

(3) as it is learnt that waste plastics recycling bins for recycling, among others, "other plastics" (such as plastic bags, polyfoam products and plastic utensils) are provided in some public and private residential buildings registered under the pilot scheme on waste plastics collection and recycling, of the respective numbers of public rental housing (PRH) estates and private housing courts provided with such recycling bins as at December 31 last year, as well as the number of recycling bins involved; whether EPD has plans to provide more of such recycling bins at PRH estates and private housing courts by August this year; if so, of the respective numbers of relevant PRH estates and private housing courts, as well as the number of recycling bins involved; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) of the number of public refuse collection points (RCPs) in rural villages provided with waste plastics recycling bins for recycling other plastics as at December 31 last year, as well as the number of recycling bins involved; whether the EPD has plans to provide more of such recycling bins at RCPs in rural villages by August this year; if so, of the respective numbers of RCPs and recycling bins involved; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Currently, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has rolled out a number of waste reduction and recycling schemes to improve the recycling network progressively, thereby helping the public practise waste reduction at source. For example, the 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 to specifically support residents living in the clusters of residential buildings (including single-block residential 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 on Smart Recycling Systems. The recycling network comprising the above schemes has already covered over 80 per cent of the population in various districts of Hong Kong. The reply to the question raised by the Hon Dennis Leung is as follows:

(1) 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 (LNY) 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 make special service arrangements for GREEN@COMMUNITY from time to time as necessary. For example, during the weekend preceding the last LNY holidays, the operators of individual Recycling Stations and Recycling Stores set up a total of about 20 add-on Recycling Spots. All Recycling Stores also extended their service hours by three hours (i.e. operating from 9am to 10pm) on the 28th day of the last lunar month (February 7) and opened for six hours (from 11am to 5pm) from the second to fourth days of the LNY holidays (from February 11 to 13). These arrangements enabled the public to recycle the recyclables generated from the clean-up activities before the LNY.

(2) As at mid-February 2024, a total of 11 Recycling Stations, 40 Recycling Stores and over 130 Recycling Spots have been set up throughout the 18 districts in Hong Kong under GREEN@COMMUNITY for the collection of 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. The first Recycling Store in an MTR station, GREEN@TSING YI, has just been put into service in February 2024, and the twelfth Recycling Station, GREEN@WONG TAI SIN, is also expected to commence services in the fourth quarter of 2024 gradually. The EPD is setting up small-scale Recycling Stores

in 50 PRH estates progressively in order to enable residents living in the PRH estates and nearby to participate in clean recycling. Eight of the small-scale Recycling Stores have already commenced operation, and the remaining Recycling Stores will commence operation gradually around April 1 this year. We will also enhance recycling services by increasing the number of Recycling Spots in the vicinity of "three-nil buildings" and in public markets.

The EPD will keep reviewing the operation of all community recycling facilities and the specific needs of individual districts for recycling facilities, and will proactively explore various measures such as increasing the number of Recycling Spots and extending their service hours, etc. We anticipate that the number of public collection points in Hong Kong will increase to about 500 in August this year to cope with the possible increase in the amount of recyclables and to improve the services of the community recycling network.

(3) At present, GREEN@COMMUNITY provides collection-at-door service to a total of about 200 PRH estates and over 1 800 private housing estates/single-block buildings/villages, etc for collection of nine common types of recyclables, including plastic bottles and other plastics. The contractors of EPD have provided about 2 300 designated recycling bins for "other plastics" for 99 PRH estates and about 350 private housing estates/residential buildings. Some housing estates/residential buildings have also set up their own recycling bins for "other plastics". We do not have statistical data on the numbers of these recycling bins.

In addition, the EPD is implementing the Pilot Programme on Smart Recycling Systems to enhance the operational efficiency of GREEN@COMMUNITY and provide the public with new recycling experience. At the present stage, a total of about 50 sets of smart recycling bins which can collect "other plastics" have been distributed to different application points (including PRH estates, private housing estates, villages, shopping malls, universities and government venues, etc) and have already been put into service.

(4) As at mid-February 2024, the EPD has set up about 1 100 sets of roadside recycling bins in public places in the rural areas, among which about 600 sets are placed outside the refuse collection points managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to enable residents in rural areas to recycle the most common types of recyclables, including paper, plastic bottles and metals. In case "other plastics" are received by the roadside recycling bins for plastic bottles, the service contractors of EPD will collect and deliver them to the workshops altogether for sorting before delivering to the approved recyclers for proper treatment. We will review the usage of roadside recycling bins in rural areas and change the labels of "plastic bottles" to "plastics" progressively in order to clearly indicate that the recycling bins concerned can receive any type of waste plastics.

LCQ4: Recovery of waste textiles

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

Question:

According to the waste statistics for 2021 published by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), the quantity of waste textiles disposed of at landfills was 404 tonnes on average per day, accounting for 3.6 per cent of the total quantity of municipal solid waste (MSW), and the quantity of textiles accounted for less than 1 per cent of the quantity of recyclables recovered from MSW. On the other hand, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) has since 2006 implemented the Community Used Clothes Recycling Bank Scheme (the Scheme), which aims at facilitating members of the public to make use of the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks to donate used clothes in support of environmental protection and for charitable purposes. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the quantity of waste textiles recovered through the Scheme in the past three years, and its percentage in the total quantity of waste textiles recovered;

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the quantity of waste textiles recovered from the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks in the 18 districts in Hong Kong; if so, of the details;

(3) as there are views pointing out that the rise of "fast fashion" has led to a decline in the quality of clothing, resulting in nearly 70 per cent of the used clothes recovered at present being waste, of the corresponding measures put in place by EPD to recover and recycle used clothes;

(4) of the total number of clothing recovery and recycling contractors in Hong Kong at present; whether it knows the main recycling methods adopted by these contractors;

(5) whether EPD has set targets for the quantity of waste textiles reduced, their recovery rate and recycling rate; if so, whether it will put in place new measures to encourage community-wide participation in the recovery of waste textiles; and

(6) whether HAD has considered enhancing the Scheme by, for example, installing smart devices in the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks, so that the quantity of clothing recovered in the recycling banks can be displayed in real time on a one-stop website, with a view to making it more convenient for members of the public to use the recycling banks?

Reply:

President,

The policy of the Government is to promote waste reduction and recycling in the most cost-effective way, thereby alleviating the burden on landfills and promoting the development of circular economy. According to market principles, the recycling trade has been proactively collecting and recycling recyclables with stable market value (such as metals). The priority of Government's measures will be accorded to the treatment of two types of wastes, including (a) wastes of relatively large quantities but with low recycling value and high recycling costs (such as waste plastics and food waste), and (b) wastes containing hazardous substances, posing hazards to the environment and human health (such as waste electrical and electronic equipment). When considering options for specific measures, we will, at the same time, also consider converting waste into energy, instead of remanufacturing, to enhance the cost-effectiveness of recycling.

Among the municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Hong Kong, food waste, waste plastics and waste paper account for over 70 per cent of the total quantity, while waste textiles account for about 3 per cent. Based on the above policy principle, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) provides central collection services for waste plastics, waste paper, waste glass containers and food waste. In addition, GREEN@COMMUNITY, the community recycling network under the EPD, collects nine common types of recyclables which are more difficult to reuse, including plastics, waste paper, metals, glass containers, small electrical appliances, regulated electrical equipment, fluorescent lamps/tubes, rechargeable batteries and beverage cartons, and delivers them to downstream recyclers for proper treatment, export or local recycling.

For waste textiles, there are various non-profit making organisations, social enterprises and commercial organisations in the community collecting waste textiles for resale or export. The Home Affairs Department (HAD) has launched the Community Used Clothes Recycling Bank Scheme (the Scheme) since 2006. The participating non-governmental organisations operate the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks to collect used clothes donated by the public regularly. At present, the four Scheme Managers of the Scheme are Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong), Christian Action, the Salvation Army and the Conservancy Association. A total of 187 Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks are placed at appropriate locations in all districts across the territory. All of the used clothes collected and the revenue generated from their sale have to be used for charitable purposes.

In consultation with the HAD, the reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Yung is as follows:

(1) and (2) The four Scheme Managers of the Scheme (namely Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong), Christian Action, the Salvation Army and the Conservancy Association) operate and manage the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks at designated districts respectively. In the past three years, the quantities of used clothes collected in the different districts by the Scheme Managers are

tabulated below:

Scheme Manager	District	Quantity of used clothes collected (in tonnes)		
		2021	2022	2023
Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong)	Central & Western Eastern Wan Chai Southern Islands	246.96	237.13	292.89
Christian Action	Sham Shui Po Kwun Tong Kowloon City Yau Tsim Mong Wong Tai Sin	283.77	234.88	267.88
The Salvation Army	Tsuen Wan Kwai Tsing Yuen Long Tuen Mun	60.84	64.25	65.05
The Conservancy Association	Sai Kung North Tai Po Sha Tin	54.08	60	85.83
	Quantity per year (in tonnes)	645.65	596.26	711.66

According to the waste statistics compiled by the EPD, the recycling rate of waste textiles collected by different non-profit making organisations, social enterprises, commercial organisations and the Scheme has increased from about 4 per cent in 2018 to nearly 11 per cent in 2022. The total quantity of waste textiles recycled in 2022 was about 17 000 tonnes, among which the used clothes collected by the Scheme accounted for about 3 per cent.

(3), (4) and (5) Given the wide variety of clothing materials, recycling used clothing involves technical and cost-effectiveness issues at present. Therefore, there are organisations in the community providing different kinds of clothing recycling services, including consignment service in second-hand clothing stores, online auctions and bartering, etc. In recent years, there are also some large-scale fashion stores offering shopping discounts for used clothes recycling, and reprocessing the collected used clothes into fabrics or other products. We do not collect the data from these organisations or enterprises, and do not set any recycling target for used clothes.

The Government has all along been promoting the environmentally friendly culture of "Use Less, Waste Less" and enabling green living to take root in the community. Before disposing of those relatively durable items or items with reusable value, such as clothing, we encourage the public to consider

how to better utilise them first, such as reusing these items through "swapping", resale or donation to charitable organisations, etc. The Recycling Stations of GREEN@COMMUNITY organise different types of environmental education activities from time to time, such as organising workshops to teach the public how to properly use or upcycle waste items, including clothing, and arranging "swapping" events, etc. In addition, the EPD makes use of the GREEN\$ mobile app and the Waste Reduction Website (www.wastereduction.gov.hk) to provide the public with the locations of the used clothes recycling points managed by the Scheme and other organisations.

For the time being, reuse of used clothes, such as allowing non-profit making organisations participating in the Scheme to donate them to people/organisations in need, or making use of the revenue generated from the sale of used clothes for charitable purposes, is the most cost-effective way of handling. With the development of recycling technologies, there may be other cost-effective ways to recycle used clothes in the future.

(6) To facilitate and encourage the public to donate used clothes, the HAD disseminates information relating to the Scheme, including the locations of the Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks and details of the Scheme Managers, etc. on its website (www.had.gov.hk/en/public_services/community_used_clothes_recycling_bank_scheme/). The HAD will closely monitor the development of relevant technologies, including the application of smart recycling devices, with a view to providing the public with a more convenient service to recycle used clothes.