

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (February 16) released the latest grading of water quality for four gazetted beaches that are open all year round for swimming.

Four beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach	Golden Beach
Deep Water Bay Beach	Silverstrand Beach

Compared with the grading released last week, there was no change in the grading for these beaches.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades, namely Good (Grade 1), Fair (Grade 2), Poor (Grade 3) and Very Poor (Grade 4), 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.

While the ratings represent the general water quality at the beaches, an EPD spokesman reminded members of the public that water quality could be temporarily affected during and after periods of heavy rain. Bathers should avoid swimming at beaches for up to three days after a tropical cyclone or heavy rainfall.

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 EPD's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666. Members of the public can also obtain the latest daily water quality forecast information for all beaches that are open for swimming through the Beach Water Quality Forecast mobile application (available for download from: www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQApp) or the dedicated beach water quality forecast page (www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQForecast) on the EPD's beach thematic website.

February 2024 issue of "Hong Kong

Monthly Digest of Statistics” now available

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) published today (February 16) the February 2024 issue of the "Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics" (HKMDS).

Apart from providing up-to-date statistics, this issue also contains a feature article entitled "Use of Language in Hong Kong".

"Use of Language in Hong Kong"

The C&SD conducted a Thematic Household Survey on use of language in Hong Kong during September to December 2021 to collect information on Hong Kong persons aged 6 to 65 on the use of spoken and written Chinese and English. This feature article gives a brief account of the major findings of the survey.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Social Surveys Section (2) of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5179; email: thematic@censtatd.gov.hk).

Published in bilingual form, the HKMDS is a compact volume of official statistics containing about 130 tables. It collects up-to-date statistical series on various aspects of the social and economic situation of Hong Kong. Topics include population; labour; external trade; National Income and Balance of Payments; prices; business performance; energy; housing and property; government accounts, finance and insurance; and transport, communications and tourism. For selected key statistical items, over 20 charts depicting the annual trend in the past decade and quarterly or monthly trend in the recent two years are also available. Users can download the Digest at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1010002&scode=460).

Enquiries about the contents of the Digest can be directed to the Statistical Information Dissemination Section (1) of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4738; email: gen-enquiry@censtatd.gov.hk).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, February 16, 2024 is 105.2 (down 0.2 against yesterday's index).

Sydney ETO holds reception in Melbourne to celebrate Chinese New Year (with photos)

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Sydney (Sydney ETO) hosted a reception in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday (February 15) to celebrate Chinese New Year.

More than 150 guests from various sectors including political and business circles, media, academic and community groups as well as government representatives attended the reception. Amongst them were the Acting Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Melbourne, Mr Zeng Jianhua, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Development, representing the Premier of Victoria, Mr Paul Hamer.

Addressing the reception, the Director of the Sydney ETO, Miss Trista Lim, highlighted the strong trade and investment ties as well as the long-standing people-to-people links between Hong Kong and Australia. Miss Lim introduced to the guests the array of initiatives announced in "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address" to attract enterprises, investment and talent, and to enhance Hong Kong's development of "eight centres" as outlined in the National 14th Five-Year Plan. In the international arena, Miss Lim said that Hong Kong is striving for early accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, the world's largest free trade agreement.

"Blessed with the strong support of our motherland and our close connection to the world, Hong Kong is the only world-class city that can capitalise on both the China advantage and the international advantage. We will continue to proactively play the bridging role as the 'super connector' and 'super value-adder' between the Mainland and the rest of the world", Miss Lim said.

Miss Lim also shared that the Government will step up promoting the development of a mega-event economy, noting that over 80 mega events are to take place in Hong Kong in the first half of 2024.

To promote traditional Chinese music, a Chinese orchestra performance was staged at the reception.

In addition to the Melbourne reception, the Sydney ETO will host Chinese New Year receptions in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth in Australia, and Auckland in New Zealand, to celebrate the Year of the Dragon with the communities.



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 15 to noon today (February 16), the CFS conducted

tests on the radiological levels of 116 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).

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 30 819 samples of food imported from Japan (including 20 660 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 8 672 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.