

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, January 19, 2024 is 104.9 (down 0.1 against yesterday's index).

Prefabrication of modules for waste-to-energy facility I·PARK1 completed (with photos)

The prefabrication of electrical and mechanical equipment modules for the I·PARK1, Hong Kong's first waste-to-energy (WtE) facility for treating municipal solid waste (MSW) has been successfully completed. Deputy Director of Environmental Protection Mr Raymond Wu today (January 19) attended a ceremony for the completion and delivery of the giant electrical and mechanical equipment modules at the prefabrication yard in Zhuhai.

Mr Wu, Zhuhai officials and representatives of I·PARK1's contractors, who also attended the event, delivered speeches at the ceremony. They also reviewed the processes and achievements of the prefabrication, assembly, testing and successful deliveries of the electrical and mechanical equipment modules together.

Addressing the ceremony, Mr Wu said that the successful delivery of prefabricated modules marked another important milestone for the I·PARK1 project. The full collaboration of the relevant parties in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, as well as the close co-operation of various government departments in Hong Kong, led to a smooth arrangement for the cross-border delivery by sea. This also showcased the determination and joint efforts of the project teams from Hong Kong and Zhuhai that yielded a great success with fruitful achievements.

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is building the I·PARK1, which is located on an artificial island in the sea off Shek Kwu Chau, at full speed. The contractor arranged to prefabricate the main electrical and mechanical equipment modules in Zhuhai using the Modular integrated Construction (MiC) approach, which comprised six incineration boiler modules and six flue gas treatment system modules. All incineration boiler modules have been successfully delivered. Each incineration boiler module is about 50 metres in height and weighs about 6 000 tonnes. Each boiler module, which are the largest of their kind in the world, takes approximately one year to prefabricate and requires around 500 workers to work on it simultaneously during peak periods. The last two flue gas treatment system modules are expected to arrive in Hong Kong in the first quarter of this year.

Mr Wu said, "The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is committed to develop the WtE facility for sustainable MSW management. The EPD will continue to closely monitor the construction progress of I·PARK1 for commissioning in 2025. Moreover, we are pushing forward with the development of the second WtE facility (I·PARK2) proposed to be constructed at Tsang Tsui in Tuen Mun, and are promoting various waste reduction and recycling initiatives in order to achieve the goals of 'Zero Landfill' and carbon neutrality set out in the Waste Blueprint for Hong Kong 2035 and Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050."



[Import of poultry meat and products from areas in Sweden and France suspended](#)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (January 19) that in view of notifications from the Swedish Board of Agriculture and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 and H5 avian influenza in Ystad Municipality of Skåne County in Sweden and Vendée Department in France respectively, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above-mentioned areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 50 tonnes of frozen poultry meat from Sweden, and about 170 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 280 000 poultry eggs from France in the first nine months of last year.

"The CFS has contacted the Swedish and French authorities over the issues and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

13 persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations (with photo)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight" and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion" and "Windsand" for four consecutive days from January 15 to yesterday (January 18). A total of 13 suspected illegal workers were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 24 target locations including premises under renovation, restaurants and retail shops. Seven suspected illegal workers were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised five men and two women, aged 22 to 57. Among them, one woman was suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card.

During operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 83 target locations in Central and Western districts. Six suspected illegal workers were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised one man and five women, aged 30 to 50. Among them, one man was a holder of recognisance form, which prohibits him from taking any employment.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him or her shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties."

The spokesman warned, "As stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land is prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. Under the prevailing laws, it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$100,000 and up to 10 years' imprisonment."

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. Under the Immigration Ordinance, the maximum penalty for an employer employing a person who is not lawfully employable, i.e. an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to

land, has been significantly increased from a fine of \$350,000 and three years' imprisonment to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment to reflect the gravity of such offences. The director, manager, secretary, partner, etc, of the company concerned may also bear criminal liability. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence.

According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and to imprisonment for one year. In that connection, the spokesman would like to remind all employers not to defy the law by employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to take resolute enforcement action to combat such offences.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the ImmD officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter or temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



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 January 18 to noon today (January 19), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 104 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 26 130 samples of food imported from Japan (including 17 407 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 7 368 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.