

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (January 12) released the latest grading of water quality for four gazetted beaches that are open all year round for swimming.

Three beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1) and one as Fair (Grade 2).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach Golden Beach
Deep Water Bay Beach

Grade 2 beach is:

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.

Research Grants Council to present public lecture on Happy, Healthy, Longevity – AI Can Help on January 20

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

In line with the Government's initiative to promote STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) education for all, for fun and for diversity, the Research Grants Council (RGC) is organising a series of public lectures titled Happy, Healthy, Longevity – AI Can Help, covering areas including technology, innovation and health. The second lecture of the series will be held at the Hong Kong Science Museum on January 20 (Saturday). All are welcome.

The RGC has invited Assistant Professor of the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Professor Wong Tsz-wai and Associate Director of University Research Facility of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence of the Education University of Hong Kong Professor Yu Leung-ho to talk about how artificial intelligence (AI) facilitates learning, helps medical diagnoses and saves lives. Details are as follows:

Time: 2.30pm – 4.30pm

Venue: Lecture Hall, 1/F, Hong Kong Science Museum

Language: Cantonese

Admission: Free (seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis)

Members of the public can also watch a live broadcast of the lecture through the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/hkscm) or the YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/user/hksciencemuseum) of the Hong Kong Science Museum.

First session: AI microscopy – High-speed imaging of cancer cells

Professor Wong's team has recently developed an AI-based microscope that revolutionises the ways cancer cells are detected before, during and after surgeries. Compared with the usual one-week processing time, it takes only three minutes for the AI-based microscope to provide high-resolution images of biological tissue samples from a patient that closely resemble images acquired using the highest clinical standard. The new technology enables fast and accurate medical diagnoses for all tissue types.

Second session: From saving lives to empowering learning: Wow, AI is so close!

AI is finding its way into a wide range of applications, from personalised recommendation systems and chatbots to language learning and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education. Professor

Yu will showcase several AI projects that have real-life applications, including suicide risk detection on social media, medical image diagnoses, AI-assisted language learning and assessment, and preference learning in social networks for personalised recommendations.

The RGC has been regularly organising public lectures since 2009, featuring various distinguished scholars as speakers. These lectures aim to promote research knowledge of Hong Kong's tertiary institutions and to raise public awareness of the significance and value of local research work.

For enquiries, please call 2524 3987 or visit the University Grants Committee webpage (www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/about/events/lectures/lectures.html). In addition, members of the public can register for the RGC's email subscription service at www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/about/subscribe to receive regular updates.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, January 12, 2024 is 104.3 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

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 11 to noon today (January 12), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 150 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 52 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 24 917 samples of food imported from Japan (including 16 581 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 7 018 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

FEHD orders restaurant in Kai Tak to suspend business for 14 days

The Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene has ordered a general restaurant in Kai Tak to suspend business for 14 days, as the operator repeatedly breached the Food Business Regulation (FBR) by extending the business area illegally.

The restaurant, LA MENSA GRILL & BAR, located at Shop D-F on the ground floor of 10 Muk Ning Street, was ordered to suspend business from today (January 12) to January 25.

"Two convictions for the above-mentioned breach were recorded against

the restaurant operator last June and September. A total fine of \$5,800 was levied by the court and 30 demerit points were registered against the licensee under the department's demerit points system. The contraventions resulted in the 14-day licence suspension," a spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said.

The licensee concerned had a record of two convictions for the same offence in May last year. A total fine of \$5,000 was levied and 30 demerit points were also registered, leading to a seven-day licence suspension during August and September last year.

The spokesman reminded the licensees of food premises to comply with the FBR and other relevant regulations, or their licences could be suspended or cancelled.

Licensed food premises are required to exhibit a sign, at a conspicuous place near the main entrance, indicating that the premises have been licensed. A list of licensed food premises is available on the FEHD's website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/index.html).