

# Government announces Technology Voucher Programme will cease accepting applications

The Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) announced today (December 13) that the Technology Voucher Programme (TVP) will cease accepting applications after December 31, 2024.

"The Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) administered by the ITC has been set up for over 20 years. It has made significant contributions to the local innovation and technology development by nurturing numerous research and development (R&D) talent and start-ups, delivering commercialised R&D results, as well as attracting many private investments," an ITC spokesperson said. "To ensure the proper use of public resources and the overall sustainability of the ITF so that it can continue to drive high-quality development of Hong Kong's economy, besides introducing new schemes, the Government must keep pace with the times and continue to refine and consolidate existing schemes under the ITF."

The TVP was launched under the ITF in November 2016 to subsidise local enterprises/organisations in using technological services and solutions on a matching basis. The TVP accepts applications from enterprises/organisations of all industries and does not have pre-defined types of eligible technological services. As of November 30 this year, 37 059 TVP applications involving a total funding amount of about \$6.6 billion have been approved, which helped enterprises improve productivity, and upgrade or transform their business processes.

The Government considers that the TVP has achieved its original intent. In recent years, the Government has continued to strengthen support measures for different industries, and many bureaux and departments have introduced more targeted funding schemes dedicated to the specific conditions or operational needs of individual industries. In view of this, the Government has decided to cease accepting new TVP applications after December 31 this year.

For enquiries concerning TVP application arrangements, please contact the TVP Secretariat (Tel: 2789 7000; email: [tvpc-enquiry@hkpc.org](mailto:tvpc-enquiry@hkpc.org)).

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## 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 December 12 to noon today (December 13), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 151 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html)).

From August 24, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 105 115 samples of food imported from Japan (including 68 015 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 23 766 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

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## Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (December 13) released the latest grading of water quality for six gazetted beaches that are open all year round for swimming.

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

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach      Golden Beach  
Deep Water Bay Beach

Grade 2 beaches are:

Casam Beach      Silverstrand Beach  
Lido Beach

Compared with the grading released last week, Lido Beach has been changed from Grade 1 to Grade 2.

"The changes are generally within the normal range of fluctuation of the bacteriological water quality of the beaches," an EPD spokesman said.

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, the 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](http://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 EPD's dedicated webpage on the beach water quality forecast

([www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQForecast](http://www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQForecast)).

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## **Effective Exchange Rate Index**

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, December 13, 2024 is 106.9 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

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## **Speech by CE at International Forum on "Pathways to a Sustainable Future" (English only) (with video)**

Following is the video speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the International Forum on "Pathways to a Sustainable Future" today (December 13):

Secretary General Wang Songmiao (Secretary-General of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Deputy Commissioner Li Yongsheng (Deputy Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR), Professor Herman Hu (Chairman of Friday Culture Limited), Mr Cheung Chi-kong (Deputy Secretary-General of Hong Kong Coalition), Mr Wang Kaibo (Vice Chairman of Hong Kong Ta Kung Wen Wei Media Group), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am pleased to speak to you at the fourth international forum organised by Friday Culture Limited, the Hong Kong Coalition and Dot Dot News.

You are gathered to discuss a topic of vital importance to Hong Kong and, indeed, all of humanity – "Pathways to a Sustainable Future". The world is faced with accelerating changes not seen in a century. Amid deepening geopolitical tensions, escalating trade disruptions, and increasingly severe environmental challenges, exploring the path to sustainable development has become the responsibility of our generation, as well as a valuable legacy for the generations to come.

As one of the top three global financial centres, Hong Kong is committed to supporting the cause of sustainability through our strengths in finance.

Hong Kong is a leading sustainable finance hub in Asia. Core Climate, the international carbon market launched by the HKEX (Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited), is the world's only carbon market to offer Hong Kong dollar and Renminbi settlement, for the trading of international voluntary carbon credits.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority has unveiled the Sustainable Finance Action Agenda. As detailed in the eight goals proposed in the Action Agenda, our banks will strive to achieve net zero in their own operations by 2030, and in their financed emissions by 2050. We will also develop Hong Kong into the go-to sustainable financing platform of Asia and beyond, closing talent and knowledge gaps in sustainable finance in the region.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government will launch a roadmap this year on the full adoption of the International Financial Reporting Standards – Sustainability Disclosure Standards, or the ISSB Standards. I am pleased to add that we have already launched the roadmap this week. It underlines our commitment to facilitating sustainable financing and investment for the global agenda of green transition.

At the same time, Hong Kong is dedicated to the application of renewable energy, and propelling our green and low-carbon transformation. The Government will subsidise the taxi trade and franchised bus companies to purchase electric vehicles, as well as the trials of Hydrogen Fuel Cell heavy vehicles.

More on green transport. The number of electric vehicles in Hong Kong has increased from about 14 000 five years ago to over 100 000 now. We will continue to expand the network of charging facilities to ensure that there will be sufficient and convenient charging facilities to meet the needs of various types of electric vehicles. We target to increase the number of public and private parking spaces with charging infrastructure in Hong Kong to about 200 000 by mid-2027.

Ladies and gentlemen, Hong Kong will continue on the path of sustainable development and actively seek opportunities for co-operation with partners from home and beyond in addressing the challenges posed by climate change. I believe that by embracing collaboration, we will be able to find forward-thinking solutions and create a better future for Hong Kong and the world.

My thanks to the organisers for this important gathering. I trust that today's discussions will inspire more thinking and action, uniting our community in contributing to a sustainable world.

I wish you the best of health in the coming year. Thank you very much.