

AFCD reports to Expert Group on Conservation of Marine Mammals on investigation findings of cause of death of Bryde's whale last year

The Expert Group on Conservation of Marine Mammals held a meeting today (July 19). The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) reported to the Expert Group on the findings of the investigation into the cause of death of the Bryde's whale that appeared in Hong Kong waters in July last year, as well as the progress of the Government's work in strengthening conservation of marine mammals.

After comprehensive consideration of the report of the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong (OPCFHK) commissioned by the AFCD last year to investigate the cause of death of the Bryde's whale, as well as the opinions of two experts from Australia and Spain, the Expert Group noted that the Bryde's whale was struck by a fast-moving vessel between the morning of July 30 and the morning of July 31 last year, the animal's back and spine was thus injured and instant death was caused. The type of the vessel concerned cannot be determined in the analysis. Nonetheless, no whale-watching activity was detected during the four days prior to the death of the Bryde's whale. Moreover, fishing vessels generally do not travel at such high speeds, and fishing sampans and speedboats equipped with outboard engines could not cause such large wounds. Therefore, the wounds were more likely caused by other types of vessels.

Whales per se are not species that reside in Hong Kong waters. Their entry into Hong Kong waters is likely due to special circumstances, such as health problems, disorientation or young whales losing their caretakers. The international principle in dealing with this type of situation is to avoid any human disturbance as far as possible, strengthen monitoring and patrols, and allow the whales to swim back to suitable habitats on their own under minimal disturbance as far as possible.

A spokesman for the AFCD said, "Between the first sighting of the Bryde's whale in Sai Kung waters last year until its death, the AFCD worked with the OPCFHK as well as local and Mainland marine conservation experts to closely monitor the health condition of the whale and consider suitable measures to protect its safety, and worked jointly with relevant government departments to advise the public not to go out to sea for whale watching and conduct water activities in the relevant waters. On July 29 and 30, the AFCD further co-ordinated with relevant government departments to adopt special administrative measures to set up a management area in the waters frequented by the whale, where patrols were stepped up and all vessels entering the area were requested to leave immediately.

"Based on the experience of this incident, the department has strengthened its work in four aspects, including formulating a response plan with relevant departments to deal with similar incidents in future, reviewing the relevant powers of the AFCD under current legislation, sending staff to the Mainland and overseas to learn about measures for protecting marine mammals and applying them to the response plan, and taking measures to raise public awareness and knowledge of wildlife conservation, etc."

Since July last year, the AFCD has followed up on the above four aspects as follows:

(1) Formulate response plan: Making reference to the opinions of local, Mainland and overseas experts, as well as the actual local situation, the Government has formulated a response plan based on different scenarios where non-resident cetaceans appear in Hong Kong waters. The plan provides guidelines for interdepartmental co-ordination and response actions, stipulating the specific roles and actions of the relevant departments in monitoring, on-site operations, support, and dissemination of information to the public, with a view to handling similar situations more quickly and effectively in future. In particular, the AFCD, together with the Marine Department and the Marine Police, tried out the principles and procedures of the response plan when handling a whale sighting case in Southern District in September last year, where swift deployment and actions were taken in respect of monitoring, patrolling and disseminating information, with good effect. The Government will listen to the advice of the Expert Group, and will also maintain communication with relevant organisations and experts to ensure that the response plan meets actual needs and is kept up-to-date;

(2) Legislative review: The Government has reviewed the relevant legislation for the protection of marine mammals and preliminarily suggested that the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation should be given more powers to deal with exceptional circumstances, including the designation of temporary restriction areas more quickly where necessary through simplified procedures, and imposing restrictions on vessel navigation and relevant activities within such areas. These measures aim to provide better protection and a safe environment as well as reducing human disturbance to species that accidentally enter local waters, such as whales that are not found in Hong Kong waters normally. The Government also proposed that whale-watching activities should be prohibited to avoid causing stress to whales and endangering their health and safety. The Government expects to consult the Expert Group on the specific proposals for the relevant legislative amendments within this year;

(3) Exchange with experienced agencies: The AFCD earlier sent staff to the Beibu Gulf Cetacean Research and Protection Center at Beihai, Guangxi, and Southern Marine Parks, Queensland, Australia, to exchange and learn from their experience in dealing with marine mammal stranding; legislation, management and research on the protection of such animals; as well as communication with the public, publicity and education, such as how to observe the health condition of wild whales and respond to whale sighting reports according to a tiered mechanism, etc. The department has suitably

applied these relevant experiences in their follow-up work such as formulation of a response plan and legislative review, etc; and

(4) Enhance publicity and education: With regard to the whale sighting case in Southern District in September last year, the AFCD immediately issued press releases and posts on social media as well as distributing leaflets at nearby piers to urge the public not to go out to the sea for whale watching, whereas the Marine Department also called on vessels to reduce speed via a broadcast system. The overall response was satisfactory. The AFCD has also conducted a series of public education activities, targetting not only the general public, but also students and teachers, to deepen their understanding of Hong Kong's marine environment and wildlife, and raise their awareness of respecting, caring for and appreciating marine resources. Among others, the AFCD organised the Marine Wildlife Appreciation Festival from January to March this year to promote the message of marine conservation to the public. The department will also continue to strengthen the work of mainstreaming marine conservation awareness in future.

The Expert Group acknowledged the department's progress in the four aspects of work and discussed the response plan in detail. The AFCD will take into account views of the Expert Group when dealing with similar situations in future, and will continue to work with the Expert Group to continuously improve the response measures.

The Expert Group is responsible for advising the Government on conservation of marine mammals in Hong Kong waters, including response planning for handling of non-resident marine mammal sightings in Hong Kong waters, assessment of associated potential risks as well as the formulation of appropriate measures, guidelines, protocols, and best practices, etc. A list of its membership is at the Annex.

Relevant documents of the Expert Group meeting, including the reports prepared and opinions raised by the AFCD, the OPCFHK and the two overseas experts in relation to the cause of death of the Bryde's whale, have been uploaded to the AFCD's webpage (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/conservation/con_mar/con_mar_chi/con_mar_chi_chi/con_mar_chi_chi_rep.html) for public inspection.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, July 19, 2024 is 106.3 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

[Applications open for auctions of spectrum in 850/900 MHz, 2.3 GHz and 6/7 GHz bands](#)

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) today (July 19) published the information memoranda for the auctions of radio spectrum in the 850/900 MHz, 2.3 GHz and 6/7 GHz bands and invited interested parties to submit applications.

A spokesperson for OFCA said, "The Communications Authority (CA) and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED) issued joint statements in May last year and March this year, announcing the decisions to assign a total of 510 MHz of spectrum in the aforementioned bands through auction within this year for the provision of public mobile services including the fifth generation (5G) services. The assignment will further promote the development of 5G services in terms of network capacity, service speed and coverage."

The CA will conduct the auction of 110 MHz of re-assigned spectrum in the 850/900 MHz and 2.3 GHz bands on November 11, followed by the auction of 400 MHz of new spectrum in the 6/7 GHz band on November 25. The spectrum will be assigned to the successful bidders under unified carrier licences with a validity period of 15 years. Parties interested in participating in the auctions may submit their applications to OFCA on September 19 and 20.

The SCED has set the auction reserve prices for the use of the aforementioned spectrum, viz. \$4 million per MHz for the 850/900 MHz and the 2.3 GHz bands, and \$2 million per MHz for the 6/7 GHz band. The actual amount of spectrum utilization fees payable will be determined through the respective auctions.

The spokesperson added, "To prevent over-concentration of spectrum holdings by a single spectrum assignee, the CA has set caps on the amount of spectrum that can be acquired by each assignee in the respective bands, which are 10 MHz for the 850/900 MHz band, 50 MHz for the 2.3 GHz band, and 140 MHz for the 6/7 GHz band."

Detailed arrangements of the auctions are set out in the information memoranda which are available on OFCA's website:

For the 850/900 MHz and 2.3 GHz bands:

www.ofca.gov.hk/filemanager/ofca/en/content_1712/850_900_mhz_and_2_3_ghz_bands_auction_IM.pdf

For the 6/7 GHz band:

www.ofca.gov.hk/filemanager/ofca/en/content_1713/6_7_ghz_band_auction_IM.pdf

Senior appointments (with photos)

The Government announced today (July 19) the following senior appointments:

(a) Mrs Angelina Cheung Fung Wing-ping, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service, will take up the post of Commissioner for Tourism on August 12, 2024;

(b) Mr Aaron Liu Kong-cheung, Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury), will take up the post of Director-General of Trade and Industry on August 19, 2024; and

(c) Mr Maurice Loo Kam-wah, Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury), will take up the post of Director of Lands on September 5, 2024.

Commenting on the appointments of Mrs Cheung, Mr Liu and Mr Loo, the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mrs Ingrid Yeung, said, "The appointees are seasoned Administrative Officers with proven leadership and management skills. I have every confidence that they will continue to serve the community with professionalism in their new posts."

Brief biographical notes of the three officers are set out below:

Mrs Angelina Cheung Fung Wing-ping

Mrs Cheung joined the Administrative Service in September 1992 and rose to the rank of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B1 in April 2022. She has served in a diverse range of bureaux and departments, including the former City and New Territories Administration, the former Economic Services Branch, the former Education and Manpower Branch, the Civil Service Bureau, the Home Affairs Department, the former Food and Health Bureau and the Labour and Welfare Bureau. She was Deputy Secretary for Education from April 2012 to October 2017, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs from October 2017 to August 2020, and has been serving as Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service since August 2020.

Mr Aaron Liu Kong-cheung

Mr Liu joined the Administrative Service in June 1996 and rose to the rank of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B1 in April 2023. He has served in a diverse range of bureaux and departments, including the former Security Branch, the former Industry Department, the former Economic Services Bureau, the Civil Service Bureau and the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau. He

was Deputy Commissioner for Tourism from September 2016 to July 2019, Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial Services) from August 2019 to July 2022, and has been serving as Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) since July 2022.

Mr Maurice Loo Kam-wah

Mr Loo joined the Administrative Service in July 1996 and rose to the rank of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B1 in April 2022. He has served in various bureaux and departments, including the former Home Affairs Branch, the former Transport Branch, the Home Affairs Department, the former Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau, the former Environment and Food Bureau, the Civil Service Bureau, the Innovation and Technology Commission, the former Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Washington DC. He was Principal Assistant Secretary (Financial Services) from April 2011 to June 2014, Deputy Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands) from July 2015 to August 2020, and has been serving as Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) since August 2020.





Interactive family music theatre production “DŹ JiÄn Ninja: Finding Dreams” to be staged in August (with photo)

The International Arts Carnival (IAC), a summer arts festival organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, will present an interactive music theatre production, “DŹ JiÄn Ninja: Finding Dreams”, from August 2 to 4. Produced by local percussionist Anna Fan, who will perform together with percussion group daŹ jiaŹn, the programme melds live music and original songs with drama and dance. It is most suitable for family audiences who can learn more about the cultures of Chinese and Western music through trying out different kinds of percussion instruments.

Filled with drum beats and laughter, the production guides audiences to know more about musical instruments such as the Chinese drum, Brazilian parade drum and glockenspiel, to sample for themselves the immense power of percussion music.

At the core of the play is a group of dŹ jiÄn ninjas living on the sea. These cheery ninjas are not just good at drumming but have hidden skills lying in their superpower: using percussion to concoct a dream essence. A catastrophe has robbed people of their ability to dream when they sleep. To pull them out of the blues, dŹ jiÄn ninjas call on children and adults alike to embark on a sea adventure. Together they learn various percussion instruments so that everyone can have great dreams again.

Programme Producer Anna Fan, a local percussionist, drummer, arranger and composer, graduated from the Music Department of Hong Kong Baptist University in percussion and studied jazz drumming at the Berklee College of Music in the United States. Fan is currently the creative director, band leader and lead singer with percussion groups dCŽ jiÄŃn and FANTastic Line. Keen to promote boundary-pushing percussion and jazz culture, Fan has founded PE LAB, a collective that creates chiefly for percussion groups' original work that fuses pop, jazz and Broadway musical songs. Fan is also a drummer for local band m.a.R.K, making frequent appearances at music festivals at home and abroad.

Interactive music theatre production "dCŽ JiÄŃn Ninja: Finding Dreams" will be staged at 7.30pm on August 2 and 3, and 3pm on August 3 and 4 at the Sheung Wan Civic Centre Theatre. The programme will be performed in Cantonese with limited lyrics in English. It also contains strobe lighting and loud sound effects. Tickets priced at \$160, \$240 and \$300 (half-price tickets for children) are now available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288, or use the mobile ticketing app "URBTIX". For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2370 1044 or visit www.hkiac.gov.hk.

Each performance will be followed by a meet-the-artist session.

This year's IAC is running from July 5 to August 11, featuring a wide array of fun-filled educational programmes by overseas, Mainland and local art groups and artists. In addition to acrobatics, magic, dance, music, theatre and puppetry, the IAC also offers film screenings, online programmes, parent-child workshops and an exhibition.

