

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 November 23 to noon today (November 24), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 123 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 16 195 samples of food imported from Japan (including 10 755 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 4 562 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Cluster of Rhinovirus/Enterovirus cases in Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority.

The spokesperson for Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital made the following announcement today (November 24):

Three male patients (aged 19 to 65) in a psychiatry ward have been presenting with fever or respiratory symptoms since November 18. Appropriate viral tests had been arranged for the patients and their test results were positive for Rhinovirus/Enterovirus. The three patients are currently being treated in isolation and are in stable condition.

Enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted according to prevailing guidelines. Droplet and contact precautions, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection of the environment and equipment have also been strengthened.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation in the ward concerned. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for follow-up.

Speech by CE at Hong Kong Association of Banks Distinguished Speaker Luncheon (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) Distinguished Speaker Luncheon today (November 24):

Mr Sun Yu (Chairperson of the HKAB), ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am pleased to join you today for the Hong Kong Association of Banks Distinguished Speaker Luncheon.

I'm pleased to speak to you, the leaders and professionals of Hong Kong's banking sector. It's thanks to you, to each and every one of you, that our financial stability through the daunting pandemic years was never in question.

Despite today's challenging global economy, the Hong Kong economy has shown clear improvement. Real GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was up 4.1 per cent, year-on-year, in the third quarter, and unemployment rate remains at less than 3 per cent.

Our banking sector – home to 74 of the world's 100 largest banks – is among the world's largest and most internationalised. As of June this year, annual external transactions totalled more than US\$3 trillion.

Banking is the cornerstone enabling Hong Kong's development as an international financial centre.

This has been reaffirmed by the International Monetary Fund, which recognises Hong Kong's robust institutional framework, substantial capital and liquidity buffers, high-quality financial regulation and well-functioning Linked Exchange Rate System. Music to a banker's ears, I'd say. Music to my ears, let me add.

The latest Global Financial Centres Index, out in late September, underlines our sustained strength as a global financial hub in the post-pandemic era. We finished fourth overall, out of 121 global financial centres.

In short, ladies and gentlemen, Hong Kong's free, open and fair business environment continues to rank among the world's very best. And that isn't going to change.

We are actively building on this solid financial foundation. That means realising the full potential of Hong Kong as a bridge between our country and international investors. That means enriching mutual-market access programmes with the Mainland. That also means strengthening our position as the world's largest offshore Renminbi business hub.

We are expanding the Connect programmes progressively, broadening our Renminbi products, including Renminbi counters under Southbound trading, while introducing offshore Mainland government bond futures, and providing block trading.

We are building on Wealth Management Connect as well, enlarging investment options and promoting mutual access between Hong Kong, the Mainland and Macao.

In equities, we are launching measures to promote trading and strengthen fundraising.

The stamp duty rate on stock transfers was reduced, last Friday, to 0.1 per cent. And we will review the stock-trading spread and fee structure of real-time data services.

GEM, our second stock-market board, will be reformed, streamlining the transfer mechanism to the Main Board, simplifying compliance obligations for issuers and, generally, helping SME issuers raise funds. A new listing route for R&D (research and development) companies will also be established.

No less important is getting the good word out. To that end, my Government and the HKEX (Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited) are promoting Hong Kong as a premier listing centre to overseas issuers, focusing in particular on such sought-after markets as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the Middle East. Doing so should help us attract more multinationals to our capital market. And that can only diversify the issuer base.

Then there's green and sustainable finance, an area we're making great progress in.

We have issued green bonds totalling about US\$24 billion to date. And we are seeing significant growth in the private sector's green debt issuance as well.

Last year, over US\$80 billion in green and sustainable debt was issued in Hong Kong. That's up more than 40 per cent over 2021.

A market's success is, of course, measured by more than volume. And we are working to align our sustainability efforts with those of the international community.

That includes working with financial regulators to adopt our IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards services to meet international standards.

Core Climate, our carbon credit trading platform, supports the global transition to Net Zero, connecting opportunities across the Mainland, throughout Asia and around the world.

The Green Technology and Finance Development Committee, let me add, is working on an action agenda to promote Hong Kong's continuing rise as an international green technology and financial centre.

We see promise, too, in becoming an asset- and wealth-management centre.

At the end of last year, our asset- and wealth-management sector had accumulated HK\$30.5 trillion. Almost two thirds of that came from non-Hong Kong investors.

Hong Kong is Asia's largest hedge fund and cross-border, wealth-

management capital, and the world's second largest private-equity centre after the Mainland.

Given our singular access to the Mainland and track record, I'm confident our family office business is primed for long-term growth.

Our dedicated "FamilyOffice HK" team is committed to attracting at least 200 family offices to Hong Kong by 2025.

And rest assured, we are looking closely at tax matters. We are determined to create a more facilitating tax environment for the asset- and wealth-management industry. And business in general.

Yes, alongside boosting our competitive edge in financial services, we are laser-focused on the real economy, on attracting companies and talent from around the world.

In my annual Policy Address, last month, I put a priority on developing a headquarters economy.

That means enticing international companies to set up headquarters or corporate divisions in Hong Kong, taking advantage of the vast opportunities presented by the Mainland and the region as a whole.

On the talent side, we will implement a Capital Investment Entrant Scheme for high-net-worth investors seeking Hong Kong residency. That will bring new capital to Hong Kong and generate demand for high-end, asset- and wealth-management services.

We welcome investors from all over the world. That includes the United States (US). Like all of us, I'm sure, I was pleased to see the talks between President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden last week in San Francisco.

Hong Kong and the US, of course, have a long history of co-operation – of ties that run from trade and investment to culture, education and a great deal more. We share many values, as well, including the rule of law and open and free markets.

It's encouraging, too, that several US companies are among the 30 strategic concerns that recently agreed to set up or expand their businesses here through OASES, our Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises.

And, of course, some of America's most prominent financial corporations took part in the Global Financial Leaders' Investment Summit earlier this month. They were among the Summit's 300 overseas and local leaders, some of whom are with us today, I'm pleased to note.

The Summit unequivocally showcased the boundless opportunities Hong Kong has been blessed with. It underlined, too, the financial world's continuing confidence in Hong Kong's future.

Next week, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) and the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) will host a two-day conference here. It will mark the HKMA's 30th anniversary and the 25th anniversary of the BIS office for Asia and the Pacific.

And, in just two months, the 2024 Asian Financial Forum opens, attracting a wealth of global leaders from finance, business and government.

Ladies and gentlemen, I count on your expertise, experience and support to help us realise Hong Kong's far-reaching promise – in finance and business, in shaping the flourishing future of our nation and the Asian region. Together, I'm confident there's nothing we cannot accomplish.

My thanks to the Hong Kong Association of Banks for giving me this welcome opportunity to speak to you today.

I wish you all the best of business, and banking, in the year to come.

Thank you very much.



[Import of poultry meat and products](#)

from areas in US suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (November 24) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Edmunds County of the State of South Dakota, Fresno County of the State of California, Linn County and Marion County of the State of Oregon, and LaMoure County of the State of North Dakota in the United States (US), 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 21 470 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 57.11 million poultry eggs from the US in the first nine months of this year.

â€‹â€‹"The CFS has contacted the American authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

Arrangements for LCSD's Mobile Library services

Mobile Libraries 9, 11 and 12 will suspend services during designated periods in December for routine maintenance, while the Mobile Library 6 service point at Ap Lei Chau Estate in Ap Lei Chau will be relocated back to the area adjacent to Lei Tim House from December 19 (Tuesday), a spokesman for the Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (November 24).

Mobile Library 12 will suspend services from December 4 to 9. The affected service points are Cheong Shing Court in Fanling, Kwong Fuk Estate in Tai Po, Lei Muk Shue Estate, Tsuen King Circuit Playground, and Cheung Shan Estate in Tsuen Wan, Kwai Luen Estate in Kwai Chung, and Fu Cheong Estate in Sham Shui Po. For enquiries about Mobile Library 12 services, please call 2479 1055.

Mobile Library 11 will suspend services from December 15 to 21. The affected service points are Easeful Court and Cheung Ching Estate in Tsing Yi, Tin Wah Estate in Tin Shui Wai, Lai Yiu Estate in Kwai Chung, Wan Tau Tong Estate and Tai Yuen Estate in Tai Po, and Kwong Yuen Estate in Sha Tin.

For enquiries about Mobile Library 11 services, please call 2479 1055.

Mobile Library 9 will suspend services from December 26 to 30. The affected service points are Oi Tung Estate in Aldrich Bay, Heng Fa Chuen in Chai Wan, Tin Wan Estate in Aberdeen and Tai Hong Street in Lei King Wan. For enquiries about Mobile Library 9 services, please call 2505 4690.

In addition, the Mobile Library 6 service point at Ap Lei Chau Estate in Ap Lei Chau will be relocated back to the area adjacent to Lei Tim House from Lei Ning House starting from December 19. The opening hours will remain unchanged, i.e. from 10am to 1pm, and 2pm to 6pm every Tuesday (except library closing days and public holidays). For enquiries about Mobile Library 6 services, please call 2505 4690.

Readers are welcome to use other public libraries during the service suspension periods. They may also renew library materials by telephoning 2698 0002 or 2827 2833, or via www.hkpl.gov.hk.