

Company and its director fined \$160,000 for contravening Employment Ordinance

Best Metro (Hong Kong) Limited and its director were prosecuted by the Labour Department (LD) for violation of the requirements under the Employment Ordinance (EO). The company and its director pleaded guilty at Shatin Magistrates' Courts today (October 20) and were fined a total sum of \$160,000.

The company failed to pay an employee, in accordance with the EO, wages of about \$470,000 and annual leave pay of about \$12,000 within seven days after the expiry of the wage periods or termination of employment. The company also failed to pay the awarded sum of about \$460,000 within 14 days after the date set by the Labour Tribunal (LT) award. The director concerned was prosecuted and convicted for his consent, connivance or neglect in the offence of defaulting the awarded sum of the LT committed by the company.

"The ruling will disseminate a strong message to all employers, directors and responsible officers of companies that they have to pay wages to employees within the statutory time limit stipulated in the EO, as well as the sums awarded by the LT or the Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board," a spokesman for the LD said.

"The LD will not tolerate these offences and will spare no effort in enforcing the law and safeguarding employees' statutory rights," the spokesman added.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, October 20, 2023 is 106.7 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

CFS investigates suspected cases of

breaching Food Safety Order on aquatic product and fruit imported from Japan

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (October 20) that an aquatic product and fruit from regulated Japanese prefectures were found suspected to be in breach of the relevant Food Safety Order when the CFS inspected food imported from Japan. The products concerned have been marked and sealed by the CFS and have not entered the market. The CFS is following up on the case.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "During inspections of the food labels of the concerned consignments of food imported from Japan, the CFS found a pack of chilled scallops that was manufactured, processed and packed in Miyagi Prefecture after the Order was issued and a pack of figs from Chiba Prefecture that was not accompanied with a radiation certificate and exporter certificate, and the importer concerned is thus suspected of breaching the relevant Order."

According to the Order, all aquatic products originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Chiba, Tochigi, Ibaraki, Gunma, Miyagi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, are prohibited from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong if they are harvested, manufactured, processed or packed on or after August 24, 2023, including all live, frozen, chilled, dried or otherwise preserved aquatic products, sea salt, and unprocessed or processed seaweed. In addition, all vegetables, fruits, milk, milk beverages and dried milk originating from Fukushima are banned from importing into Hong Kong while such foods originating from Chiba, Tochigi, Ibaraki and Gunma prefectures are allowed to be imported on the condition that they are accompanied with a radiation certificate and an exporter certificate issued by the Japanese authority certifying that the radiation levels do not exceed the guideline levels and are fit for human consumption.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incidents and take appropriate action, including informing the Japanese authorities concerned of the incidents. Prosecution will be instituted against the importer concerned should there be sufficient evidence. The investigation is ongoing.

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

â€‹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 October 19 to noon today (October 20), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 156 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 9 666 samples of food imported from Japan (including 6 325 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 2 806 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Coin Collection Programme

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) today (October 20) announced a new service schedule of the two Coin Carts under the Coin Collection Programme, for the period of November 6, 2023 up to January 14, 2024. The schedule and other details of the Programme are shown on the HKMA webpage (coincollection.hkma.gov.hk).

Since the launch of the Programme in October 2014 up to September 30, 2023, the two Coin Carts had carried out 1,127,000 transactions, collecting 889 million coins with a total face value of HK\$1,393 million during the period. The collected coins are re-circulated to meet demand.

The Coin Carts provide service at locations that are convenient to the public without affecting the normal flow of traffic and pedestrians. Locations that have suitable power supply facilities, such as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department mobile library service locations, are preferred so as to reduce the need for using the Coin Carts' own stand-by generators. This makes the Programme more environmentally friendly. In selecting the service locations, the HKMA has taken into consideration comments and suggestions given by district councils and members of public, and has consulted the Transport Department and the Hong Kong Police Force as necessary.

The two Coin Carts collect coins from members of public in the 18 districts of Hong Kong on a rotating basis. Under normal circumstances, each Coin Cart will stay at a location for a week, subject to availability of the parking space and the maintenance schedule of the Cart. Service hours are from 10am to 7pm. Each vehicle is equipped with two coin counting machines and operational staff will be present to provide assistance. An electrical wheelchair lift is available for use. Users can choose to exchange coins for banknotes or adding value to their stored value facilities, such as Octopus Cards or e-wallets (including AlipayHK, Octopus Wallet, Tap&Go, TNG Wallet and WeChat Pay). There is also a Community Chest donation box inside each vehicle. The coin collection service is free of charge.

The HKMA will review the Programme from time to time, and will regularly update the service schedule to give advance notice to the public.