

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 5 to noon today (December 6), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 194 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, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 103 889 samples of food imported from Japan (including 67 017 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 23 416 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

[Hong Kong Customs detects smuggling case involving ocean-going vessel with goods worth about \\$23 million seized \(with photos\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs on December 1 detected a suspected case of using an ocean-going vessel to smuggle goods to Pakistan at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals. A large batch of suspected smuggled earphones and skincare products with an estimated market value of about \$23 million was seized.

Through intelligence analysis and risk assessment, Customs discovered that criminals intended to use ocean-going vessels to smuggle goods, and thus formulated strategies to combat related activities.

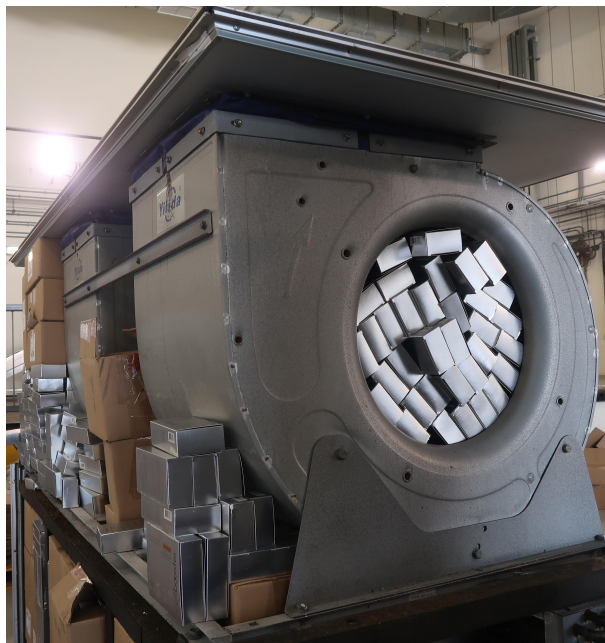
On December 1, Customs officers identified for inspection an ocean-going vessel preparing to depart from Hong Kong for Pakistan. A large batch of suspected smuggled earphones and skincare products were found to be concealed in four machines inside a container which was declared as containing machines, air-conditioners, electronic parts, etc.

An investigation is ongoing. The likelihood of arrests is not ruled out.

Customs is the primary agency responsible for tackling smuggling activities and has long been combating various smuggling activities on all fronts. Customs will keep up its enforcement action and continue to resolutely combat sea smuggling activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, and carry out targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times to crack down on related crimes.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years upon conviction.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 8080 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).



Exchange Fund Bills tender results

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

Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date	: December 6, 2024
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: M2408
Issue date	: December 9, 2024
Maturity date	: January 8, 2025
Amount applied	: HK\$5,385 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$800 MN
Average yield accepted	: 3.88 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 3.88 PCT
Pro rata ratio*	: About 40 PCT
Average tender yield	: 3.97 PCT

* "Pro rata ratio" refers to the average percentage of allotment with respect to each tender participant's tendered amount at the "highest yield accepted" level.

Government appoints Chairmen and members to Councils of HKBU, CityU and PolyU

The Government today (December 6) announced that the Chief Executive appointed Dr Kennedy Wong Ying-ho as the Chairman of the Council of Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), and Mr Michael Ngai Ming-tak as the Chairman of the Council of City University of Hong Kong (CityU), and reappointed Dr Lam Tai-fai as the Chairman of the Council of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), all with effect from January 1, 2025, for a term of three years.

The Chief Executive also appointed members to the Councils of the above three universities (the terms all beginning on January 1, 2025, for three years): HKBU – appointed Mr Lo Wing-hung, Dr Louis Ng Chi-wa and Ms Malina Ngai Man-lin, and reappointed Mr Abraham Chan Yu-ling and Dr Wong Yu-yeuk; CityU – appointed Mr Eugene Fong Yick-jin and Ms Grace Yu Ho-wun, and reappointed Ms Miranda Kwok Pui-fong, Mr Robert Andrew Lui Chi-wang and Mr Justin Wong Tak-ho; PolyU – appointed incumbent Council member Dr Daniel Yip Chung-yin as the Deputy Chairman of the Council, and Mr Arthur Lee Kin as the Treasurer of the University.

The Chief Executive said, "With highly international and diverse post-secondary education, and outstanding science and research talent, Hong Kong is an international hub for high-calibre talent for exchanges and collaboration. HKBU, CityU and PolyU are important assets of Hong Kong, providing constant impetus for Hong Kong's development into an international post-secondary education hub, and commanding high expectations from the Government and the public. The new appointees are all prominent leaders in society. They have been dedicated to serving the community in different fields over the years. They possess outstanding capabilities and rich experience, and have made remarkable contributions to Hong Kong's education sector. With their wealth of experience in public service and knowledge about Hong Kong's education sector, I believe that they will steer the three universities towards greater achievements on various fronts in the coming few years, supporting Hong Kong's development into an international post-secondary education hub."

The Chief Executive has expressed his gratitude to the outgoing HKBU Council Chairman, Dr Clement Chen Cheng-jen, and members Mr Chui Wing-On, Ms So Ching and Ms Connie Wong Wai-ching; CityU Council Chairman, Mr Lester Garson Huang, and member Dr Eugene Chan Kin-keung; and PolyU Council Deputy Chairman, Dr Lawrence Li Kwok-chang, and Treasurer of the University, Ms Loretta Fong Wan-huen, for their work and efforts during their terms.

Government releases final report of Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care and corresponding action plan (with photo/video)

The Government released the final report of the Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care today (December 6). The Working Group recommended shifting the focus of the current oral health and dental care system from the prevailing treatment-oriented tendency to an approach targeting prevention, early identification, and timely intervention. The Working Group also recommended adopting oral health policies that encourage better oral hygiene habits among citizens, thereby enhancing their oral health through retention of teeth and eventually achieving the goal of overall good health and well-being. The Government concurred with the strategic recommendations of the Working Group and formulated a corresponding Oral Health Action Plan to adopt the strategies of widely promoting among citizens across all age groups prevention-oriented primary oral healthcare while providing essential dental care services targeting underprivileged groups.

Recommendations on oral health policies and development strategies

With reference to the Global Strategy and Action Plan on Oral Health 2023–2030 of the World Health Organization and China's Oral Health Action Plan (2019-2025) released by the National Health Commission, the Working Group recommended the Government adopt the following oral health policies:

- Oral health constitutes an integral component of general health. The Government's oral health policies aim to enable all Hong Kong citizens to improve their oral hygiene and lifestyles conducive to further enhancing both oral health and general health levels;
- The Government will assist citizens in managing their oral health through publicity and education as well as promotion and development of primary oral health and dental care, with a view to putting into action prevention, early identification and timely intervention of dental diseases with the objective of retaining teeth; and
- The Government will provide appropriate oral health and dental care services for underprivileged groups with financial difficulties and special needs in a bid to ensure access to essential dental care services by these groups.

Having reviewed the reports of the oral health survey, the Working Group noted that the public health measures on oral health implemented over time

have borne fruit, resulting in a relatively satisfactory level of oral health among citizens. However, the risk of having dental diseases and tooth loss persist, implying that there is need for better prevention. The Working Group also observed that the Government has been substantially increasing the amount of resources for directly provided or subsidised dental services over the years, with relevant expenditure approaching \$1.3 billion in 2023/24, but the utilisation of resources has skewed towards curative treatment instead of prevention. There was also a lack of holistic examination on the cost-effectiveness of resources devoted.

The Working Group considered that preventive primary oral healthcare should be pushed ahead at full steam to reduce the demand for curative dental treatment. The cost-effectiveness and sustainability of resource utilisation as well as the priority of providing and subsidising dental services should also be reviewed such that resources will be more effectively utilised to promote primary oral healthcare towards the goal of improving citizens' oral health by focusing on prevention, early identification and timely intervention, thereby achieving the policy objective of enhancing citizens' health. To this end, the Working Group recommended the adoption of the approach to promote prevention-oriented primary oral healthcare among citizens across all age groups while providing essential dental care services for underprivileged groups in particular. Such an approach will serve as the strategy for the future development of the oral health and dental care system, as follows:

Community-wide preventive primary oral healthcare: To actively develop prevention-oriented primary oral healthcare through extensive promotion to Hong Kong citizens across different age groups, assisting them in managing their oral health, establishing good oral hygiene habits and lifestyles, and seeking regular oral check-ups and risk assessments of their own accord;

Essential dental care services targeting underprivileged groups: To focus on the provision of essential dental services through the public system or subsidy programmes for underprivileged groups who have difficulties in accessing dental care, namely those with financial difficulties, persons with disabilities or special needs and high-risk groups are to receive preventive and curative oral health and dental care services; and

The Working Group also considered various supporting conditions such as dental professional manpower resources, legal regulations, service models, financial arrangements and the use of electronic dental record systems, and subsequently put forward a series of strategic recommendations to the Government.

Oral Health Action Plan

Concurring with the recommendation directions of the Working Group, the Government developed a corresponding Oral Health Action Plan in response to various strategic recommendations of the Working Group.

In accordance with the strategy of developing community-wide preventive

primary oral healthcare, the action plan covers the following measures to be implemented next year:

- To pilot risk assessment and oral hygiene instruction services at certain District Health Centres/District Health Centre Expresses;
- To introduce preventive dental services for preschool children aged up to 6 years by providing regular oral check-ups and care guidance;
- To launch the Primary Dental Co-care Pilot Scheme for Adolescents to incentivise regular oral check-ups among adolescents aged between 13 and 17 by providing Government subsidies under co-payment arrangements;
- To encourage citizens to receive regular oral check-ups. For adults in particular, employers offering dental benefits will be encouraged to drive their employees to receive regular oral check-ups through their prevailing plans. The dental sector will also be motivated to formulate the essential items in oral check-up packages for citizens of different age groups; and
- To encourage the elderly to make good use of Elderly Health Care Vouchers (EHCVs) for seeking oral check-ups. Through the Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Reward Scheme launched in 2023 and joint promotion efforts with the sector on the importance of oral check-ups, the elderly will be steered to better utilise the EHCVs for prevention dental services.

According to the strategy of providing essential dental services targeting underprivileged groups, the action plan will take forward the following measures:

- To launch the Community Dental Support Programme next year to provide dental services for underprivileged groups (including elderly persons with financial difficulties) with enhancement in capacity and service points and extension of service scope. This support programme will supplant the Community Care Fund Elderly Dental Assistance Programme by 2026;
- To continue streamlining the arrangements of dental services of the General Public Session of the Department of Health (DH). The DH will launch an Online Registration System for Dental General Public Session on December 30 and consider introducing eligibility criteria to put the service focus on helping those with financial difficulties; and
- To continue expanding special care dental services to further cover groups with other disabilities or special needs, while strengthening relevant dental services in hospitals and providing additional training.

The Oral Health Action Plan also includes various relevant supporting measures for strengthening professional dental manpower and the eHealth system. The Government will also establish a steering and advisory framework for oral health and dental care to keep advancing various measures.

The full text of the Working Group's final report is available on the website of the Health Bureau:
www.healthbureau.gov.hk/download/press_and_publications/otherinfo/241200_dent

[al/e_final_report.pdf](#).

The Chairman of the Working Group and the Permanent Secretary for Health, Mr Thomas Chan, said, "I would like to express gratitude to all members of the Working Group for their efforts and contributions. The Government will, in accordance with the Working Group's recommendations, push ahead the development of community-wide preventive primary oral healthcare and continue to develop Hong Kong's oral health and dental care system along the approach of promoting prevention-oriented primary oral healthcare among citizens across all age groups while providing essential dental care services for underprivileged groups in particular. The Government looks forward to working with the dental profession, training institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and members of the public to promote oral health for all, enabling citizens to improve their oral health behaviours and retain their teeth through prevention, early identification and timely intervention of dental diseases, thereby genuinely embracing both oral and general health."

Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care

The [Working Group on Oral Health and Dental Care](#), established as announced in "The Chief Executive's 2022 Policy Address", comprises members from the dental profession, medical sector, social welfare sector, patient groups, collaborating NGOs collaborating government-subsidised dental care programmes, and relevant well-regarded community personalities. The Working Group conducted a comprehensive review of dental care services provided or subsidised by the Government and put forward a series of recommendations including long-term strategies for oral health and dental care as well as enhancement of service scopes and models with the aim of safeguarding public oral health. The Working Group's tenure will expire at the end of this year. Throughout the term, seven meetings were held and an interim report was released at the end of last year.

Report of Oral Health Survey 2021

The DH also released today the [Report of Oral Health Survey 2021](#) which was conducted between 2021 and 2023. As revealed by the survey results, various oral health-related public health measures implemented by the Government over the years have effectively improved citizens' oral health, observing a general decline in tooth decay and a continuous increase in tooth retention among the elderly. The tooth decay level among Hong Kong children aged 5 and 12 and the proportion of elderly persons with complete tooth loss compares very favourably with global levels. That said, citizens still face a risk of having dental diseases and tooth loss. Strengthening of prevention is required.

