

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) 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).

Approved Man Kam To Outline Zoning Plan amended

The Town Planning Board today (December 13) announced amendments to the approved Man Kam To Outline Zoning Plan (OZP).

The amendments mainly involve rezoning a site in Sandy Ridge from "Other Specified Uses" ("OU") annotated "Cemetery, Columbarium, Crematorium and Funeral Related Uses" to "OU" annotated "Innovation and Technology" ("OU(I&T)") for data centres and related purposes.

The Notes and Explanatory Statement of the OZP are amended to take into account the above amendments. Opportunity is also taken to update the general information of various land use zones and the planning scheme area, where appropriate.

The draft Man Kam To OZP No. S/NE-MKT/5, incorporating the amendments, is available for public inspection during office hours at (i) the Secretariat of the Town Planning Board, (ii) the Planning Enquiry Counters, (iii) the Sha Tin, Tai Po and North District Planning Office, (iv) the North District Office, and (v) the Ta Kwu Ling District Rural Committee.

Any person may make written representations in respect of the amendments to the Secretary of the Town Planning Board on or before February 13, 2025. Any person who intends to make a representation is advised to read the Town Planning Board Guidelines No. 29C on "Submission and Processing of Representations and Further Representations" (TPB PG-No. 29C).

Submission of a representation should comply with the requirements set out in TPB PG-No. 29C. In particular, the representer should take note of the following:

* If the representer fails to provide his or her full name and the first four alphanumeric characters of his or her Hong Kong identity card or passport number as required under TPB PG-No. 29C, the representation submitted shall be treated as not having been made; and

* The Secretariat of the Town Planning Board reserves the right to require the representer to provide identity proof for verification.

The Guidelines and the submission form are available at the above locations (i) and (ii) as well as the Town Planning Board's website (www.tpb.gov.hk).

Copies of the draft Man Kam To OZP are available for sale at the Map Publications Centres in North Point and Yau Ma Tei. The electronic version of

the OZP can be viewed on the Town Planning Board's website (www.tpb.gov.hk).

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).

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).

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, 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.

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).