

Arrangements for assignment of spectrum in 6/7 GHz band and related spectrum utilisation fee

The Communications Authority (CA) announced today (March 1) its decision to assign a total of 400 MHz of spectrum in 6570-6770 MHz and 6925-7125 MHz band (the 6/7 GHz band) by way of auction for the provision of public mobile services. The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED) also announced his decision on the method for determining the related spectrum utilisation fee (SUF).

The 6/7 GHz band is the remaining largest block of the mid-band spectrum that supports mobile services. It is vital to the deployment of the fifth generation mobile networks and services with speed and capacity as well as the future sustainable development of the digital economy and mobile broadband connectivity in Hong Kong.

In arriving at the decisions about the assignment arrangements of the aforementioned spectrum and the related SUF, the CA and the SCED have considered thoroughly the views and comments received in the public consultation conducted between July and August last year.

"Spectrum in the 6/7 GHz band is the mid-band spectrum which provides comparatively longer range propagation than high-band spectrum above 7 GHz, and offers wider bandwidth than the low-band spectrum below 1 GHz. Hence, it is very suitable for supporting cost effective provision of mobile broadband services to meet both coverage and capacity demands," a spokesman for the CA said.

The CA considers that there are likely competing demands for the spectrum in the 6/7 GHz band, and hence the spectrum will be assigned by way of auction. The CA, subject to the completion of amendments to the relevant subsidiary legislation, aims to conduct the auction before the end of this year.

On the relevant SUF, the SCED decided to prescribe that it will be determined by auction, with the auction reserve price to be specified nearer the time of the auction after taking into account all relevant factors. To provide greater financial flexibility to spectrum assignees, the assignees will be given a choice to pay the SUF either by lump sum payment upfront or by annual instalments in the assignment period of 15 years.

For details of the arrangements for the spectrum assignment and the related SUF, please refer to the joint statement published by the [SCED](#) and the [CA](#) today.

CFS follows up on seaweed product imported from Japan suspected of breaching Food Safety Order

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (March 1) that a seaweed product manufactured in a regulated Japanese prefecture was suspected to be in breach of the relevant Food Safety Order when the CFS inspected a consignment of food imported from Japan. The product concerned has been marked and sealed by the CFS and has not entered the market. The CFS is following up on the case.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "During an inspection of the food label of the concerned consignment of food imported from Japan, the CFS found 10 packs of a seaweed product suspected to have been manufactured in Ibaraki Prefecture after the Order was issued. 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, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, 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, chilled, frozen, dried or otherwise preserved aquatic products, sea salt, and unprocessed or processed seaweed.

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

Second-term Partners' Board under Strive and Rise Programme holds first meeting (with photos)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, convened the first meeting of the second-term Partners' Board under the Strive and Rise Programme today (March 1). The membership of the Board comprises the Chief Secretary for Administration, representatives of relevant government

departments, and strategic partners providing the Programme with key support (see the list in the Annex). At the meeting, members were briefed by government officials on an overview of the first round of the Programme as well as the progress of the second round. They also exchanged views on the Programme.

Mr Chan extended his warm welcome to the enterprises and organisations serving as strategic partners in the new-term Partners' Board. He said he hoped that the board will continue to tap into the collective wisdom to enhance the Strive and Rise Programme and benefit more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. He said that the smooth implementation of the Programme has rested upon the tripartite collaboration among the Government, the business sector and the community since its announcement in August 2022, and that the active participation and valuable advice of the strategic partners have played an important role.

Mr Chan added that, with the implementation of the first round of the Programme, as well as the advice tendered by the first-term Partners' Board and other stakeholders, fully taken into account, the second round of the Programme has introduced various new elements. They include extending target mentees to cover students of Secondary One to Secondary Four, increasing the number of mentees to 4 000, enriching the variety of group activity sessions (such as organising more Mainland study and exchange tours), and introducing mentorship groups. He encouraged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to seize the diversified opportunities under the Programme to stand tall, look up and get ahead.

Members were pleased to learn that, for the second round of the Programme, over 200 enterprises and organisations have been offering various types of support, including nomination of mentors and arrangement of group activities, and 29 Star Mentors have joined in. With the joint efforts of the Government, Central Co-ordinator and District Co-ordinators, mentorship pairing and arrangement of orientation, training and group activity sessions are being taken forward in an orderly manner for mentees of the second round to help them broaden their horizons, reinforce their self-confidence and strive for upward mobility. Members shared their views about the contents and implementation of the second round of the Programme.

Members were also pleased to note that, upon the successful conclusion of the first round of the Programme at the end of last year, all graduates have automatically become members of the Strive and Rise Alumni Club. The Government is now working together with the alumni co-ordinator and internship organiser to line up various activities for the alumni. The activities cover areas such as financial education, career and life planning, and leadership development, to encourage mentees to continue their self-enhancement.

In addition, members noted that a Group Activity Advisory Committee has been newly established under the Programme. The Committee comprises experienced mentors and representatives of relevant government departments. It is responsible for collecting feedback from mentors on group activities,

providing advice and recommendations on the organisation of group activities, and reviewing their implementation. The Committee has held the first meeting to exchange views on the group activities in the second round of the Programme.

The Strive and Rise Programme, the first initiative under the Government's targeted poverty alleviation strategy, was introduced in the second half of 2022. Through the tripartite collaboration among the Government, the business sector and the community, the Programme aims to help secondary school students from underprivileged families, particularly those living in subdivided units, to broaden their horizons, reinforce their self-confidence, develop a positive outlook on life, set goals for their future and strive for upward mobility. It comprises three elements, namely mentorship, personal development plans and financial support. The target of the Programme has been extended from junior secondary school students in the first round to Secondary One to Secondary Four students in the second round. The number of mentees has also been increased from 2 800 to 4 000.



[Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme invites new round of](#)

applications

The Main Programme under the Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS) is inviting a new round of applications for project proposals starting today (March 1) from non-profit-distributing organisations such as professional bodies, trade and industrial organisations and research institutes.

PASS, with a total allocation of \$200 million, aims at funding non-profit-making industry-led projects to increase exchanges and co-operation between Hong Kong's professional services and external counterparts, promote relevant publicity activities, and enhance the standards and external competitiveness of Hong Kong's professional services.

The maximum grant for each approved project under the Main Programme of PASS is \$3 million or 90 per cent of the total eligible project cost, whichever is lower. A wide range of professional services, such as accounting, legal and dispute resolution, architecture, engineering, healthcare, information and communications technology, design and technical testing and analysis, are eligible for the Main Programme. Sector-specific projects and cross-sectoral projects are both welcome. Expenses directly incurred for implementing a project, such as manpower costs, venue and set-up costs, production and promotion costs, and the project team and active participants' travel and accommodation costs outside Hong Kong are typically eligible for funding support under the Scheme. Funding support may also be provided for travel and accommodation costs incurred by participants of relatively longer professional internships or attachment programmes outside Hong Kong which are funded by the Main Programme.

Up to early February 2024, over 100 projects had been funded under the Main Programme, including project deliverables in and outside Hong Kong. The deliverables include capacity-building programmes for enhancing the standards of local professionals, such as training programmes, workshops and study tours; outreach and promotional activities for showcasing the strengths of Hong Kong's professional services, such as roadshows, promotional seminars and participation in exhibitions outside Hong Kong; exchange activities for deepening interaction between Hong Kong professionals and their external counterparts, such as visits to other economies and international conferences and seminars held in Hong Kong; and research projects on potential external markets for Hong Kong professional services and development of best practice guidelines and manuals for professionals. Details about the Main Programme and its funded projects are available at www.pass.gov.hk/main/en/home/index.html.

Furthermore, with a view to stepping up the promotion of Hong Kong's competitive edges and professional services to Mainland cities (including those in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area) and overseas markets, \$50 million has been set aside for the Professionals Participation Subsidy Programme (PSP) under PASS to subsidise Hong Kong major professional

bodies to participate in relevant activities organised by the Government (such as Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices) and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council after the pandemic situation has stabilised. Details of the PSP and its latest list of eligible activities are available at www.pass.gov.hk/psp. Hong Kong professionals from the eligible professional sectors under PASS may make use of the PSP subsidy to join the relevant activities.

The Main Programme and the PSP receive applications for project and activity proposals all year round and they are processed on a quarterly basis. The deadline for the new round of applications is May 31, 2024. A briefing session will be held this month for organisations interested in applying for PASS funding. For registration for the briefing session or other enquiries, please contact the PASS Secretariat at 3655 5418 or pass@cedb.gov.hk.

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (March 1) released the latest grading of water quality for eight gazetted beaches that are open for swimming, including four that are open to swimmers all year round and four others that are open for swimming since March 1.

Eight beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Big Wave Bay Beach	Repulse Bay Beach
Clear Water Bay Second Beach	Silver Mine Bay Beach
Deep Water Bay Beach	Silverstrand Beach
Golden Beach	Stanley Main Beach

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, an 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 Beach Water Quality Forecast mobile application (available for download from: www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQApp) or the dedicated beach water quality forecast page (www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQForecast) on the EPD's beach thematic website.