

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (July 12) released the latest grading of water quality for 38 gazetted beaches that are open for swimming and one non-gazetted beach (i.e. Discovery Bay*).

Fourteen beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1), 18 as Fair (Grade 2) and seven as Poor (Grade 3).

Grade 1 beaches are:

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St. Stephen's Beach Shop May Bay Beach Hut
 1005 North Broadway
 Asheville, NC

Compared with the grading released last week, Kwun Yam Beach, St Stephen's Beach and Turtle Cove Beach have been upgraded from Grade 2 to Grade 1; Anglers' Beach, Approach Beach, Kadoorie Beach and Ma Wan Tung Wan Beach from Grade 3 to Grade 2.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades 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 storm 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 department's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

Analytical Accounts of the Exchange Fund

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) released today (July 12) the key analytical accounts of the Exchange Fund at the end of June 2019.

Foreign assets, representing the external assets of the Exchange Fund, increased during the month by HK\$51.1 billion to HK\$3,653.9 billion.

The Monetary Base, comprising Certificates of Indebtedness, Government-issued currency notes and coins in circulation, the balance of the banking system and Exchange Fund Bills and Notes issued, amounted to HK\$1,634.5 billion.

Claims on the private sector in Hong Kong amounted to HK\$216.3 billion.

The analytical accounts of the Exchange Fund are released in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and are referred to as the Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank under SDDS (Annex).

At present, four press releases relating to the Exchange Fund's data are issued by the HKMA each month. Three of these releases are issued to disseminate monetary data in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS). The fourth press release, on the Exchange Fund's Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account, is made in accordance with the HKMA's policy of maintaining a high level of transparency. For the month of July 2019, the scheduled dates for issuing the press releases are as follows:

July 5 (Issued)	SDDS International Reserves (Hong Kong's Latest Foreign Currency Reserve Assets Figures)
July 12	SDDS Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank (Analytical Accounts of the Exchange Fund)
July 31	SDDS Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity
July 31	Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account

Progress in the handling of banking complaints by HKMA

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (July 12) the progress made in its handling of banking complaints received as at end-June 2019. Banking complaints include cases concerning general banking services and conduct-related issues.

In June 2019, 143 cases were received and the handling of 142 cases was completed. As at end-June, the handling of 434 cases was in progress.

A table summarising the progress made in the handling of banking complaints by the HKMA is attached.

Missing boy in Kwai Chung located

A boy who went missing in Kwai Chung has been located.

Lai Ming-sing, aged 12, went missing after he left his residence in On Yam Estate on July 10 morning. His family made a report to Police on the same day.

The boy was located on Kwai Shing Circuit this morning (July 12).

Twenty-nine immigration offenders arrested (with photos)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a territory-wide anti-illegal worker operation codenamed "Twilight" from July 8 to 11. A total of 20 illegal workers, seven suspected employers, an overstayer and an illegal immigrant were arrested.

During the operation, ImmD Task Force officers raided 48 target locations including a car park, a factory, a farm, garages, hotels, an office, a recycling site, restaurants and wet markets. Twenty illegal workers and seven employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised 11 men and nine women, aged 28 to 62. Among them, one woman was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. In addition, one man and four women were suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards. Meanwhile, seven men, aged 30 to 51, were suspected of employing the illegal workers. A female overstayer and a female illegal immigrant, aged 52 and 45 respectively, were also arrested. They were also suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any

business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases. It is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

