

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 July 12 to noon today (July 15), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 351 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category, in the past three days (including last Saturday and Sunday). 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 152 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 67 852 samples of food imported from Japan (including 43 653 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 16 194 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

RGC announces funding results of Areas of Excellence Scheme and Theme-based Research Scheme 2024/25

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Research Grants Council (RGC) announced today (July 15) the funding results of the Areas of Excellence (AoE) Scheme 2024/25 (Twelfth Round) and the Theme-based Research Scheme (TRS) 2024/25 (Fourteenth Round).

Three AoE and seven TRS research proposals were awarded RGC funding totalling \$236 million and \$330 million respectively. The lists of the awarded projects are set out in Annexes I and II.

The Chairman of the RGC, Professor Timothy W. Tong, said, "I am delighted to announce the successful completion of the 2024/25 exercise. Under the AoE Scheme, three outstanding projects in the areas of diabetes care, surgical robots and artificial intelligence for geriatric care were selected for funding, after rigorous peer reviews based on academic and scientific merits. I would like to congratulate the three project teams for successfully securing the funding support to develop their cutting-edge research into areas of excellence.

"Under the TRS, the RGC decided to fund seven projects which are of strategic importance to Hong Kong's long-term development. These projects cover a wide range of research areas highly relevant to our daily lives, including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) control, hepatocellular carcinoma, resilience against extreme storm surges, wireless power transfer technologies, sustainable supply chain finance, multi-sensory emulation wearable devices, and social robots. I am confident that these projects will deliver enduring economic and societal impacts at the local, national and international levels.

"The RGC has been committed to promoting the University Grants Committee-funded universities in carrying out academic collaborative research. By providing annual funding through the AoE Scheme and the TRS, the RGC has been supporting universities in consolidating and putting into play their advantages, as well as pooling talent and resources. This would provide a strong foothold for developing Hong Kong into an international hub for post-tertiary education, and contributing to the further enhancement of Hong Kong's research capacity and the vibrancy of our innovation ecosystem."

Professor Tong expressed his gratitude to the panel experts for their valuable contributions to the assessment process, as well as local researchers for their continued support for the AoE Scheme, the TRS and the

RGC's work.

Details of the approved projects for the 2024/25 exercise are available on the RGC website (AoE Scheme: www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funding_opport/aoe/funded_research/aoe12.html and TRS: www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funding_opport/trs/funded_research/trs14.html) for reference. A call for proposals for the AoE Scheme and the TRS 2025/26 will be issued later this month.

July 2024 issue of “Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics” now available

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) published today (July 15) the July 2024 issue of the "Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics" (HKMDS).

Apart from providing up-to-date statistics, this issue also contains two feature articles entitled "Foreign Affiliates Statistics of Hong Kong" and "Trade between Hong Kong and the Mainland of China".

"Foreign Affiliates Statistics of Hong Kong"

With globalisation of the world economy, it is popular for multinational enterprises to provide services to customers in another economy through setting up affiliated companies abroad.

In view of the importance of services supplied via this mode, the C&SD has developed a statistical framework for compiling relevant statistics, known as "foreign affiliates statistics (FATS)". This feature article briefly describes the statistical system for compiling inward FATS, and presents principal inward FATS of Hong Kong for 2022. It is an update of similar articles on the same subject published in preceding years.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Trade in Services Statistics Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7410; email: tis@censtatd.gov.hk).

"Trade between Hong Kong and the Mainland of China"

Hong Kong has maintained a close trading relationship with the mainland of China (the Mainland) for many years. In the past decade, the Mainland was Hong Kong's largest destination of total exports and supplier of imports, on average accounting for 55.9% and 45.9% of Hong Kong's total exports and imports respectively.

This feature article analyses the performance and highlights the salient

features of merchandise trade between Hong Kong and the Mainland during the period from 2014 to 2023.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Trade Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4914; email: trade@censtatd.gov.hk).

Published in bilingual form, the HKMDS is a compact volume of official statistics containing about 130 tables. It collects up-to-date statistical series on various aspects of the social and economic situation of Hong Kong. Topics include population; labour; external trade; National Income and Balance of Payments; prices; business performance; energy; housing and property; government accounts, finance and insurance; and transport, communications and tourism. For selected key statistical items, over 20 charts depicting the annual trend in the past decade and quarterly or monthly trend in the recent two years are also available. Users can download the Digest at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1010002&scode=460).

Enquiries about the contents of the Digest can be directed to the Statistical Information Dissemination Section (1) of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4738; email: gen-enquiry@censtatd.gov.hk).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, July 15, 2024 is 106.3 (up 0.1 against last Saturday's index).

â€‹The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, July 13, 2024 was 106.2 (down 0.2 against last Friday's index).

Communications Authority press release

The following is issued on behalf of the Communications Authority:

This press release summarises the decision of the Communications Authority (CA) following its 136th meeting held in July 2024.

Relaxation of requirement related to insertion of news updates in television programmes

The CA decided to relax the requirement related to the display of non-programme material (Note 1) within programmes on domestic free television programme services (free TV) and domestic pay television programme services (pay TV) so that individual licensees may, having regard to their production and scheduling needs, decide whether or not to insert news updates in their programmes.

In June 2024, the CA received an application from Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) for a waiver to enable it to display news headlines (Note 2), in the form of superimposed text, for specified types of programmes (including current affairs programmes, documentaries, informative and infotainment programmes) on the Phoenix Hong Kong Channel. The CA notes that with the proliferation of instant information and increasing demand for such information, viewers should have been accustomed to the display of news headlines in the aforesaid types of programmes and that their viewing pleasure would not be affected. In view of the above, the CA approved TVB's application on the condition that the superimposition of news headlines would not affect the viewing pleasure of the viewers. The waiver is valid until further notice. The relaxation is also applicable to TVB's other programme channels as well as the other two free TV licensees (i.e. HK Television Entertainment Company Limited and i-CABLE HOY Limited) and the pay TV licensee (i.e. PCCW Media Limited) for the broadcast of the aforesaid types of programmes.

Note 1: Paragraph 1 of Chapter 8 of the Generic Code of Practice on Television Advertising Standards stipulates that unless otherwise permitted by the CA, non-programme material may be placed only at the beginning or end of a programme or in a natural break occurring therein. For the purpose of this code, "non-programme material" includes news headlines in the form of superimposed text within a programme (except news programme).

Note 2: The CA has previously approved TVB's application for a temporary waiver for the Phoenix Hong Kong Channel to display news headlines for specified types of programmes (including current affairs programmes, documentaries and informative programmes). The waiver is valid for a period of three months from April 22 to July 21, 2024.