

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 2 to noon today (July 3), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 196 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 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 64 112 samples of food imported from Japan (including 41 537 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 15 592 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

LCQ9: Crackdown on illegal workers

Following is a question by the Hon Chau Siu-chung and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (July 3):

Question:

Regarding the crackdown on illegal workers, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective staffing establishment and strength of the Immigration Department (ImmD) responsible for carrying out frontline enforcement actions against illegal workers or illegal employment in each of the past five years and this year to date;

(2) of the respective numbers of illegal workers who were (i) arrested, (ii) prosecuted, and (iii) convicted in each of the past five years and this year to date, and set out in the table below a breakdown by the type of illegal workers;

Type of illegal workers	2019					Since 2024		
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(i)	(ii)	(iii)
Visitors									
Illegal immigrants									
Foreign domestic helpers (FDHs)									
Imported workers who are subject to specific employment conditions (except FDHs)									
Others (if applicable)									

(3) of the average penalties imposed on the convicted illegal workers mentioned in (2), and the jobs in which such convicted persons were engaged, with a breakdown by job type;

(4) as it is learnt that ImmD will exercise stringent controls at various immigration control points to identify dubious visitors intending to work illegally in Hong Kong and prevent those people from entering Hong Kong, of the respective numbers of dubious visitors identified and refused entry by

the ImmD in each of the past five years and this year to date;

(5) of the respective numbers of employers arrested, prosecuted for and convicted of employing illegal workers in each of the past five years and this year to date, as well as the average penalties imposed on those convicted employers;

(6) as it is learnt that the ImmD will seek legal advice from the Department of Justice and consider whether an application for sentence review or the lodging of appeal should be made if there are reasons to believe that the sentence imposed on employers convicted of employing illegal workers is clearly inadequate, whether the ImmD has applied for sentence review or lodged appeals against the convicted persons mentioned in (5); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(7) given that the ImmD has set up channels such as a 24-hour reporting hotline, email and online form for members of the public to report activities relating to suspected illegal employment, of the respective numbers of such reports received by the ImmD in each of the past five years and this year to date and, among them, the number of those on which follow-up actions were taken; among the reported cases on which follow-up actions were taken, of the average time from the receipt of the reports to the taking of follow-up actions, as well as the respective numbers of illegal workers and their employers who were arrested; whether the Government will consider stepping up publicity to encourage different stakeholders (including members of the public and frontline property management staff, etc.) to report suspected illegal employment; and

(8) as it has been reported that in recent years, some individuals or companies have been offering household cleaning services at low prices on the Internet to solicit business, which may involve illegal workers employed at low costs, what targeted measures the Government has put in place to address the problem, and whether it will consider stepping up the collection of evidence by way of posing as clients to enhance the effectiveness of investigation and law enforcement?

Reply:

President,

The Government is committed to combatting illegal employment, with a view to protecting job opportunities for the local workforce. It is a serious offence to engage in illegal employment. Employers, illegal workers as well as aiders and abettors of illegal employment will be liable to prosecution in accordance with the Immigration Ordinance (IO). Visitors and illegal immigrants (IIs), and more, are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Aiders and abettors are liable to the same penalties. In addition, the Government amended the IO in 2021 by significantly increasing the maximum penalty of employers of illegal workers to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment with a view to reflecting the gravity of such offences. The reply to the Hon

Chau Siu-chung's question is as follows:

(1) Since 2019, the staff establishment of all investigation sections under the Enforcement Branch of the Immigration Department (ImmD) (including only disciplined posts) is tabulated below:

Year (as at January 1 of that year)	Staff establishment of all investigation sections under the Enforcement Branch (including only disciplined posts)
2019	361
2020	413
2021	442
2022	442
2023	442
2024 (as at June 1)	443

As combatting on illegal employment is part of the regular duties of the relevant investigation sections of the ImmD, the above staff concerned also undertake enforcement duties relating to the investigation of other immigration offences. Moreover, the ImmD has always flexibly deployed manpower to carry out related work in combatting illegal employment having regard to the operational needs. The actual number of staff deployed in enforcement operations against illegal employment involves details of operations which should not be disclosed.

(2) According to the ImmD's record, the numbers of illegal workers arrested, prosecuted and convicted are tabulated below with breakdown by immigration status:

Illegal workers	2019			2020		
	Arrested	Prosecuted	Convicted	Arrested	Prosecuted	Convicted
Visitors	1 327	873	832	502	379	368
Illegal immigrants (IIs)	182	163	146	147	152	120
Foreign domestic helpers (FDHs)	150	112	105	120	74	62

Imported workers who are subject to specific employment conditions (except FDHs)	4	2	1	11	6	4
Others (if applicable)	25	7	11	45	4	1
Total	1 688	1 157	1 095	825	615	555

Illegal workers	2021			2022		
	Arrested	Prosecuted	Convicted	Arrested	Prosecuted	Convicted
Visitors	417	303	234	265	147	116
IIs	307	281	188	221	131	113
FDHs	270	219	175	318	242	224
Imported workers who are subject to specific employment conditions (except FDHs)	16	4	2	12	7	2
Others (if applicable)	93	8	1	70	12	2
Total	1 103	815	600	886	539	457

Illegal workers	2023			2024 (as at end-May)		
	Arrested	Prosecuted	Convicted	Arrested	Prosecuted	Convicted
Visitors	679	476	435	274	231	211
IIs	146	100	95	48	46	38
FDHs	415	343	318	121	96	74

Imported workers who are subject to specific employment conditions (except FDHs)	6	5	3	4	4	2
Others (if applicable)	58	19	18	17	0	0
Total	1 304	943	869	464	377	325

Note: persons prosecuted/convicted may not be arrested/prosecuted in the same year.

(3) From 2019 to end-May this year, the majority of the convicted illegal workers were sentenced to imprisonment with terms ranging from 10 days to 40 months. The ImmD does not maintain the breakdown of statistics on the work type of the convicted illegal workers.

(4) The ImmD is responsible for exercising immigration control, whose officers take into account various factors on a case-by-case basis when examining arriving visitors, including their purpose of visit and whether they meet the general immigration requirements (for example, whether they hold a valid travel document or an entry permit with adequate returnability to their places of origin), etc. The ImmD does not maintain statistics on the number of visitors denied entry with intention for working illegally in Hong Kong.

(5) & (6) According to the ImmD's record, the numbers of employers of illegal workers arrested, prosecuted and convicted are tabulated below:

Year	Number of employers of illegal workers		
	Arrested	Prosecuted	Convicted
2019	674	246	196
2020	486	164	104
2021	604	185	105
2022	448	138	85
2023	502	109	99
2024 (as at end-May)	213	70	52

Note: persons prosecuted/convicted may not be arrested/prosecuted in the same year.

From 2019 to end-May this year, the majority of the convicted employers of illegal workers were sentenced to imprisonment or fine, with imprisonment terms ranging from four weeks to around 19 months, and fines ranging from

\$1,000 to \$100,000.

We believe that the amended IO in 2021, which increased the penalty of employers of illegal workers, has already carried a deterrent effect. One of the employers was convicted in court in February 2024 for employing persons not lawfully employable and sentenced to 19 months' imprisonment. The sentence reflected the gravity of employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to pay close attention to sentences imposed by the courts, with due regard to the individual circumstances and severity of each case. If necessary, the ImmD will consult the Department of Justice on the appropriateness of a review of sentence before applying to the original magistrate or the Court of Appeal of the High Court for a sentence review. There is one review case under processing as of now.

(7) The ImmD has set up a dedicated hotline (2824 1551), email account (anti-crime@immd.gov.hk) and Online Reporting of Immigration Offences (www.immd.gov.hk/eng/online-services/) for the public to report illegal employment. From 2019 to end-May this year, the number of reports against suspected employment of illegal workers received by the ImmD is tabulated below:

Year	Number of reports against suspected employment of illegal workers
2019	6 167
2020	4 288
2021	5 604
2022	4 558
2023	6 024
2024 (As at end-May)	3 052

The ImmD will handle each report against illegal employment in accordance with established procedures and mechanisms. The ImmD does not maintain the breakdown of statistics on the average time required for actions to be taken to follow up on a received report, and the numbers of illegal workers and employers of illegal workers arrested arising from the reports.

The ImmD has all along been proactively stepping up the publicity campaign on multiple fronts in order to enhance employers' understanding of the serious consequences of employing illegal workers, and raise public awareness of not employing illegal workers. The ImmD has deployed officers and promotional vehicles to black spots of illegal employment from time to time to distribute "Don't Employ Illegal Workers" leaflets to employers. The employers are provided with information on how to identify persons who are lawfully employable and are reminded to inspect the original Hong Kong identity cards of job seekers for verification. For example, acting on the

latest crime trend and relevant black spots of illegal employment activities, the ImmD's officers have stepped up inspections at new housing estates which are ready for move-in, and actively initiated publicity to educate residents of housing estates not to employ illegal workers for domestic work, renovation and furniture installation, and more, with a view to raising public awareness.

In addition, information and videos about not to employ illegal workers and the points to note for employers before employing a job seeker are uploaded on the ImmD's website for public reference. The ImmD has also disseminated the message of "Employing Illegal Workers Is an Offence" through the ImmD's official account on social media platforms.

(8) The ImmD is aware that some lawbreakers have touted for business in the Internet by operating online stores. The ImmD will definitely take resolute enforcement actions to combat such illegal acts. For example, the ImmD recently discovered that some Mainland companies had been utilising social media platforms to advertise cleaning services in Hong Kong. After intelligence analysis and in-depth investigation, the ImmD's investigation officers identified a Mainland company which arranged for illegal workers to perform domestic and office cleaning work in Hong Kong. In June this year, an anti-illegal worker operation codenamed Netstrike was mounted by deploying officers-in-disguise to contact the person-in-charge of the identified Mainland cleaning service company suspected of having arranged for illegal workers to work in Hong Kong. During the operation, a person-in-charge of the Mainland cleaning company and three Mainland illegal workers were arrested.

The ImmD has established the Cybercrime and Forensics Investigation Group in 2021, which is dedicated to assisting frontline investigators in collecting digital evidence so as to strengthen the ability in case investigation and evidence collection, with a view to coping with criminals who may use well-developed technologies to commit immigration-related offences and some potential complicated crimes in the future, such as using online social platforms or instant messaging applications to organise, arrange, and incite the public to commit serious crimes like illegal employment. The ImmD will continue to step up enforcement actions against illegal employment, including conducting target-oriented cyber patrols, disseminate the serious consequences of employing illegal workers on multiple fronts, raise public awareness of not to employ illegal workers and take resolute enforcement action to combat such offences.

[Land Registry releases statistics for June](#)

The Land Registry today (July 3) released its statistics for June 2024.

Land registration

- * The number of sale and purchase agreements for all building units received for registration in June was 5 245 (-28.7 per cent compared with May 2024 but +9.8 per cent compared with June 2023)
- * The 12-month moving average for June was 4 859 (0.8 per cent above the 12-month moving average for May 2024 but 5.4 per cent below that for June 2023)
- * The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements of building units in June was \$41.1 billion (-34.0 per cent compared with May 2024 but +3.6 per cent compared with June 2023)
- * Among the sale and purchase agreements, 3 856 were for residential units (-30.5 per cent compared with May 2024 but +6.7 per cent compared with June 2023)
- * The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in respect of residential units was \$34.5 billion (-35.4 per cent compared with May 2024 but +2.6 per cent compared with June 2023)

Statistics on sales of residential units do not include sale and purchase agreements relating to sales of units under the Home Ownership Scheme, the Private Sector Participation Scheme, the Tenants Purchase Scheme, etc, unless the premium of the unit concerned has been paid after the sale restriction period.

Figures on sale and purchase agreements received for the past 12 months, the year-on-year rate of change and breakdown figures on residential sales have also been released.

As deeds may not be lodged with the Land Registry until up to 30 days after the transaction, these statistics generally relate to land transactions in the previous month.

Land search

- * The number of searches of land registers made by the public in June was 356 843 (-11.9 per cent compared with May 2024 and -9.3 per cent compared with June 2023)

The statistics cover searches made at the counter, through the self-service terminals and via the Integrated Registration Information System Online Services.

A hot and cloudier June

June 2024 was characterised by generally cloudier and showery weather during the first half of the month. With the subtropical ridge over the western North Pacific extending westwards and covering southeastern China, local weather became generally fine with high temperatures in the second half of the month, including nine consecutive very hot days from June 20 to 28, one of the longest on record for June. Overall, the month was cloudier than usual. The mean amount of cloud in the month was 86 per cent, 9 per cent above the normal of 77 per cent. The duration of bright sunshine in the month was 116.3 hours, about 19 per cent below the normal figure of 144.3 hours. The month was also hotter than usual with the mean temperature of 28.8 degrees, 0.5 degrees above the normal of 28.3 degrees. With five out of the six months warmer than usual, the first half of 2024 was abnormally warm. The mean minimum temperature of 21.4 degrees, the mean temperature of 23.3 degrees and the mean maximum temperature of 25.8 degrees were respectively the highest, one of the highest and the second highest on record for the same period. Despite the generally cloudier and showery conditions for the first half of June, the monthly rainfall was 281.3 millimetres, about 43 per cent below the normal of 491.5 millimetres in June. The accumulated rainfall recorded in the first six months of the year was 863.4 millimetres, about 20 per cent below the normal figure of 1 082.5 millimetres for the same period.

Tropical storm Maliksi made landfall over Yangjiang, Guangdong, on the early morning of June 1. It then moved across inland Guangdong and weakened progressively into an area of low pressure in the evening. The outer rainbands of Maliksi brought heavy squally showers to Hong Kong on June 1. More than 30 millimetres of rainfall were generally recorded over the territory and rainfall even exceeded 80 millimetres over Tsuen Wan and Sha Tin. Affected by a southwesterly airstream, there were sunny periods and a few showers on June 2.

A trough of low pressure lingering over the northwestern part of the South China Sea brought a few showers to Hong Kong from June 3 to 7. It was also windier on June 3 and 4 under the influence of a strong easterly airstream. Under the rain, temperatures at the Observatory dropped to a minimum of 22.9 degrees on June 4, the lowest of the month. With the trough of low pressure edging closer to the Pearl River Estuary, the showers over Hong Kong became heavier with a few thunderstorms on June 8 and 9. More than 50 millimetres of rainfall were generally recorded over most parts of the territory, and rainfall even exceeded 100 millimetres over parts of Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan and Sai Kung Districts on these two days.

Under the influence of a southerly airstream, the weather of Hong Kong was a mixture of sunny intervals, showers and thunderstorms from June 10 to 13. There were heavy showers over Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing Districts on the morning of June 11 and more than 70 millimetres of rainfall were recorded over these districts. With the settling in of an active southwest monsoon, the weather deteriorated with heavy rain episodes from June 14 to 16. More

than 80 millimetres of rainfall were generally recorded over most parts of the territory, and rainfall even exceeded 200 millimetres over parts of North, Tai Po and Tsuen Wan Districts on these three days. The heavy rain on June 14 necessitated the issuance of the Red Rainstorm Warning. More than 4 000 strokes of cloud-to-ground lightning were recorded within Hong Kong on that day. The Observatory issued the Amber Rainstorm Warning three times on June 15. Violent gusts exceeding 110 kilometres per hour were once recorded at Lau Fau Shan in that afternoon.

With the subtropical ridge over the western North Pacific gradually extending westwards, the weather improved from June 17 to 19 with sunny intervals. Meanwhile, there were still a few showers and isolated thunderstorms over Hong Kong under the influence of a southerly airstream. Under the dominance of a subtropical ridge, apart from a few showers and isolated thunderstorms, local weather was very hot with sunny periods during the day from June 20 to 28. The daily maximum temperature of 34.0 degrees and daily mean temperature of 30.8 degrees on June 21 were both one of the highest on record for the Summer Solstice. Moreover, the daily minimum temperature of 29.5 degrees on June 22 was one of the highest on record for June. With plenty of sunshine, the temperatures at the Observatory rose to a maximum of 34.4 degrees on the afternoon of June 27, the highest of the month. A waterspout was also spotted over the seas west of Hong Kong Island on the afternoon of June 28. Affected by the tropical disturbance over the northeastern part of the South China Sea and the subsequent southwesterly airstream, local weather was a mixture of sunny intervals, showers and squally thunderstorms on the last two days of the month. The showers were particularly heavy over parts of Tsuen Wan and Sai Kung Districts, with more than 60 millimetres of rainfall recorded on these two days.

One tropical cyclone occurred over the South China Sea and the western North Pacific in June 2024.

Details of issuance and cancellation of various warnings/signals in the month are summarised in Table 1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal for June are tabulated in Table 2.

Government to move resolution to resume collection of Hotel Accommodation Tax

The Government served a notice to the Legislative Council today (July 3) to move a resolution under the Hotel Accommodation Tax Ordinance (Cap. 348) (HATO) to resume the collection of hotel accommodation tax (HAT).

Under the HAT0, the HAT is imposed on hotel and guesthouse accommodation, and is levied on the accommodation charges payable by guests to hotel or guesthouse proprietors at a rate specified in the Schedule to the HAT0. Since July 1, 2008, the HAT tax rate has been reduced from 3 per cent to 0 per cent.

In the 2024-25 Budget, the Financial Secretary proposed to resume the collection of the HAT at a rate of 3 per cent with effect from January 1, 2025, as part of the comprehensive fiscal consolidation programme to restore fiscal balance in a few years' time. The HAT will bring an estimated annual revenue of about \$1.1 billion to the Government, providing a stable source of revenue without affecting members of the general public. The HAT to be collected only accounts for less than 1 per cent of the spending by overnight visitors in Hong Kong and will not affect visitors' choice of Hong Kong as a travel destination or their spending sentiment in Hong Kong.

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury will move the relevant resolution pursuant to section 3(2) of the HAT0 at the Legislative Council on October 23. The resolution will be published in the Gazette on October 25.

Since the announcement of the proposal to resume the collection of the HAT in the 2024-25 Budget, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) have been actively reaching out to the hotel and guesthouse industry to facilitate them in understanding the operational arrangements regarding the collection of the HAT and in preparing for compliance. The IRD has also been providing assistance by organising briefings for industry practitioners, disseminating relevant information via letters and its website, as well as setting up a dedicated enquiry hotline and a dedicated helpdesk at the Inland Revenue Centre.