

Red tides sighted

Two red tides were sighted during the past week, the Inter-departmental Red Tide Working Group reported today (March 28).

The red tides were spotted by staff of the Marine Department at Sha Tin Hoi and Tolo Harbour (including the Yim Tin Tsai Fish Culture Zone) on March 24 and 25 respectively. Both red tides still persist, and no associated fish deaths have been reported as of today.

A spokesman for the working group said, "Both red tides were formed by *Asterionellopsis glacialis*, which is commonly found in Hong Kong waters and non-toxic."

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) urged mariculturists at the fish culture zones of Yim Tin Tsai, Yim Tin Tsai (East), Yung Shue Au and Lo Fu Wat to monitor the situation closely and increase aeration where necessary.

Red tide is a natural phenomenon. The AFCD's proactive phytoplankton monitoring programme will continue to monitor red tide occurrences to minimise the impact on the mariculture industry and the public.

Promotion of Recycling and Proper Disposal of Products (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2025 gazetted today

The Promotion of Recycling and Proper Disposal of Products (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2025 (Amendment Bill) was published in the Gazette today (March 28) to establish a common legislative framework for Producer Responsibility Schemes (PRs) applicable to different products, facilitating the progressive inclusion of regulated products in the future.

A spokesman for the Environment and Ecology Bureau indicated that a PRS is one of the key policy tools in waste management based on the principle of "polluter pays" and the concept of "eco-responsibility". Stakeholders through the value chain, from manufacturers at one end to consumers at the other, share responsibility through usage reduction, waste recovery, and recycling, thereby reducing waste, and enhancing both the quality and quantity of recyclables more effectively. The Government has already implemented PRs for plastic shopping bags, waste electronic and electrical equipment, and glass beverage containers.

The spokesman said, "In view of the fact that there are many common elements among the PRSs, to facilitate future implementation of PRSs in a more efficient manner, expanding our waste-to-resources capacities, the Amendment Bill proposes to establish a common legislative framework for PRSs applicable to different products to set out the general operational mechanism for PRSs, the responsibilities of relevant stakeholders, associated regulatory control measures, etc. The operational details applicable to individual regulated products will be prescribed in the respective subsidiary legislations."

To complement the common legislative framework, the Amendment Bill also proposes to make other amendments to the Waste Disposal Ordinance (Cap. 354), Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance (Cap. 603) and relevant subsidiary legislations to regulate the waste disposal and recycling facilities and implement import and export controls for certain product wastes, ban the disposal of vehicle tyre waste at designated disposal facilities, and enable the Director of Environmental Protection to specify the form of any notice, with a view to including digital payment methods for settling fixed penalties.

The spokesman added, "PRSs help develop the circular economy by creating job opportunities and business, while stimulating innovation and use of technologies in waste management. To alleviate the compliance costs of the trades, we will consider providing exemptions as appropriate. We will maintain close liaison with the trades when formulating each scheme and suitably incorporate their views into the operational details. We will also provide adaptation periods for stakeholders to familiarise themselves with the implementation details. Once the trades are ready, we will consult the Panel on Environmental Affairs of the Legislative Council and the Advisory Council on the Environment on the respective operational details. We will introduce individual PRSs having regard to prevailing circumstances and introduce the respective subsidiary legislations to the Legislative Council for negative vetting."

The Amendment Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council for first and second readings on April 2.

Courts (Remote Hearing) Ordinance comes into operation

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Courts (Remote Hearing) Ordinance (the Ordinance) takes effect upon gazettal today (March 28). The Ordinance provides a clear legal basis for judges and judicial officers to order remote hearings for court proceedings

at various levels of courts and tribunals where appropriate, having regard to the requirements under the Ordinance.

Remote hearing is one of the Judiciary's key technology initiatives for enhancing the efficiency of court operations. Remote hearing saves time for parties and other participants (such as witnesses) to commute to law courts buildings for attending court proceedings, thereby facilitating the listing of court proceedings. It also facilitates the courts in better tackling unforeseen circumstances where physical presence by parties may not be possible.

A spokesman for the Judiciary said, "Since 2020, the Judiciary has conducted over 2 100 remote hearings at various levels of courts and tribunals, and the experience has been positive. The Judiciary will step up promotion for remote hearing. We are also prepared to conduct remote hearings more often in suitable proceedings, particularly for short proceedings (such as three-minute hearings) and non-trial criminal proceedings."

The Judiciary would like to remind all court users that the Ordinance has introduced new offences to criminalise unauthorised recording, publishing and broadcast of proceedings in physical and remote hearings. Anyone who commits the offences is liable to a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment and a fine of \$100,000.

The Ordinance has also amended section 7 of the Summary Offences Ordinance (Cap. 228) to expand the coverage of the offence of taking photographs in courts to include making images or audio records of any court premises and any person on court premises; and to increase the maximum penalty to one year's imprisonment and a fine of \$50,000.

While remote hearing is generally applicable to both civil proceedings and non-trial criminal proceedings, the Judiciary plans to start conducting remote hearings for the latter in about six months' time so as to allow time for stakeholders to get prepared. The Judiciary will issue practice directions by phases to specify the operational details for conducting remote hearings, including the application procedures, guidelines and related issues.

[Postal services to Georgia return to normal](#)

â€‹Hongkong Post announced today (March 28) that, as advised by the postal administration of Georgia, mail delivery services previously impacted by severe weather have returned to normal.

“Population and Household Statistics Analysed by District Council District 2024” published

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) published today (March 28) the report "Population and Household Statistics Analysed by District Council District 2024".

The report provides information on the socio-economic characteristics of the land-based non-institutional population in 2024 at the District Council district level. Population characteristics like age and sex, and household characteristics like household income and type of households are included.

The statistics in the report are primarily compiled based on the survey results of the General Household Survey from January to December 2024 as well as the mid-year population estimates, thus largely reflecting the overall situation of the population in each District Council district in the year. This survey covers the land-based non-institutional population of Hong Kong. Summary statistics by District Council district are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 attached.

Users can browse and download the report at the website of the C&SD at (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1130301&scode=150).

Enquiries about the contents of the report can be directed to the Social Analysis and Research Section of the C&SD (Tel.: 2887 5106; e-mail: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).