

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (March 21) released the latest grading of water quality for 10 gazetted beaches that are open for swimming.

Nine beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1), and one as Fair (Grade 2).

Grade 1 beaches are:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Big Wave Bay Beach | Lido Beach |
| Casam Beach | Repulse Bay Beach |
| Clear Water Bay Second Beach | Silver Mine Bay Beach |
| Deep Water Bay Beach | Stanley Main Beach |
| Golden Beach | |

Grade 2 beach is:

Silverstrand Beach

Compared with the grading released last week, there was no change in the grading for these beaches.

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 EPD's dedicated webpage on the beach water quality forecast (www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQForecast).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, March 21, 2025 is 106.5 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

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 is conducting 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 the situation and continue to implement the enhanced testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on March 20 to noon today (March 21), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 117 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, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 123 898 samples of food imported from Japan (including 81 334 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 28 578 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Housing Authority endorses tightening of "Well-off Tenants Policies" and review of implementation details

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

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) Subsidised Housing Committee (SHC) endorsed today (March 21) the tightening of "Well-off Tenants Policies" (WTP) and the rationalisation of some of the implementation details.

"The Chief Executive announced in the 2024 Policy Address that the WTP of public rental housing (PRH) will be tightened up, by raising the additional rent and lowering the income limit of well-off tenants. In this connection, the HA has reviewed various arrangements to expedite the circulation of PRH flats and encourage upward mobility of well-off tenants," a spokesman for the HA said.

Tightening up the WTP

Under the existing WTP, PRH tenants who have resided in PRH for 10 years or more are required to declare biennially their income, assets and whether they own domestic properties in Hong Kong. Households whose family income exceeds five times the prevailing PRH income limits (PRHILs) or with a total household net asset value exceeding 100 times the prevailing PRHILs or who have domestic property ownership in Hong Kong (applicable to all PRH households regardless of their length of residence in PRH), or refuse to make declaration should vacate their PRH flats. PRH households who do not have domestic property ownership in Hong Kong and whose household income exceeds two times and not more than three times the prevailing PRHILs, will be required to pay 1.5 times net rent plus rates; if their household income

exceeds three times and not more than five times the prevailing PRHILs, they will be required to pay double net rent plus rates. These tenants may continue to reside in their PRH flats.

Raising the additional rent for well-off tenants

In order to allocate resources properly, the SHC has endorsed reducing the subsidies for well-off tenants by raising their additional rents. Households whose family income exceeds two times and not more than three times the prevailing PRHILs will be required to pay 2.5 times net rent plus rates; households whose family income exceeds three times and not more than four times the prevailing PRHILs will be required to pay 3.5 times net rent plus rates; households whose family income exceeds four times and not more than five times the prevailing PRHILs will be required to pay 4.5 times net rent plus rates. For details, please refer to the Annex.

"With the increase in additional rents for well-off tenants, average rent to total household income of well-off tenants will account for about 11 per cent. While this is still much lower than the median rent-to-income ratio of 31.5 per cent for households renting private residential flats, it is comparable to general PRH tenants, which is more reasonable," the spokesman said.

The new additional rent level will take effect from the declaration cycle in October this year, and the first batch of well-off tenants will pay rent in accordance with the new additional rent level on October 1, 2026.

Adjusting the threshold for vacating PRH flats

The SHC also endorsed that PRH tenants with income levels exceeding four times but not five times the PRHILs after two declaration cycles (i.e. four years in total) must also vacate their flats.

"This adjustment will not affect tenants whose financial condition has just begun to improve, and it will also enable better-off PRH tenants to make early arrangements for vacating their PRH flats to ensure the proper use of public housing resources," the spokesman said.

Encourage upward mobility of well-off tenants

The SHC also endorsed the suggestions below:

(a) Starting from the next home ownership scheme (HOS) sale exercise, adjust the quota allocation ratio of Green Form (GF) and White Form (WF) to 50:50;

(b) Well-off tenants who are paying additional rents (irrespective of the rent level) can retain their GF status for four years after voluntarily moving out from their flats. The new arrangements will be implemented from October 1, 2025; and

(c) Explore the introduction of new arrangements in the sale exercise of

subsidised sale flats (SSF) in helping well-off tenants stand a better chance of purchasing flats that they desire and increase their chances of success in home ownership. Details will be announced and implemented when the next HOS sales exercise is launched.

"Under the whole package of enhancements to the WTP, we have on the one hand reduced the subsidy for well-off tenants, and at the same time increased their chances of success in purchasing SSF. This aligns with the principles and vision of the HA in optimising the use of public housing resources and encouraging upward mobility," the spokesman said.

Rationalising the implementation details of the WTP

Arrangements for PRH tenants who have purchased domestic properties in Hong Kong

Under the prevailing arrangements, if an individual member of a PRH tenancy purchased an SSF using WF status or purchased private domestic property, the HA will issue a Notice To Quit to the tenant concerned for the surrender of the PRH flat, irrespective of whether or not the property concerned has been completed. As for the GF applicants, they do not need to vacate their flat before taking possession of the purchased property and can continue to pay the prevailing level of rent.

To encourage and enable the upward mobility of PRH tenants and with the completion of more SSFs in the future, the SHC endorsed:

(a) For PRH tenants who have signed an Agreement for Sale and Purchase (ASP) (including a Preliminary Agreement for Sale and Purchase (PASP)) to purchase a private domestic property, or individual members of the household have purchased an SSF with WF status (regardless of whether the domestic property is completed or not), the HA will continue to allow them to rent their existing PRH flats until their surrender of the PRH flats or deletion of the subject member from the tenancy after assignment;

(b) During the above period, PRH tenants can continue to pay the prevailing level of rent, which is the same as those who have purchased SSF with GF status. However, while waiting for the handover, they must still make declarations in a timely manner according to the WTP declaration cycle and pay the corresponding level of rent according to their household income level; and

(c) If the tenant (including some of the family members) purchased the flat, regardless of GF or WF status, through the SSF Schemes under the HA or the Housing Society, the HA will not consider them as omitting or refusing to declare the ownership of the subject SSF property even if they have not made separate declarations to the HA.

"Tenants have the responsibility to truthfully declare to the HA when they have entered into an ASP (including a PASP) or purchased any domestic property in Hong Kong (including an uncompleted domestic property), the expected date of handover and the date of successful completion of sale and

purchase. The HA shall also be informed immediately of any adjustments to the relevant dates," the spokesman emphasised.

Enhancing the declaration arrangements of the WTP

Under the existing declaration form under the WTP, all household members of a PRH tenancy are required to declare jointly whether they own any domestic property in Hong Kong, and all members of the household are jointly responsible for the truthfulness and accuracy of the contents of the declaration. The SHC endorsed the enhancement direction of the declaration arrangement. The HA will require each family member to declare individually whether they own any domestic property in Hong Kong under the WTP declaration, so as to identify those who has made false declarations for the purpose of taking enforcement measures. The member who has made false declarations will be subject to a five-year debarment for the application of PRH and liable to prosecutions.

Measures related the rationalisation of the implementation details of the WTP, will be implemented from March 31, this year onwards. "Policy on Grant of New Tenancy" and "Tenancy Management Policies" adopt the same implementation criteria as the WTP, and the relevant policies will also be implemented on the same date.

Appointment of Directors of Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited

â€‹The Government today (March 21) announced the appointment of five new Directors and the reappointment of three serving members to the Board of Directors of the Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited (Cyberport), for a two-year term from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2027.

The five new Directors are Mr Kenny Chien Kwok-keung, Ms Ivy Chua Suk-lin, Mr Stephen Law Cheuk-kin, Mr James Li Tsz-shu and Mr Roy Ng Chun-tat. Three serving Directors, namely Mr Jack Kong Jian-ping, Mr Lau Kwok-fan and Dr Derrick Pang Yat-bond, have been reappointed to the Board.

The Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, welcomed the above appointments. He said, "Benefitting from the diverse backgrounds, experience and vision of the Board members, Cyberport will continue with its public mission and scale new heights, fostering Hong Kong's development as an international innovation and digital technology hub."

Professor Sun also expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the outgoing Directors, Mr Victor Ng Chi-keung, Mr Charleston Sin Chiu-shun and Mr Eric Yeung Chuen-sing, for their contributions to Cyberport over the past six

years.

The full membership of the Cyberport Board with effect from April 1, 2025, is as follows:

Mr Simon Chan Sai-ming (Chairman)

Mr Nicholas Chan Hiu-fung

Professor Christopher Chao Yu-hang

Ms Ivy Cheung Wing-han

Mr Kenny Chien Kwok-keung

Ms Ivy Chua Suk-lin

Mr Jack Kong Jianping

Mr Lau Kwok-fan

Mr Stephen Law Cheuk-kin

Mr Michael Leung Kin-man

Mr James Li Tsz-shu

Ms Erica Ma Yun

Mr Roy Ng Chun-tat

Dr Derrick Pang Yat-bond

Mr Patrick Tsang On-yip

Ms Maggie Tsoi Tsz-shan

Mr Ken Wong Kin-hang

Permanent Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry