

[EDB announces arrangements for third round of Basic Law and National Security Law Test in 2024/25 school year](#)

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (February 19) announced that the third round of the Basic Law and National Security Law Test (BLNST) in the 2024/25 school year will be open for application from 9am on February 21 to 5pm on March 6. The test will be held on April 12 (Saturday).

The target participants for the third round of the test are persons with a bachelor's degree or those who will attain a bachelor's degree in the 2024/25 or 2025/26 academic year and are planning to join or change to another secondary school, primary school or kindergarten to take up a teaching post. Applications can be made through the EDB's online application system (www.edb.gov.hk/en/blnst). Limited places for the test will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Those who have already obtained a pass result in the BLNST organised by the EDB, the Civil Service Bureau or recruiting departments/grades for degree holders will not be accepted to sit the test again.

Starting from the 2023/24 school year, all newly appointed teachers in public sector schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools and kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme (including newly joined teachers and teachers changing schools) are required to pass the BLNST in order to be considered for appointment. The requirement applies to all ranks of the teacher grade including principals.

The EDB is conducting five rounds of the BLNST for degree holders and non-degree holders respectively this school year. Details are available on the EDB webpage (www.edb.gov.hk/en/blnst). The fourth round will be open for non-degree holders and will be held on June 22 (Sunday). The fifth round will be open for degree holders and will be held on July 19 (Saturday). Relevant arrangements will be announced in due course.

[LCQ8: Guidance Notes on Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work](#)

Following is a question by the Hon Lam So-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council

today (February 19):

Question:

The Labour Department (LD) launched on May 2 last year the revised "Guidance Notes on Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work" (GN) and introduced the optimised Heat Stress at Work Warning system. However, some labour unions have relayed that GN and the optimised measures are virtually non-existent (including the fact that some companies still do not arrange rest time or shaded areas for rest breaks for their employees), failing to help employees in preventing heat stroke. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of cases of heat stroke-related work injury cases registered at LD in the past three years; whether it has reviewed if the number of heat stroke-related work injury cases registered has decreased after the revision of GN; if it has reviewed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the details; if the outcome of the review is in the negative, whether it has studied the reasons for that;

(2) after the revision of GN, of the respective numbers of advice or warnings given by the authorities against employers who have not taken sufficient measures to prevent heat stroke; as the Secretary for Labour and Welfare indicated in a media interview in May last year that for employers who deliberately do not follow GN, the authorities will invoke the provision of general responsibility of employers under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509) to institute prosecutions, of the number of such prosecutions so far; and

(3) of the specific timetable for reviewing GN; whether the authorities will consider legislating to mandate employers to conduct workplace heat stress risk assessment for their employees so as to further ensure the safety of employees; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Hon Lam So-wai's question is as follows:

(1) The number of work injury cases related to heat stress in the past three years is listed below:

Year	2022	2023	2024
Total number of cases	16	31	29*

* As some suspected cases are still under investigation, the number of cases in 2024 is provisional and subject to change based on the investigation outcome.

The increase in the number of cases is probably related to the issuance

of the "Guidance Notes on Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work" (GN) by the Labour Department (LD) in 2023 and the extensive publicity carried out in collaboration with the Occupational Safety and Health Council. The GN raised employers' and employees' awareness and concern about heat stroke at work, as well as their understanding that heat stroke at work can be considered and handled as work injuries, thus resulting in an increase in the reporting of relevant cases in 2023 and 2024.

(2) In the summer of 2024, the LD conducted a total of 23 620 inspections related to risk control measures against heat stress and issued 1 031 warnings to relevant stakeholders. The warnings were mainly related to failure to conduct a heat stress risk assessment in accordance with the GN to ensure the implemented heat stroke preventive measures are appropriate and effective, failure to keep records of heat stress risk assessment, or failure to take adequate preventive measures to reduce the risk of heat stroke at work. We did not find any serious contravention in the period of inspection that warranted prosecution under the general duty provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (OSHO). We believe that most employers recognise the need to prevent their employees from getting heat stroke at work and are willing to take necessary measures against heat stress in accordance with the recommendations in the GN.

(3) In 2023, the LD issued the GN and introduced the Heat Stress at Work Warning (HSWW) based on the Hong Kong Heat Index to enable employers and employees to formulate, with reference to the GN and according to the heat stress level, appropriate and risk-based control measures to reduce the risk of heat stroke posed to employees at work.

Taking into account the views of various stakeholders, the LD expedited the review in May 2024 with parts of the GN revised and strengthened in order to enhance the employers' and employees' understanding of the criteria and recommendations provided in the GN. At the same time, the HSWW system was optimised by linking its warning with the Hong Kong Observatory's "Extremely Hot" special alert and adjusting the cancellation mechanism of HSWW further so that the re-issuance of warning within a short time after cancellation was significantly reduced in 2024.

Under the general duty clauses of section 6 of the OSHO, every employer must, so far as reasonably practicable, ensure the safety and health at work of all the employer's employees, including the provision or maintenance of a working environment and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health of the employees. Employers are required to conduct heat stress risk assessments for employees working in hot environment, and take necessary risk control measures based on the assessment results to prevent employees from getting heat stroke at work. The LD will conduct inspection and law enforcement work. In particular, inspection of workplaces with a higher risk of heat stroke will be stepped up during summer time to ensure that employers have taken appropriate measures to safeguard employees against heat stroke at work. If irregularities are found during inspection, relevant law enforcement actions will be taken based on the seriousness of the circumstances and the evidence available.

We believe that the GN can raise the awareness and capacity of employers and employees in preventing heat stroke at work, and we will continue to conduct various publicity and promotional activities as well as education and training work to remind and assist them to take appropriate heat stroke preventive measures in accordance with the GN. Moreover, the LD will continue to perform inspection and law enforcement work to monitor the implementation of heat stroke prevention measures in high-risk industries and ensure that employers have taken appropriate measures to prevent employees from getting heat stroke at work.

LCQ16: Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Maggie Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (February 19):

Question:

The Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS) launched by the Government in 2016 with a total commitment of \$200 million aims at funding non-profit-making industry-led projects to increase exchanges and co-operation between Hong Kong's professional services and external counterparts, promote relevant publicity activities, and enhance the standards and external competitiveness of Hong Kong's professional services. In addition, the Government has set aside \$50 million to launch the Professionals Participation Subsidy Programme (PSP) under PASS, which subsidises Hong Kong's major professional bodies to participate in relevant activities organised by the Government and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council after the epidemic has stabilised in order to step up the promotion of Hong Kong's competitive edges and professional services to external parties. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on the Main Programme of PASS from August 2021 to November last year: the number of (i) funded and (ii) rejected projects, (iii) the number of beneficiary organisations, (iv) the average amount of grant for approved projects, and (v) the beneficiary sectors and their proportions;

(2) given that according to the paper submitted by the Government to the Finance Committee of this Council on July 8, 2016, the funding of \$200 million allocated to PASS could sustain its operation up to around 2021-22, of the total amount of grants involved in the approved projects of PASS since its launch, and whether the Government has re-assessed up to when the funding can sustain the operation of PASS;

(3) of the following information on the PSP since its launch: (i) the number of applications approved, (ii) the total amount of subsidies granted, and (iii) the number of beneficiaries;

(4) as there are views pointing out that international legal and dispute resolution services are among the several industries in which Hong Kong can utilise its unique advantages under "one country, two systems", whether the Government has compiled statistics on the number of applications for PASS funding submitted by organisations in the legal sector and the proportion they account for, and analysed their reasons for applying; of the highest and lowest amounts of funding granted for such applications;

(5) whether it has reviewed if the number of applications under PASS has resumed to the pre-epidemic level after the Government's lifting of all mandatory mask-wearing requirements in March 2023; if the number of applications has resumed to the pre-epidemic level, of the details; if not, whether it has studied the reasons for that; and

(6) apart from issuing a press release on December 1 last year announcing that PASS would accept a new round of applications, whether the Government has formulated other promotion plans for PASS; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will formulate the relevant plans expeditiously?

Reply:

President,

The Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS), launched in November 2016 with a total commitment of \$200 million, aims to support Hong Kong's professional services sector in undertaking worthwhile projects to strengthen exchanges and co-operation with external counterparts, promote relevant publicity activities, and enhance service standards and external competitiveness. Since the launch of the Main Programme of PASS, nearly 120 projects have been funded, involving a total grant of about \$80 million.

In addition, it was announced in the 2020 Policy Address that the Government would set aside \$50 million under PASS to set up the Professionals Participation Subsidy Programme (PSP), which subsidises Hong Kong's major professional bodies to participate in relevant activities organised by the Government (e.g. Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices) and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council after the pandemic situation has stabilised, with a view to stepping up promotion of Hong Kong's competitive edge and professional services to Mainland cities and overseas markets.

My reply in response to the question raised by the Hon Maggie Chan is as follows:

(1), (3) and (4) From August 2021 to November last year, a total of 41 projects were funded under the PASS Main Programme, involving 24 applicants with a total grant of about \$24 million. The average amount of grant for each

project is about \$600,000. A total of 25 applications were not funded. Among the beneficiary sectors, health-related services accounted for about 40 per cent, legal services accounted for about 20 per cent and building and construction-related services accounted for around 15 per cent. Beneficiary sectors of the remaining projects included design services, information and communications technology services etc. Projects related to legal services involved four applicants, with the highest and lowest amounts of grant approved being around \$1.1 million and \$270,000 respectively. As for the PSP, since the stabilisation of the pandemic and easing of travel restrictions at the end of 2022, a total of 14 activities were funded. Nearly 300 local professionals participated, involving a total subsidy of about \$3.4 million.

(2) As mentioned in the first paragraph above, since the launch of the PASS Main Programme in 2016, the total amount of grant approved is about \$80 million, averaging around \$10 million of funding approved per year. With reference to the average annual funding approved in the past, it is expected that the funding of \$150 million designated for the Main Programme can sustain its operation until around 2031-32, though the actual situation will depend on the number of applications submitted by applicants and the amount of grant approved for each project.

(5) and (6) The number of applications under PASS during the pandemic was similar to those before and after the pandemic. Most of the applicants conducted their projects online during the pandemic, hence the relatively low amount of funding applied. The projects have now resumed in a physical format. We have been actively promoting PASS through various channels, such as holding quarterly briefing sessions, sending emails to post-secondary institutions, commercial and industrial organisations as well as professional bodies, issuing press releases, and providing application information on the PASS website. We also take the initiative to reach out to and meet with commercial and industrial organisations as well as professional bodies from time to time to brief them on PASS and encourage them to actively apply for funding. Relevant promotion work is on-going.

Red flags hoisted at Silverstrand Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (February 19) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Silverstrand Beach

and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (February 19). The arrangements will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

A. Traffic arrangements before the commencement of the first race

The following road closure and traffic diversions will be implemented from 50 minutes before the start of the first race for day racing, or from 6pm onwards for night racing:

1. Road closure

Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp outside the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) will be closed, except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel.

2. Traffic diversions

- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the up-ramp outside the HKJC will be re-routed one way northbound;
- Traffic along eastbound Queen's Road East heading for Wan Chai and Happy Valley will be diverted to turn left to Morrison Hill Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along Queen's Road East cannot turn right to Wong Nai Chung Road, except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Queen's Road East will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Morrison Hill Road to turn right at the junction of Wong Nai Chung Road and Queen's Road East; and
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley or Racecourse will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, southbound Morrison Hill Road, Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road.

B. Traffic arrangements before the conclusion of race meeting

The following road closure and traffic diversions will be implemented from about 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

1. Road closure

- The up-ramp on Wong Nai Chung Road outside the HKJC leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the Public Stands of the HKJC;
- Westbound Leighton Road between Wong Nai Chung Road and Canal Road East; and
- Southbound Morrison Hill Road between Leighton Road and Queen's Road East.

In addition, southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel and the Public Stands of the HKJC will be closed from about 10 minutes before the start of the last race.

2. Traffic diversions

- Eastbound Queen's Road East at its junction with Morrison Hill Road will be reduced to one-lane traffic heading for northbound Canal Road flyover;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Wan Chai will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, U-turn slip road beneath Canal Road flyover, Canal Road West and Hennessy Road;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road will be diverted to turn left to eastbound Leighton Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road; and
- Traffic along westbound Leighton Road will be diverted to Wong Nai Chung Road.

C. Learner drivers prohibition

Learner drivers will be prohibited to turn left from Caroline Hill Road to Leighton Road between one and a half hours before the start of the first race and one hour after the last race. In addition, learner drivers will be prohibited from accessing the following roads within the above period of time:

- Shan Kwong Road between Yik Yam Street and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Village Road between its upper and lower junctions with Shan Kwong Road;
- Percival Street between Hennessy Road and Leighton Road;
- Canal Road East; and
- The service road leading from Gloucester Road to Canal Road flyover.

D. Suspension of parking spaces

Parking spaces on southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Sports Road and Blue Pool Road will be suspended from 11am to 7pm for day racing, and from

5pm to 11.59pm for night racing respectively.

All vehicles parked illegally during the implementation of the above special traffic arrangements will be towed away without prior warning, and may be subject to multiple ticketing.

Actual implementation of road closure and traffic diversion will be made by the Police at the time depending on traffic conditions in the areas. Motorists should exercise tolerance and patience, and follow the instructions of Police on site.