

Recruitment arrangement for Government Counsel applicants announced

The Department of Justice today (August 2) reminded potential applicants for the post of Government Counsel (GC) that they are required to obtain a certain level of results in the Common Recruitment Examination (CRE) in order to qualify for the post.

The GC recruitment exercise will be conducted around late August/early September this year. Similar to last year's recruitment exercise, applicants will be required to obtain a Level 2 result in the Use of English (UE) paper and a Level 1 result in the Use of Chinese (UC) paper of the CRE.

In this connection, Level 5 or above in English Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSEE) or Grade C or above in Use of English in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) or Grade C or above in English Language in the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) are accepted as equivalent to Level 2 in the UE paper of the CRE. Furthermore, Level 4 in Chinese Language in the HKDSEE or Grade D in Chinese Language and Culture or Chinese Language and Literature in the HKALE are accepted as equivalent to Level 1 in the UC paper of the CRE. Other equivalent qualifications can also be found at www.csb.gov.hk/english/recruit/cre/949.html.

Under exceptional circumstances a limited number of applicants who do not meet the requisite Chinese language requirement may be appointed, subject to the operational needs of the department.

Since 2008, applicants for the GC post should also take a Basic Law Test (BLT). While not mandatory, the results of the BLT will be taken into account in considering the suitability of a candidate for appointment.

The next CRE and BLT will be held on October 5 and 12, in Hong Kong. Prospective GC applicants without the requisite results in the CRE or equivalent and/or those who wish to take the BLT are invited to apply between August 2 and 15, for sitting the relevant examination and/or test.

Further information on the CRE and BLT is available on the homepage of the Civil Service Bureau (under the 'Recruitment' section) at www.csb.gov.hk.

Several beaches reopened (2)

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 (August 2) that the shark prevention nets at Butterfly Beach, Castle Peak Beach, Kadoorie Beach, Cafeteria Old Beach, Cafeteria New Beach and Golden Beach in Tuen Mun District have been repaired and the beaches have been reopened.

The beaches were temporarily closed earlier on for shark prevention net maintenance work.

Visa-free access to Iran for HKSAR passport holders

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has received confirmation from the Government of Iran that with immediate effect HKSAR passport holders may visit Iran visa-free for a stay of up to 21 days.

An Immigration Department spokesman said, "Iran is along the Belt and Road. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, this visa-free arrangement would bring greater travel convenience to the travellers of Hong Kong and strengthen the tourism, cultural and economic ties between the two places."

Including Iran, 166 countries and territories have granted visa-free access or visa-on-arrival to HKSAR passport holders. Please visit the following website for details:
www.immd.gov.hk/eng/service/travel_document/visa_free_access.html or scan the attached code.

Twenty-eight immigration offenders arrested

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a territory-wide anti-illegal worker operation codenamed "Twilight" on July 29 and 30 and August 1. A total of 17 illegal workers, four suspected employers and seven overstayers were arrested.

During the operation, ImmD Task Force officers raided 27 target locations including companies, garbage collection points, a hostel, a park, restaurants and a shop. The illegal workers comprised 10 men and seven women, aged 29 to 59. Among them, one man was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits him from taking any employment. In addition, three men and one woman were suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards and one woman was suspected of using a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Meanwhile, three men and one woman, aged 33 to 68, were suspected of employing the illegal workers. Furthermore, seven female overstayers, aged 28 to 49, were also arrested.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases. It is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they

are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

Land Registry releases statistics for July

The Land Registry today (August 2) released its statistics for July 2019.

Land registration

- * The number of sale and purchase agreements for all building units received for registration in July was 6,380 (+2.7 per cent compared with June but -24.6 per cent compared with July 2018)
- * The 12-month moving average for July was 6,144 (2.7 per cent below the 12-month moving average for June and 18.8 per cent below that for July 2018)
- * The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in July was \$54.0 billion (+0.3 per cent compared with June but -45.7 per cent compared with July 2018)
- * Among the sale and purchase agreements, 4,805 were for residential units (+3.8 per cent compared with June but -21.1 per cent compared with July 2018)
- * The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in respect of residential units was \$44.1 billion (-2.8 per cent compared with June and -32.4 per cent compared with July 2018)

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 and the Tenants Purchase Scheme 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 July was 459,753 (+6.4 per cent compared with June but -4.9 per cent compared with July 2018)

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