

Red flags hoisted at several beaches

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 (October 23) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach, Shek O Beach and Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; Cheung Chau Tung Wan Beach in Islands District; and Silverstrand Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

LCQ13: Labour force participation rate of older persons

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Tan Yueheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (October 23):

Question:

According to government information, the labour force participation rate of older persons in Hong Kong remains relatively low compared to other developed economies. There are views that as Hong Kong is facing a structural decline in its labour force, there is an urgent need to further unleash the potential labour force of older persons. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views that older persons have rich experience and distinctive advantages in the employment market, and that encouraging the active participation in employment of people aged between 60 and 65 will help alleviate the crisis of a dwindling workforce in Hong Kong and provide them with more lifestyle choices, whether the Government has any new measures to encourage employers to be flexible in dealing with employees' retirement age and to give more consideration to employing older persons; and

(2) whether it has any medium and long-term plans to systematically increase the labour force participation rate of older persons; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

The Government endeavours to encourage and support employers to employ older persons. In response to Dr the Hon Tan Yueheng's question, the reply is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Government implements a range of measures to promote the employment of older persons which include:

(i) The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) provides around 700 market-oriented training courses straddling across 28 industries and generic skills for eligible persons including older persons. The ERB also provides training courses which gear towards the employment needs of older persons aged 50 or above to encourage the potential workforce to enter the labour market. For example, the ERB organises the Post-50 Internship Programme for older persons aged 50 or above to facilitate their understanding of the current employment market situation. Through its Service Centre and Service Spots at district level, the ERB provides latest training and employment-related information and other support services to service targets including older persons. Besides, under the "Hire and Train" Scheme, the ERB encourages the participating employers to provide suitable job vacancies for trainees (including persons who have recently retired), adjust the working hours and leave arrangements to cater for trainees' family and personal situation, and provide on-the-job training and other related support measures so as to encourage the potential workforce to enter the labour market.

(ii) The Labour Department (LD) provides diversified employment services for job seekers including older and middle-aged persons, and launched the three-year Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme (REA Scheme) on July 15 this year to encourage persons aged 40 or above who have not been at paid employment for three consecutive months or more to join the employment market. During the implementation period of the REA Scheme, each eligible participant who has worked for 12 consecutive months will receive a maximum re-employment allowance of \$20,000. Besides, the LD implements the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged (EPEM), offering on-the-job training (OJT) allowance to employers to encourage them to hire older and middle-aged persons. Employers engaging each eligible job seeker aged 60 or above under EPEM will receive a maximum OJT allowance of \$5,000 per month for six to 12 months. To further encourage employers to take on participants of the REA Scheme, the LD has uniformly extended the duration of OJT period under EPEM to 12 months for eligible employers engaging REA Scheme participants aged 60 or above. The REA Scheme is very well received, and had recorded over 20 000 participants and more than 2 200 placements as at September 30. Of which, more than 4 700 participants were aged 60 or above with 520 placements recorded.

(iii) The Government has all along been encouraging employers, having regard to their individual circumstances, to adopt elderly-friendly employment practices, such as extending the working age of employees, providing flexible work arrangements and fostering an environment conducive to elderly

employment, to facilitate more older persons to stay in or rejoin the labour market. The LD will continue to organise publicity activities, including the Good Employer Charter 2024, to strengthen the promotion of related measures to employers.

The Government will continue to support employment of older persons and encourage employers to engage older employees through training, employment services and promotion.

CE expresses sorrow over passing of Mr Michael Suen

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, today (October 23) expressed sorrow over the passing of Mr Michael Suen, former Secretary for Education.

Mr Suen joined the Government in 1966. He had served as Secretary for Home Affairs, Secretary for Constitutional Affairs and Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands in the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). He was appointed as the Secretary for Education in 2007, a post he held until June, 2012.

"Mr Suen had devoted decades of service to the Government, holding various important positions. He had formulated strategies and provided counsel to the HKSAR in various policy areas, addressing different challenges while promoting Hong Kong's development. He commanded great respect from government colleagues and members of the community with his dedicated service to the public over the years. Mr Suen had made significant contributions to the HKSAR and was awarded the Gold Bauhinia Star in 1999.

"I am saddened by the passing of Mr Suen. I extend my deepest condolences to his family," Mr Lee said.

Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected counterfeit goods worth about \$14.9 million (with photos)

â€‹Hong Kong Customs from October 9 to 16 seized about 74 700 items of suspected counterfeit goods at the Tuen Mun River Trade Terminal Customs

Cargo Examination Compound. The total estimated market value of the seizure was about \$14.9 million.

Through risk assessment, Customs inspected four 40-foot containers, declared as carrying footwear and arriving in Hong Kong from the Mainland, in the abovementioned period. After inspection, Customs officers found the batch of suspected counterfeit sports shoes therein.

An initial investigation revealed that the batch of suspected counterfeit goods would be transshipped to overseas regions.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs will continue to combat cross-boundary counterfeit goods activities by interception at source, with stringent enforcement action based on risk assessment and intelligence analysis.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, any person who imports or exports any goods to which a forged trademark is applied commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected counterfeiting activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 182 80 80 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).



Property owner fined over \$80,000 for persistently not complying with

removal order

A property owner who persistently failed to comply with a removal order issued under the Buildings Ordinance (BO) (Cap. 123) was convicted and fined over \$80,000 at the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts earlier this month.

The case involved two unauthorised building works (UBWs) with a total area of about 33 square metres on the roof and ground floor of a house in Yuen Long. As the UBWs were carried out without prior approval and consent from the Buildings Department (BD), a removal order was served on the owner under section 24(1) of the BO.

Failing to comply with the removal order, the owner was prosecuted by the BD and was fined over \$6,000 upon conviction by the court. The owner removed one of the UBWs, i.e. UBWs on the roof after the prosecution, but UBWs were later found re-erected on the roof again. As the owner persisted in not complying with the removal order, the BD instigated prosecution again. The owner was fined \$83,600 in total, of which \$53,600 was the fine for the number of days that the offence continued, upon conviction again at the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts on October 4.

A spokesman for the BD today (October 23) said, "UBWs may lead to serious consequences. The owners concerned must comply with the removal orders without delay. The BD will continue to take enforcement actions and consider instigating prosecution against the owners again if they persist in not complying with the orders, so as to ensure building safety."

Failure to comply with a removal order without reasonable excuse is a serious offence under the BO. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$200,000 and one year's imprisonment, and a further fine of \$20,000 for each day that the offence continues.