

## **EDB announces arrangements for Basic Law and National Security Law Test in 2024/25 school year**

The Education Bureau (EDB) issued a circular memorandum to all schools in Hong Kong today (September 4), announcing arrangements for the Basic Law and National Security Law Test (BLNST) in the 2024/25 school year.

The EDB will conduct a total of five rounds of the BLNST for degree holders and non-degree holders respectively in this school year.

The first round of the BLNST is scheduled for October 26. The target participants are persons without a bachelor's degree and 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](http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/blnst)) from 9am on September 6 to 5pm on September 19. Limited places for the test will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Please note that a pass result in the test at a non-degree level is only applicable for applying for non-graduate teaching posts. Those who have already obtained a pass result in the BLNST organised by the EDB, the Civil Service Bureau or recruiting departments/grades 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.

Details about the BLNST are available on the EDB webpage ([www.edb.gov.hk/en/blnst](http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/blnst)). The second to fifth rounds of the test will be held in December 2024 and April, June and July 2025 respectively. Relevant arrangements will be announced in due course.

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## **DH conducts enforcement operation against waterpipe smoking in no smoking areas (with photos)**

The Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of

Health (DH) conducted an enforcement operation against illegal waterpipe smoking activities in no smoking areas in Central district last night (September 3).

During the operation, officers from TACO (including plainclothes officers) issued a total of four fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to persons illegally smoking waterpipes at one bar. TACO's investigation is ongoing, and prosecution may also be taken against operators of the bar who are suspected of contravening the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) (the Ordinance) and the Criminal Procedure Ordinance (Cap. 221) for aiding and abetting smoking offences. TACO will also notify the Liquor Licensing Board of the above-mentioned violation.

Under the Ordinance, conducting a smoking act in a statutory no smoking area (such as indoor areas of bars or restaurants) is prohibited. Any person doing a smoking act in statutory no smoking areas is liable to a fixed penalty of \$1,500. Moreover, where smoking products (including waterpipes) are sold, in bars or otherwise, the restrictions on the promotion and sale of smoking products stipulated in the Ordinance apply. Offenders are liable on summary conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000. Venue managers of statutory no smoking areas are empowered by the Ordinance to request a smoking offender cease the act; if the offender is not co-operative, the manager may contact the Police for assistance.

Also, under the Criminal Procedure Ordinance, any person who aids, abets, counsels or procures the commission by another person of any offence shall be guilty of the like offence. A spokesman for the DH appeals to operators and venue managers of bars/restaurants not to assist any person in breaching the statutory smoking prohibitions, or provide a waterpipe apparatus and tobacco to customers for use.

The DH spokesman stressed that TACO will follow up and investigate every complaint about illegal smoking, and will conduct inspections and take enforcement actions in the venue concerned. TACO will also conduct joint inspections and enforcement action (including plainclothes operations) with other law enforcement agencies from time to time with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement. The DH will continue to closely monitor and take stringent enforcement actions to tackle illegal waterpipe smoking. In the past 12 months, TACO conducted 105 operations against illegal waterpipe smoking activities in no smoking areas. A total of 145 FPNs were issued against smoking offenders, while 74 summonses were issued to staff members and operators of the bars/restaurants for other related offences.

The spokesman said that waterpipe is a smoking product, and its combustion of fuel (e.g. charcoal) releases carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that is a by-product from incomplete combustion of any fuel containing carbon, such as charcoal. Exposure to a low concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to a range of symptoms such as dizziness, headache, tiredness and nausea; whereas exposure to a high concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to impaired vision, disturbed co-ordination, unconsciousness, brain damage or even death. People

should seek medical attention immediately if they suspect they are developing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Due to deeper inhalation and longer smoking sessions, waterpipe users usually inhale more toxins than they would when smoking cigarettes. A typical one-hour waterpipe smoking session exposes the user to 100 to 200 times the volume of smoke inhaled from a single conventional cigarette. Moreover, sharing a waterpipe apparatus increases the risk of transmitting infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis. Furthermore, areas in bars/restaurants where waterpipes are handled or kept have been found to be unhygienic during previous enforcement operations. The spokesman cautions against waterpipe smoking and the use of other smoking products. Smokers should quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. For more information on the hazards of waterpipe smoking, please visit [www.livetobaccofree.hk/pdfs/waterpipe\\_leaflet\\_new.pdf](http://www.livetobaccofree.hk/pdfs/waterpipe_leaflet_new.pdf).



## **Red flags hoisted at some 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 (September 4) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Hap Mun Bay Beach, Clear Water Bay First Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

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## **Chai Wan Public Fill Barging Point closed**

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

The Civil Engineering and Development Department today (September 4) announced that as the Standby Signal No. 1 has been issued by the Hong Kong Observatory, the Chai Wan Public Fill Barging Point has been closed at 8.30am until further notice.

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## **LD holds online exhibition on Employment Ordinance and Minimum Wage Ordinance**

â€‹The Labour Department (LD) is holding an online exhibition from 9am today (September 4) to 6pm on September 6 on the LD's website disseminating information about the Employment Ordinance and the Minimum Wage Ordinance to enhance the public's understanding of employment rights and benefits.

Consolidating the content of physical exhibitions held by the LD, the online exhibition features the main provisions of the Employment Ordinance and the Minimum Wage Ordinance, employment rights and benefits for foreign

domestic helpers, as well as good human resource management measures. The relevant hyperlink is [www.labour.gov.hk/common/Online\\_exhibition\\_E0\\_MW0/index\\_en.html](http://www.labour.gov.hk/common/Online_exhibition_E0_MW0/index_en.html).