

DH continues to clamp down on illegal waterpipe smoking in no smoking areas (with photos)

â€‹The Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of Health (DH) continued to clamp down on illegal waterpipe smoking in no smoking areas by conducting another enforcement operation, codenamed "Pipepurge", in Central last night (March 14) and issued a total of two fixed penalty notices (FPNs).

During the operation, officers from TACO (including plainclothes officers) carried out inspections and enforcement action at one bar in Central, and issued a total of two FPNs to persons illegally smoking waterpipes. TACO's investigation is ongoing, and prosecution may also be taken against operators of the bar who are suspected of aiding and abetting smoking offences. TACO will also refer the cases to the Liquor Licensing Board for appropriate follow-up action.

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.

In addition, 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 same offence.

"The DH will continue to closely monitor and take stringent enforcement action against illegal waterpipe smoking. Last year (2024), TACO conducted 162 operations against illegal waterpipe smoking activities in no smoking areas. A total of 162 FPNs were issued against smoking offenders, while 89 summonses were issued to staff members and operators of the bars/restaurants for other related offences," the Head of TACO, Dr Fung Ying said.

Dr Fung reminded the public that waterpipe is a smoking product, and its combustion of fuel (e.g. charcoal) releases carbon monoxide. 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.

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.

She cautioned 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.



MD announcement

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

The Marine Department today (March 15) reminded masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels navigating in Hong Kong waters to proceed at a safe speed and exercise extreme caution because restricted visibility of less than 2 nautical miles has been reported.

Appropriate sound signals shall be made when underway or at anchor. All vessels must comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea.

Also, when radar is used without the benefit of adequate plotting facilities, the information obtained from the equipment is rather limited and should be construed accordingly.

Visibility reports are broadcast by the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) on VHF channels 02, 12, 14, 63 and 67.

In the event of an accident, a report shall be made immediately to the VTC at Tel: 2233 7801.

Regional flag day today

Three charities have been issued Public Subscription Permits to hold flag sales from 7am to 12.30pm today (March 15). They are, on Hong Kong Island, Saint Barnabas' Society and Home; in Kowloon, Hope Worldwide; and in the New Territories, The Free Methodist Church of Hong Kong, a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said.

Arrangements have been made with the charities to help people to distinguish among the three flag-selling activities.

Information on the three flag-selling organisations on March 15 is as follows:

Region	Name of organisation	Colour of collection bag	Colour of flag
Hong Kong Island	Saint Barnabas' Society and Home	Red	White
Kowloon	Hope Worldwide	Yellow	White
New Territories	The Free Methodist Church of Hong Kong	Yellow	White

Details of the charitable fund-raising activities, including any updated information, covered by the issued Public Subscription Permits have been published on the GovHK website (www.gov.hk/en/theme/fundraising/search). Permits for flag days containing information on contact methods of the flag-selling organisations and the approved flag-selling activities have also been uploaded to the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/ngo/controlofc/flagdays) for reference. For enquiries, please call the SWD's hotline at 2343 2255, or the designated hotline of the 1823 Call Centre at 3142 2678.

In the case of suspected fraudulent flag day activities, people should not make any donation and should immediately report the matter to the Police, the spokesman added.

Town Planning Board upholds “Undetermined” zoning for the proposed Global Innovation Centre site in Pok Fu Lam

The Town Planning Board (TPB) completed today (March 14) the consideration of further representations (FRs) on the proposed amendment to the draft Pok Fu Lam Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) No. S/H10/22 and decided to uphold its previous decision of rezoning the 4.72-hectare site for the proposed Global Innovation Centre (the Centre) by the University of Hong Kong (HKU) in Pok Fu Lam (the Site) from "Other Specified Uses" annotated "Global Innovation Centre" to "Undetermined" ("U") in the interim.

The TPB reached the above decision at today's meeting after thoroughly considering 1 861 FRs (including 30 with further responses to departmental comments) as well as the views and responses of the Planning Department and other relevant government bureaux/departments on the FRs.

Members noted that the grounds/views in the opposing FRs were mainly related to (i) designation of "U" zoning; (ii) suitability of the Site for the Centre; and (iii) procedural issues. Members also took note that most issues were similar to those raised in the representations and were duly deliberated by the TPB at the representation stage.

As for (i) members acknowledged that in accordance with section 6B(8) of the Town Planning Ordinance (the Ordinance), the TPB had the authority to amend the OZP in other manner that, in its opinion, would meet the representations. The legal advice we obtained from government lawyers confirmed that it was legally proper for the TPB to propose rezoning the Site to "U" to partially meet the representations. As for (ii), members considered that the purpose of the "U" zoning was to provide an opportunity for HKU to review the suitability of the Site and other possible sites in and outside Pok Fu Lam, in the light of comments of stakeholders including the Ebenezer and residents in the Pok Fu Lam area. As for (iii), members did not see procedural improprieties in handling the FRs, including following the administrative arrangements set out in the TPB Guidelines No. 29C.

In light of the above, the TPB considered it prudent to maintain the "U" zoning for the Site at this stage, which would allow time for HKU to review the development proposal for the Centre, conduct relevant technical assessments including potential traffic impacts during construction and operational stages, further consult the local community and submit a revised proposal for consideration by the Government and the TPB within a reasonable time. Any proposed development of the Site would be effected through rezoning

in accordance with section 5 of the Ordinance whereby the public would have the opportunity to submit representations and the TPB would conduct hearings to deal with the representations before deciding whether to accept the rezoning proposal.

During the course of discussion, members saw the need to impress upon HKU to come up with the way forward for the Centre within reasonable time. To this end, members agreed that HKU should be invited to report to the TPB on the latest developments of the project within three months, which should include its decision on site selection with detailed justifications, a development timeline for the project as well as an update on engagement with stakeholders. Members also reaffirmed the importance of constructive engagement with stakeholders and emphasised their expectation that HKU should enhance its engagement with the community.

Kwong Wah Hospital announces incident of healthcare worker assaulted

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesman for Kwong Wah Hospital (KWH) made the following announcement today (March 14) regarding an incident of a healthcare worker being assaulted:

A nurse was assaulted yesterday afternoon (March 13) while working in a ward of KWH. Ward staff and security staff immediately arrived on the scene to assist and reported the incident to the Police for assistance. The injured nurse was sent to the Accident and Emergency Department for treatment. The injured nurse, who suffered an injury to his arm, was discharged after treatment. The Police arrested a male visitor at the hospital later, who was suspected of being involving in the incident.

The hospital is highly concerned about the incident, expressed sympathy and rendered necessary support to the nurse. The hospital resolutely adopts a zero-tolerance attitude to any workplace violence and strongly condemns the violent act. The hospital will follow up seriously and fully co-operate with the Police's investigation.

KWH has long attached great importance to work safety for its staff under prevailing guidelines and measures to prevent workplace violence. The hospital appeals to patients and relatives to follow the advice of healthcare workers.

The hospital has reported the incident to the Hospital Authority Head Office via the Advance Incident Reporting System.