

Fourth GBA Legal Professional Examination held

The 2024 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Professional Examination (GBA Examination) was held today (June 29).

The Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, said, "The GBA Examination held this year is the first examination held after the period of the pilot scheme for Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to practise in the nine Mainland municipalities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) was extended, and the practice experience threshold for enrolling in the GBA Examination was lowered, in September last year.

"As more Hong Kong legal practitioners pass the GBA Examination and obtain practice qualifications to provide legal services in the nine Mainland municipalities in the GBA, this can help these Hong Kong legal practitioners with dual qualifications to integrate into the national development and utilise their abundant experience in handling cross-jurisdictional legal matters, contributing to the building of a pool of foreign-related legal talent in the GBA for the country."

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) decided in August 2020 to authorise the State Council to conduct a pilot scheme for eligible Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to provide legal services in the nine Mainland municipalities in the GBA on certain civil and commercial matters to which Mainland laws apply, after passing the GBA Examination and having obtained the Lawyer's License (GBA). The pilot scheme was for a period of three years, and would have originally expired on October 4 last year. The NPCSC passed a decision in September last year to extend the period of the pilot scheme until October 4, 2026. The General Office of the State Council also published the revised pilot measures in September last year, which lowered the practice experience threshold for Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to enrol in the GBA Examination from five years to three years.

Celebration events for 27th anniversary of establishment of HKSAR

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, and senior government officials will attend a flag-raising ceremony and a reception on July 1 (Monday) to celebrate the 27th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The flag-raising ceremony will be held at Golden Bauhinia Square outside the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) in Wan Chai at 8am. Community leaders and members of uniform groups will attend the ceremony. No public viewing area will be set up. The Police Band will perform at the ceremony, and a choir from Kwun Tong Government Secondary School will sing the national anthem under the lead of two singers, Mr Albert Lim and Ms Yuki Ip, followed by a fly-past and a sea parade by the disciplined services.

The celebration reception, led by the Chief Executive, will be held at the Grand Hall on Level 3 of the HKCEC after the flag-raising ceremony.

Motorists are reminded that the Police will implement special traffic arrangements at Golden Bauhinia Square and the nearby area during the celebration events.

Red flag hoisted at Shek O 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 (June 29) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Shek O Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.

HKSAR Government strongly disapproves of and rejects remarks related to Hong Kong in US' 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) today (June 29) strongly disapproved of and rejected the slandering remarks against the situation of human rights, etc. in the HKSAR in the so-called 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom of the United States (US) under the guise of religious freedom.

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "The HKSAR Government strongly disapproves of and rejects the US' repeated attempts, through yet another so-called annual report, to slander the HKSAR under the guise of religious freedom by piling up false stories and fabricated narratives. As always, Hong Kong residents enjoy the rights and freedoms, including religious freedom and the freedom of speech, under the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other relevant laws. The Hong Kong National Security Law and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance clearly stipulate that human rights shall be respected and protected in safeguarding national security in the HKSAR. The rights and freedoms that Hong Kong residents enjoy under the Basic Law, and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as applied to Hong Kong, shall be protected in accordance with the law."

The spokesman stressed, "Hong Kong is a society underpinned by the rule of law and has always adhered to the principle that laws must be obeyed and lawbreakers held accountable. The law enforcement agencies of the HKSAR have been taking law enforcement actions based on evidence and strictly in accordance with the law in respect of the acts of the persons or entities concerned, and such actions have nothing to do with their political stance, background or occupation. The Department of Justice of the HKSAR, by virtue of the Basic Law, shall control criminal prosecutions and make independent prosecutorial decisions based on an objective assessment of all admissible evidence and applicable laws free from any interference. The Judiciary of the HKSAR exercises judicial power independently in accordance with the Basic Law and decides cases strictly in accordance with the evidence and all applicable laws. Cases will not be handled differently because of the background of the persons involved."

The spokesman reiterated, "The HKSAR Government is steadfast in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, fully and faithfully upholding the highest principle of 'one country, two systems', while protecting the legal interests, rights and freedoms of Hong Kong residents and other people in Hong Kong in accordance with the law. It will resolutely safeguard the overall interest of the community and the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, ensuring the steadfast and successful implementation of 'one country, two systems'. The HKSAR Government strongly urges the US to immediately stop acting against the international law and basic norms of international relations and interfering in Hong Kong matters, which are purely China's internal affairs."

[Transcript of remarks by S for Health](#)

at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, at a media session after attending a radio programme this morning (June 29):

Reporter: You mentioned that A&E resources must go to those in need, so how would authorities classify resources for those urgent and non-urgent users? Is there any standard for a cap on fees for severely-ill cases? And also, since the Government has ordered a comprehensive review of the Hospital Authority after a series of medical blunders, how is the progress so far? Will there be a review on prescription of drugs?

Secretary for Health: The Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department is one of the focus for public hospital services. It is an area that we must ensure that we can provide adequate and timely service for the acute and emergency patients. In the Accident and Emergency Department, we have a triage system, with the categories I, II and III patients having service pledges, that they should be managed within a very reasonable time. For the category I patients, it's a promise for "zero waiting time". We must ensure that these critically-ill patients are taken care of immediately, but unfortunately at this time we have 60 per cent of the patients attending the Accident and Emergency Department who are non-urgent patients or they are all these mild disease patients, like patients with flu, fever or rather mild symptoms. They are classified as category IV or even V. But unfortunately, they amounted to 60 per cent of all the patients attending the Accident and Emergency Department, that is a substantial drain on the resources and is causing a lot of burden on our healthcare professionals and causing concerns even about infection control. So we would like to emphasise that the resources of our Accident and Emergency Department should be catered for the need of those categories I to III patients mainly. And for these categories IV to V patients, we would consider adjusting the fees and charges, so as to serve as a guiding force for them not to so easily walk into the A&E Department for healthcare service.

Of course, on the other hand, we would have to enhance the services of our existing both public and private general clinics and family doctors. For example, in the previous long holidays and weekends, and the coming July 1 long weekend, we have enhanced the services of our public General Outpatient Clinics. We have 14 General Outpatient Clinics open during this long weekend to serve the patients, so we have to change the culture for our citizens to manage their health themselves on minor illnesses. They should be able to think about managing their own health conditions and seeking healthcare services from the General Outpatient Clinics or their family doctors, rather than easily walking into the Accident and Emergency Department and causing burden on the whole healthcare system.

Considering the major illnesses, a very common example these days will be patients with cancer, that is actually a major burden for the patients and their families as well. Because with the advance in healthcare, especially in

cancer treatment, some of these medications can be very expensive. Some of our cancer patients, even in the public sector, have to pay for all these self-financed items, and very expensive medications. That's the reason that in the current exercise for fees and charges review, we are considering not just the Accident and Emergency Department fees revision to focus on the acute patients, we are also looking into how to help our patients with major illnesses including those with cancer and rare diseases. One of the several measures we are considering is to increase the subsidy for the self-financed items. And also considering those patients with severe, critical or major illnesses, to see whether once their expenditure, fees and charges accumulate to a certain amount, we can increase the subsidy, or even setting a cap. We are looking into all possibilities and will come up with a proposal, and would seek comments and opinions from all stakeholders, as well as the public.

We realise that this is a very important issue, but I would like to emphasise that, even though most of us believe that we are healthy, and want ourselves to be healthy, we must prepare ourselves that one day we may encounter acute problems that we need to seek medical care in the Accident and Emergency Department, and one day we may have major illnesses, like cancer or stroke. We want to ensure that the current healthcare system in Hong Kong can provide the safety net for these people. The safety net should be for the acute and major illnesses, not for those with minor illnesses, so that everybody get the best protection. Even though the number of patients in category I, II or III in the Accident and Emergency Department, or the cancer or rare disease patients, constitute a small percentage of the people, but you never know, one day we may be one of them. That's why our current direction for driving towards these acute and major illnesses offers our 7.5 million of citizens protection. Similar to insurances, you never want to ask for a payment in insurance, but you have to prepare. That is the protection for all citizens in Hong Kong.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)