

Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme invites new round of applications

The Main Programme under the Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS) is inviting a new round of applications for project proposals starting today (March 1) from non-profit-distributing organisations such as professional bodies, trade and industrial organisations and research institutes.

PASS, with a total allocation of \$200 million, aims at funding non-profit-making industry-led projects to increase exchanges and co-operation between Hong Kong's professional services and external counterparts, promote relevant publicity activities, and enhance the standards and external competitiveness of Hong Kong's professional services.

The maximum grant for each approved project under the Main Programme of PASS is \$3 million or 90 per cent of the total eligible project cost, whichever is lower. A wide range of professional services, such as accounting, legal and dispute resolution, architecture, engineering, healthcare, information and communications technology, design and technical testing and analysis, are eligible for the Main Programme. Sector-specific projects and cross-sectoral projects are both welcome. Expenses directly incurred for implementing a project, such as manpower costs, venue and set-up costs, production and promotion costs, and the project team and active participants' travel and accommodation costs outside Hong Kong are typically eligible for funding support under the Scheme. Funding support may also be provided for travel and accommodation costs incurred by participants of relatively longer professional internships or attachment programmes outside Hong Kong which are funded by the Main Programme.

Up to early February 2025, nearly 120 projects had been funded under the Main Programme, including project deliverables in and outside Hong Kong. The deliverables include capacity-building programmes for enhancing the standards of local professionals, such as training programmes, workshops and study tours; outreach and promotional activities for showcasing the strengths of Hong Kong's professional services, such as roadshows, promotional seminars and participation in exhibitions outside Hong Kong; exchange activities for deepening interaction between Hong Kong professionals and their external counterparts, such as visits to other economies and international conferences and seminars held in Hong Kong; and research projects on potential external markets for Hong Kong professional services and development of best practice guidelines and manuals for professionals. Details about the Main Programme and its funded projects are available at www.pass.gov.hk/main/en/home.

Furthermore, with a view to stepping up the promotion of Hong Kong's competitive edges and professional services to Mainland cities (including those in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area) and overseas

markets, \$50 million has been set aside for the Professionals Participation Subsidy Programme (PSP) under PASS to subsidise Hong Kong major professional bodies to participate in relevant activities organised by the Government (such as Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices) and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council after the pandemic situation has stabilised. Details of the PSP and its latest list of eligible activities are available at www.pass.gov.hk/psp. Hong Kong professionals from the eligible professional sectors under PASS may make use of the PSP subsidy to join the relevant activities.

The Main Programme and the PSP receive applications for project and activity proposals all year round and they are processed on a quarterly basis. The deadline for the new round of applications is May 31, 2025. A briefing session will be held this month for organisations interested in applying for PASS funding. One-on-one consultations are also available upon request for discussing preliminary project ideas or projects in the planning stage. To register for the briefing session, schedule a consultation, or for other enquiries, please contact the PASS Secretariat at 3655 5418 or pass@cedb.gov.hk.

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More than 1 100 students build spectacular horticultural display for Hong Kong Flower Show (with photos)

More than 1 100 students from 38 kindergartens, primary, secondary, and special schools joined the Jockey Club Mosaiculture Display by Students activity at Victoria Park today (March 1). Under the guidance of some 140 green volunteers, the students worked together to put on a spectacular horticultural display, "Wonders of Africa", which is one of the major attractions of the upcoming Hong Kong Flower Show.

The parterre is embellished with about 44 000 richly coloured flowers and plants of various species including carnations, myosotis, chrysanthemums, lavender, pansies, cosmos, impatiens and more.

The horticultural display, featuring adorable installations made of cut flowers, showcases common animals in Africa including a gorilla and a hippopotamus clinging to their territories in verdant rain forests, a camel and an ostrich seeking water sources across boundless deserts, while a horned viper curls up in a corner, an elephant and a giraffe forage for food in vast savannas, and two horses freely gallop.

Visitors can enjoy the display and take photos with the plant sculptures. In the evening, the display is enhanced with light effects, making visitors feel as if they are in the mysterious and fascinating African wilderness.

This year's flower show will be held in Victoria Park for 10 days from March 14 to 23. It will be open from 9am to 9pm daily, featuring the colourful cosmos as its theme flower, with the theme being "Ablaze with Glory".

For enquiries, please call 2601 8260 or visit the flower show webpage www.hkflowershow.hk/en/hkfs/2025/index.html.

The Hong Kong Flower Show is organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust is supporting the flower show for the 13th consecutive year, and has been its major sponsor since 2014.



Remarks of SLW on \$2 Scheme

Following are the remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, on the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (\$2 Scheme) at a media session after attending a radio programme this morning (March 1):

Reporter: Good morning Mr Sun. You talked about the Government's plan to allow beneficiaries to check the number of remaining trips under the monthly cap of 240 trips. Could you elaborate more on this? What exactly would be done in terms of promotion to ensure senior citizens are fully aware of the

changes before the amendments take effect no later than September next year?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: Thank you for your questions. With the capping arrangements being in place, i.e. the number of trips to be taken by beneficiaries under the \$2 Scheme would be no more than 240 per month, it is important for them to be able to check whenever they want how many trips are remaining for that month. Right now this is not within the functions of the Octopus cards they are holding, hence we have to create that function for them to check. Most likely they have to go to the machines, what we called Octopus card checkers, installed at places like MTR stations which they can check their balance and recent transactions, to tap their cards and check how many trips are remaining for that month.

It is also equally if not more important to reach out in a very extensive way to beneficiaries about changes that are going to be made towards the \$2 Scheme. By the time the scheme is changed to "\$2 and 20 per cent", i.e. users have to pay 20 per cent of the original fare for trips exceeding \$10, we have to make it very clear to them and allow them to adapt to the changes. This is going to be one of our major efforts coming along and we are going to work on that to make sure they are well informed. By the time the new changes are implemented, they would find it easy to use.

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

Red flag hoisted at Stanley Main 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 (March 1) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.