

# **Government allocates additional \$1 billion for Distance Business Programme**

The Innovation and Technology Commission today (June 26) announced an additional provision of \$1 billion under the Anti-epidemic Fund for the Distance Business Programme to further support enterprises to adopt information technology (IT) solutions for continuing business and services during the epidemic.

"The Programme was opened for application on May 18. As at 6pm on June 24, it had received more than 14 500 funding applications from enterprises, 95 per cent of which are small and medium enterprises. Of the 1 194 applications processed so far, 1 094 have been approved with total funding of more than \$44 million. In view of the overwhelming response from enterprises, the Government will allocate \$1 billion for the Programme, in addition to the original \$500 million, to benefit more enterprises," a spokesman for the Commission said.

The vetting criteria of the Programme include relevance of the proposed project to the applicant's business, reasonableness of the budget and its conformity to economic principles, complexity and feasibility of the implementation details, and the relevant technical capability and experience of the service provider with a view to ensuring proper use of public funds. In general, the funding amount received by an applicant enterprise is within the reasonable market price range and sufficient for implementing a more economical and convenient IT solution with the same effect.

The current application deadline of the Programme is October 31. In view of the present situation, the Programme may need to cease accepting applications earlier, taking into account the progress of funding approval and the amount approved. Such an arrangement would be announced about two weeks beforehand. Enterprises wishing to apply for the Programme's funding are advised to submit applications online as soon as possible. Details are available on the Programme's website ([u.hkpc.org/dbiz](http://u.hkpc.org/dbiz)). For enquiries, please contact the Programme Secretariat by phone on 2788 5070 during business hours (9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays)) or via email at [dbiz@hkpc.org](mailto:dbiz@hkpc.org).

---

## **Appeal for information on missing**

## woman in Sham Shui Po (with photo)

Police today (June 26) appealed to the public for information on a woman who went missing in Sham Shui Po.

Liu Ping-mui, aged 87, went missing after she was last seen in her residence at Lai Kok Estate on June 24. Her family made a report to Police on June 25.

She is about 1.6 metres tall, 41 kilograms in weight and of thin build. She has a pointed face with yellow complexion and short white hair.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing woman or may have seen her is urged to contact the Regional Missing Person Unit of Kowloon West on 3661 8036 or 9020 6542 or email to [rmpu-kw-2@police.gov.hk](mailto:rmpu-kw-2@police.gov.hk), or contact any police station.



---

## “Central-Hung Hom” ferry service to commence on June 28

The Transport Department announced today (June 26) that the "Central-Hung Hom" ferry service will commence operation from June 28 (Sunday). The first sailing will depart from Hung Hom at 7.30am.

The "Central-Hung Hom" ferry route will ply between the Hung Hom (South) Ferry Pier and Central Pier No. 8 (Western Berth). The adult fare is \$9 per trip. The ferry operator will provide fare concessions for children, the elderly and persons with disabilities as well as monthly ticket concessions. The basic schedule is every 20 minutes during peak hours from Mondays to

Saturdays; and every 30 to 50 minutes during non-peak hours, Sundays and public holidays. The operator will closely monitor the passenger demand and strengthen services as necessary.

After conducting an open tender invitation, Fortune Ferry Company Limited was selected to operate the ferry service. The company is granted a ferry service licence for a period of five years to operate the route.

To gear up for commencement of the "Central-Hung Hom" ferry route, the operator has already carried out enhancement works at Hung Hom (South) Ferry Pier and Central Pier No. 8 (Western Berth), including provision of free Wi-Fi service, passenger seats, electronic display panels, a public announcement system, turnstiles, fans and luggage storage facilities to offer better services for passengers.

In support of the Government's development of a smart city, the operator will disseminate real-time arrival/departure information of ferry routes via mobile phone applications and open up such data in a machine-readable format for use by the public under the data.gov.hk portal within six months upon commencement of the ferry service. The operator will continue to carry out enhancement works at Hung Hom (South) Ferry Pier and Central Pier No. 8 (Western Berth), including provision of battery charging facilities, exploring the installation of solar panels for illumination of the external walls in order to support the smart city development and promote environmental protection, and installing LED lighting on the external walls to beautify the exterior of the pier.

For service details, please visit the Transport Department's website [www.td.gov.hk](http://www.td.gov.hk).

---

## Two illegal workers jailed

Two Pakistani illegal workers holding recognisance forms were jailed by Shatin Magistrates' Courts on June 24.

During the operation "Breakthrough" conducted on May 18, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators raided an office under renovation in Lai Chi Kok. Two male Pakistani illegal workers, aged 33 and 35, were arrested while working as renovation workers. Upon identity checking, they produced for inspection recognisance forms issued by the ImmD, which prohibit them from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that they were non-refoulement claimants. An employer suspected of employing the illegal workers was also arrested and the investigation is ongoing.

The two illegal workers were charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts on June 24 with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and

remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. They pleaded guilty to the charge and were each sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening on vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers who are arrested during any operation, with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

---

# US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender notice

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender notice:â€‹

Tender date	: June 30 (Tuesday)
Tender submission time	: 9am to noon
Settlement date	: July 2 (Thursday)
Repayment date	: July 9 (Thursday)
Tenor	: Seven Days
Amount on offer	: US\$10,000 Million

Note: Licensed Banks interested in participating in the tender for the first time are encouraged to provide US dollar settlement instructions by email ([settlementsection@hkma.gov.hk](mailto:settlementsection@hkma.gov.hk)) to the HKMA's Settlement Team in advance, preferably two days prior to the tender. Required information includes name of corresponding bank, name of final beneficiary (must be the Licensed Bank participating in the tender), and account or CHIPS number of a US dollar bank account to be settled in the US. Such information needs to be provided once only, unless there is further change.