

Court Proceedings (Electronic Technology) Bill gazetted

The Government published in the Gazette today (December 27) the Court Proceedings (Electronic Technology) Bill which seeks to provide an electronic option for handling court-related documents.

"The Bill aims to make the necessary legislative amendments to implement the Judiciary's Information Technology Strategy Plan (ITSP). Under the ITSP, an integrated court case management system (iCMS) is being implemented to streamline and standardise electronic court processes across different levels of courts as appropriate. This will in the long run improve the efficiency of litigation in Hong Kong and reduce paper use," a Government spokesman said.

"The ITSP will facilitate active case management throughout the entire litigation/adjudication and ancillary processes to improve access to justice for the benefit of all stakeholders," he added.

Key proposals of the Bill include:

- (a) electronic filing or sending of documents to the court will generally be allowed;
- (b) documents between parties may be served electronically if there is mutual consent to serve and accept documents by electronic means;
- (c) signatures other than traditional manual signatures, such as digital signature and electronic signature, for court-related documents will generally be allowed; and
- (d) provide proper legal status for printouts/copies of printouts for documents issued by the court.

"Court users are encouraged to transact court businesses by electronic means on a voluntary basis, while they can choose to continue to interact with the Judiciary and the other parties concerned by conventional means," the spokesman said.

The Bill also provides that the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal may specify by subsidiary legislation or include in practice directions the detailed court and operational procedures for the use of electronic mode, so as to enable the Judiciary to make timely refinements to the detailed procedures and practices to take into account rapid technological developments.

In formulating the Bill, the Judiciary has carefully balanced the principles and spirit of the administration of justice as set out in the existing legislation against the convenience resulting from the use of technology.

"The ITSP will be implemented in two phases, with the first phase consisting of two stages for better management. In Stage 1 of Phase I, the

iCMS will be implemented in the District Court and the Summons Courts of the Magistrates' Courts (MC). In Stage 2 of Phase I, the iCMS is expected to be extended to the Court of Final Appeal, the High Court, the remaining part of the MC and the Small Claims Tribunal. For the remaining courts and tribunals, the iCMS is planned to be implemented under Phase II," the spokesman added.

The Hong Kong Bar Association, the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services were consulted and supported the Bill.

The Bill will be introduced into the LegCo for first reading on January 8, 2020.

MD reminds trade about implementation of amendment regulations to enhance marine safety

The Marine Department (MD) met the local maritime trade today (December 27) to remind members about the implementation of new amendment regulations on the strengthened requirements for the provision of lifejackets on local vessels and enhanced marine safety during major events at sea. The trade was advised to comply with the regulations to ensure the safety of all persons on board as well as marine safety.

The new amendment regulations include the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Safety and Survey) (Amendment) Regulation 2019 and the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (General) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulation 2019.

A spokesman for the MD said, "The purpose of the meeting with the trade today is to reiterate that the new amendment regulations have already come into effect since December 23. The operation and the provision of lifejackets of the vessels concerned must comply with the requirements of the regulations. The trade agreed that the regulations could enhance marine safety and they all pledged to observe the rules, including during major events at sea."

According to the new regulations, all local vessels are required to carry on board suitable lifejackets, the quantity of which must be not less than the total number of persons which the vessel is licensed to carry. Furthermore, all commercial passenger-carrying local vessels licensed to carry more than 12 passengers must carry on board infant lifejackets, the quantity of which must not be less than 2.5 per cent of the number of passengers that the vessel is licensed to carry.

In addition, to enhance marine safety during major events at sea, the new regulations require children on board to wear lifejackets at all times during the events. A list of passengers and crew must also be kept by the coxswain of the vessel for emergency purposes.

Today, some 40 representatives from the local maritime trade attended the meeting.

The MD has started publicity work and will continue to enhance awareness of the new regulations by both the trade and the public.

January 2020 adjustment in ceiling prices for dedicated LPG filling stations

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department today (December 27) announced an adjustment to the auto-LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) ceiling prices for dedicated LPG filling stations from January 1 to January 31, 2020, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contracts of the dedicated LPG filling stations.

A department spokesman said that the adjustment on January 1, 2020, reflects the movement of the LPG international price in December 2019. The adjusted auto-LPG ceiling prices for dedicated LPG filling stations will range from \$3.03 to \$3.57 per litre, representing an increase of \$0.04 per litre.

The spokesman said that the auto-LPG ceiling prices were adjusted according to a specified pricing formula. The formula comprises two elements – the LPG international price and the LPG operating price. The LPG international price is the LPG international price of the preceding month. The LPG operating price is adjusted on the first day of February every year according to the movement in the Composite Consumer Price Index in the previous year.

The auto-LPG ceiling prices for respective dedicated LPG filling stations in January 2020 are as follows:

Location of Dedicated LPG Filling Station	Auto-LPG Ceiling Price in January 2020 (HK\$/litre)	Auto-LPG Ceiling Price in December 2019 (HK\$/litre)
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Fung Yip Street, Chai Wan	3.57	3.53
Ngo Cheung Road, West Kowloon	3.57	3.53
Sham Mong Road, Mei Foo	3.24	3.20
Yip Wong Road, Tuen Mun	3.24	3.20
Marsh Road, Wan Chai	3.23	3.19
Fung Mat Road, Sheung Wan	3.17	3.13
Wai Lok Street, Kwun Tong	3.17	3.13
Yuen Chau Tsai, Tai Po	3.17	3.13
Cheung Yip Street, Kowloon Bay	3.21	3.17
Kwai On Road, Kwai Chung	3.21	3.17
Hang Yiu Street, Ma On Shan	3.03	2.99
Tak Yip Street, Yuen Long	3.03	2.99

The spokesman said that the details of the LPG international price and the auto-LPG ceiling price of each dedicated LPG filling station have been uploaded to the department website www.emsd.gov.hk. They are also posted at dedicated LPG filling stations to enable the trades to monitor the price adjustment.

Details of the pricing adjustment mechanism for dedicated LPG filling stations can also be viewed under the "What's New" section of the department website at www.emsd.gov.hk/en/what_s_new/current/index.html.

Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged and its Dedicated Portion for Implementing After-school Learning and Support Programmes open for new round of application

The Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged (PFD) announced today (December 27) its invitation for the 13th round Regular Portion applications and the sixth round Dedicated Portion applications for implementing After-

school Learning and Support Programmes. Welfare non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and eligible primary and secondary schools are encouraged to submit proposals to the PFD managed by the Social Welfare Department (SWD).

The Government set up the PFD in 2005 for promoting tripartite partnership among the welfare sector, business corporations and the Government to help the disadvantaged. To date the Government has injected a total of \$1.2 billion into the PFD. Apart from a commitment of \$800 million for the Regular Portion of the PFD to help the disadvantaged, a total of \$400 million has been earmarked as the Dedicated Portion. Since its launch in 2015, the Dedicated Portion has been actively promoting the "Citizens-Business-Government-School" collaboration to implement more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroots families to facilitate their whole-person development.

Taking into consideration the recent local economic downturn and its impact on the disadvantaged, the SWD has raised the ceiling of grant by 50 per cent, that is, the ceiling of grant for each Regular Portion project is raised from HK\$2 million to HK\$3 million and that for each Dedicated Portion project from HK\$3 million to HK\$4.5 million, to allow room for welfare NGOs and schools to provide services for the benefit of more disadvantaged people. Additionally, the SWD has streamlined the application form and provides relevant reference materials to facilitate the submission of proposals and to speed up the vetting process.

A spokesman for the SWD said that in the 12 earlier rounds of Regular Portion Applications of the PFD, matching grants totalling over \$470 million were approved for 192 welfare NGOs sponsored by over 1 600 business partners. More than one million disadvantaged persons have benefitted from a total of 980 welfare projects. The first five rounds of Dedicated Portion applications attracted a favourable response. More than \$205 million in matching grants have been approved for 309 after-school learning and support projects so far. Over 300 business organisations participated in the projects, benefitting more than 100 000 primary and secondary students in total.

Summaries of the two applications are as follows:

	The 13th Round Regular Portion Application	The Sixth Round Dedicated Portion Application
Eligible applicants	Bona-fide charitable welfare NGOs having tax-exempt status under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap 112)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bona-fide charitable welfare NGOs having tax-exempt status under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap 112) – Public sector primary and secondary schools including government schools, aided schools and caput schools, and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme
Contents of the projects	Social welfare projects for the disadvantaged	After-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary students from grassroots families

Application guides and forms	SWD homepage: www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_supportser/sub_partnership	SWD homepage: www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_supportser/sub_dedicatedportion
Deadline for applications	June 30, 2020 (First phase) and September 30, 2020 (Second phase)	March 31, 2020

Details of the Regular Portion and the Dedicated Portion of the PFD are available on the SWD homepage: www.swd.gov.hk. For enquiries about the applications, please contact the Secretariat of the PFD during office hours on 3468 2718/3468 2711, or by email to spfd@swd.gov.hk.

[Applications invited for 41st Personalised Vehicle Registration Marks exercise](#)

The Transport Department (TD) today (December 27) announced that the 41st invitation exercise of the Personalised Vehicle Registration Marks (PVRMs) Scheme will be launched on January 1.

"Starting from January 1, applications are invited under the 41st invitation exercise for the allocation of PVRMs upon sale by auction. Completed application forms should reach the department no later than January 31. If there are more than 1,500 applications, those to be considered will be selected by lot," a TD spokesman said.

Interested persons should complete and submit the application forms (TD569). Those who possess a digital certificate may also make use of the online application service at the GovHK website (www.gov.hk).

Application forms (TD569) and Guidance Notes for Application can be downloaded from the TD's website (www.td.gov.hk) or obtained from the TD's Licensing Offices as well as the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department. Completed applications can be put in the drop-in box at any of the TD's Licensing Offices or posted to Vehicle Registration Marks Unit, Transport Department, 12/F, South Tower, West Kowloon Government Offices, 11 Hoi Ting Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon. Applications received by mail will be dated by the postmark. No payment of deposit is required at this stage.

Applicants are advised to read carefully the Guidance Notes for details of the scheme before completing the application forms. They can also check whether a proposed PVRM is in compliance with the basic combination requirements by using the online service at the GovHK webpage at www.gov.hk/en/residents/transport/vehicle/onlineservices.htm.

Each applicant may submit only one application in each exercise. If an applicant submits more than one application, none of his/her applications will be processed. Once submitted, the applicant cannot withdraw the application or change the arrangement of the PVRM stated in the application form.

An acknowledgement will immediately be sent to the applicant upon successful submission of online application. Those who submit the applications by TD569 will receive TD's acknowledgement by ordinary post within two weeks after submission. Applicants who do not receive the acknowledgement within this time frame should call the TD hotline at 2804 2600.