

27th batch of applications approved under Pilot Green Transport Fund

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (December 13) announced its approval of the 27th batch of applications for the trials of green innovative transport technologies under the Pilot Green Transport Fund.

The 20 newly approved applications are for the trials of nine hybrid public light buses and 17 electric light goods vehicles and involve a total subsidy of about \$8.5 million. The applications were from:

Amanic Engineering Limited
Bassey Holdings Limited
Century Transportation Limited
Chan Siu Ying
Chung An Company
Double Winner Corporation Limited
Four Season Restaurant
Goden Par Co
Green 3 Limited
Hoi Ying Company
Hong Kong Youth Hostels Association
Hung Kay
Kin Yip Electrical Limited
Ma Shui Hing
Merry Dragon Limited
Profile Workshop
Rent A Truck Limited
Tong Kee Engineering Limited
Top Billion (Asia) Limited
Vast Profit Construction Engineering Limited

The latest approval brings the total number of trials being pursued under the Fund to 183 for testing 128 electric light goods vehicles, 21 single-deck electric buses, three electric light buses, three electric taxis, one electric medium goods vehicle (tractor), 48 hybrid light goods vehicles, 27 hybrid medium goods vehicles, 20 hybrid public light buses, two single-deck hybrid buses, one solar air-conditioning system for bus, four electric inverter air conditioning systems for buses, three diesel-electric propulsion systems for ferries and one seawater scrubber for ferry, amounting to a total subsidy of about \$154 million.

At present, 121 approvals under the Fund are already on trial. Eighty-three of them have completed the trials, involving 50 electric light goods vehicles, nine single-deck electric buses, three electric taxis, three electric light buses, 30 hybrid light goods vehicles, 19 hybrid medium goods vehicles, five hybrid public light buses, one solar air-conditioning system for bus, four electric inverter air-conditioning systems for buses, one diesel-electric propulsion system for ferry and one seawater scrubber for

ferry. The EPD will continue to upload the interim and final reports once completed to the Fund's website for public information.

The Government has put in place the \$300 million Fund since March 2011 to subsidise the testing of green innovative transport technologies. The Fund is open for applications from public transport operators, charitable and non-profit-making organisations providing services to clients, and goods vehicle operators. The technologies for trial include alternative-fuelled vehicles, conversion of in-use conventional vehicles to alternative-fuelled vehicles, and after-treatment emission reduction devices or fuel-saving devices related to transport activities. Transport operators may apply for the Fund to try out different green innovative products subject to a maximum subsidy of \$9 million for each application and \$12 million in total.

For more information on the Fund and the approved applications, please visit the EPD website (www.epd.gov.hk) or call the enquiry hotline on 2824 0022.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, December 13, 2019 is 105.9 (down 0.5 against yesterday's index).

Hong Kong joins global Partnership for Healthy Cities

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region (HKSAR) today (December 13) announced that Hong Kong has joined the Partnership for Healthy Cities, a global network of 70 cities committed to saving lives by preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as cancer or diabetes, and injuries.

"We are fully committed to building a healthy society and are proud to join this prominent group of cities working to ensure longer, fuller lives for the residents," said a spokesperson for the Food and Health Bureau.

Through this Partnership, cities commit to one of 14 interventions which include, among others, strengthening of public health data. "As part of the Government's commitment to the Partnership for Healthy Cities, the Department of Health will conduct a territory-wide population-based health survey next

year. The survey will strengthen our information base to assess the latest health status of the population and to support evidence-based decision making in health policy, resource allocation, and provision of preventive health services and programmes," the spokesman said.

Hong Kong's health indices rank among the best in the world but like many parts of the developed world, it is facing an increasing threat of NCDs which will give rise to increasing mortality, morbidity and disability if not addressed. The four major NCDs, namely cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes mellitus, accounted for 56.6 per cent of all registered deaths in 2018 in Hong Kong.

In 2018, the Government issued "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong", which has proposed a list of actions that Hong Kong would pursue to achieve the committed NCD targets moving towards 2025. The 2020 health survey – Hong Kong's pledged intervention for the Partnership for Healthy Cities and also part of the city's ongoing NCD surveillance – will help monitor the progress of Hong Kong's NCD prevention and control actions.

The Partnership for Healthy Cities is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and Vital Strategies. It supports the critical role cities play in effectively implementing evidence-based interventions to prevent NCDs and injuries.

"The road to a healthier world runs through cities. Most of the world now lives in urban areas, and cities can rapidly implement meaningful policies," said Dr Kelly Henning, who leads the public health program at Bloomberg Philanthropies. "The Partnership for Healthy Cities unites mayors who are committed to action. With the Partnership's expansion to 70 cities, collectively we are preventing millions of needless deaths from NCDs and injuries and protecting the health of generations to come," said Dr Henning.

"Around the world, cities are growing rapidly, and this presents significant new opportunities for action," said Dr Naoko Yamamoto, Assistant Director-General of Universal Health Coverage/Healthier Populations at the WHO. "The Partnership for Healthy Cities is showing how cities can play a key role in championing ways to tackle NCDs and injuries."

Mr José Luis Castro, President and CEO of Vital Strategies, said, "We are honored to implement this flagship urban public health initiative alongside Bloomberg Philanthropies and the WHO. Our team is actively collaborating with the Partnership cities and providing the necessary assistance to support progress in policies to combat NCDs and injuries. We view this work as core to our vision of strengthening health systems around the globe."

For more information on the Partnership for Healthy Cities, please visit partnershipforhealthycities.bloomberg.org.

Twenty-one persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight" from December 9 to yesterday (December 12). A total of 12 suspected illegal workers and nine suspected employers were arrested.

During the operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 27 target locations including a company, a factory, a massage parlour, premises under renovation and restaurants. The suspected illegal workers comprised eight men and four women, aged 37 to 55. Among them, a man was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits him from taking any employment. In addition, three men and two women were suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards. Meanwhile, seven men and two women, aged 31 to 62, were suspected of employing the suspected illegal workers.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties," an ImmD spokesman said.

The 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. It is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

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 initial screenings of 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.

“Glistening Treasures in the Dust – Ancient Artefacts of Afghanistan” exhibition to reopen

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) announced today (December 13) that the thematic exhibition entitled "Glistening Treasures in the Dust – Ancient Artefacts of Afghanistan", which had been temporarily closed earlier at the Hong Kong Museum of History, will be reopened tomorrow (December 14).

Through displaying 231 sets of rare artefacts, including goldware, glassware, bronze sculptures and ivory carvings unearthed in Afghanistan, the exhibition showcases the profound influence of Afghanistan, as the cultural intersection of the Silk Road, on promoting the exchange and integration of world civilisations.

A part of the current exhibits were thought to have been destroyed in wars and to no longer exist. But thanks to the relentless efforts of the staff of the National Museum of Afghanistan, these treasures have been preserved. Members of the public must not miss the chance of seeing these artefacts.

The exhibition is co-presented by the LCSD and the National Museum of

Afghanistan. It will run until February 10, 2020.

The Hong Kong Museum of History is located at 100 Chatham Road South, Tsim Sha Tsui. For details of the exhibition, please visit hk.history.museum/en_US/web/mh/exhibition/current.html, or call 2724 9042 for enquiries.