

Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme invites new round of applications

The Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS) is inviting a new round of applications starting today (December 2) from non-profit-distributing organisations such as professional bodies, trade or industrial organisations and research institutes.

The 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 under the PASS for each approved project is \$3 million or 90 per cent of the total eligible project cost, whichever is lower. A wide range of professional services is covered by the PASS, including accounting, legal and dispute resolution, architecture, engineering, healthcare, information and communications technology, design as well as technical testing and analysis. Sector-specific projects and cross-sectoral projects are both welcome.

The PASS funds different types of projects. Common types include seminars, forums, workshops, exchange events, exhibitions, and research and studies. Expenses directly incurred for implementing a project such as manpower costs, venue and set-up costs, production and promotion costs, and the project team's travel and accommodation costs outside Hong Kong are typically eligible for funding under the scheme.

So far, over 50 projects have been funded under the PASS. Examples include a forum held in Paris by a local chamber of commerce to promote Hong Kong's multidisciplinary professional services; conferences, workshops and seminars held by a trade body in ASEAN countries to promote Hong Kong's status as a dispute resolution hub in the region; a visit to New Zealand arranged by a professional body for local engineers to learn about innovative technologies for infrastructure construction, and professional exchange activities held in Hong Kong. Details about the PASS and its funded projects are available at www.pass.gov.hk/en/home/index.html.

The PASS receives applications all year round and they are processed on a quarterly basis. The deadline for the new round of applications is February 29, 2020.

A briefing session will be held on December 13, 2019 for organisations interested in applying for PASS funding. For registration for the briefing session or other enquiries, please contact the PASS Secretariat at 3655 5418 or pass@cedb.gov.hk.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, December 2, 2019 is 106.5 (same as last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, November 30, 2019 was 106.5 (up 0.1 against last Friday's index).

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (December 2) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From November 24 to 30, two community-acquired LD cases were reported:

1. A male patient, aged 65 with good past health, who lives in Hin Yiu House, Hin Yiu Estate, Hin Wo Lane, Sha Tin;
2. A male patient, aged 62 with good past health, who lives in Hang Tat Building, 236 Tai Nan Street, Sham Shui Po.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of November 30 this year, 101 LD cases have been reported. In 2018 and 2017, there were 105 and 72 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers,

whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus which support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
 2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and

5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

Mainland pregnant woman jailed for making false representation

A Mainland woman was charged at the Sha Tin Magistrates' Courts with one count of making false representation to an immigration staff and sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment on November 27.

The 34-year-old defendant arrived in Hong Kong as a visitor and went to an Accident and Emergency Department for delivery without prior booking. Investigation revealed that the defendant was asked by an immigration staff member about her pregnancy status during arrival examination upon arrival at the Lo Wu Control Point and she claimed she was not pregnant. The defendant was subsequently charged with one count of making false representation to immigration staff on her pregnancy status. The defendant pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment at the Sha Tin Magistrates' Court on November 27.

"Under the laws of Hong Kong, any person who makes false representation to an immigration officer commits an offence. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to the maximum penalty of a fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years," an Immigration Department spokesman said.

CAD's follow-up on operational situation of Hong Kong Airlines Limited

The Civil Aviation Department (CAD) has been monitoring the operational situation of the Hong Kong Airlines Limited (HKA) to ensure aviation safety

and working closely with the Transport and Housing Bureau with regard to the follow-up actions on HKA. The CAD is concerned about the latest financial situation of HKA, including its inability to pay salaries to its entire staff in one go earlier. The CAD noted that in response to the financial situation of HKA, the Air Transport Licensing Authority (ATLA) decided to attach new conditions to HKA's licence, and ATLA also indicated that if HKA fails to improve its financial situation as required by ATLA by the deadline, ATLA will take further action under Regulation 15E of the Air Transport (Licensing of Air Services) Regulations (Cap. 448 Subsidiary Legislation A).

A CAD spokesman said today (December 2), "According to Article 6 of the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995 (Cap. 448 Subsidiary Legislation C), the CAD has to be satisfied that an Air Operator's Certificate (AOC) holder is competent, having regard to his equipment, organisation, staffing, maintenance and other arrangements, to secure the proper and safe operation of his aircraft registered in Hong Kong for the purpose of public transport. In view of the latest financial situation of HKA, including its inability to pay salaries to its entire staff in one go earlier, the CAD has great concern and has today requested HKA, which holds an AOC, to make representation on whether it is able to continue to operate stringently in accordance with the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995. Depending on the representation, the CAD will take appropriate actions including but not limited to varying, suspending or revoking HKA's AOC according to Article 62 of the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995."

In view of HKA's financial situation, the CAD has enhanced monitoring on the airline's flight operations and aviation safety since mid-December 2018. The CAD also actively inspects and audits HKA to ensure that its various aspects including equipment, organisation, staffing, maintenance and other arrangements comply with the standards of the above-mentioned laws and to secure its proper and safe operation in compliance with the conditions specified in its AOC. In the past year (from November 2018 to October 2019), the CAD has conducted about 180 scheduled and unscheduled checks on HKA.

The CAD will continue to closely monitor HKA's flight operations and aviation safety, with a view to ensuring that HKA's operations will continue to comply fully with the requirements of relevant aviation laws and regulations.