

LCQ16: Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Maggie Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (February 19):

Question:

The Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS) launched by the Government in 2016 with a total commitment 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. In addition, the Government has set aside \$50 million to launch the Professionals Participation Subsidy Programme (PSP) under PASS, which subsidises Hong Kong's major professional bodies to participate in relevant activities organised by the Government and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council after the epidemic has stabilised in order to step up the promotion of Hong Kong's competitive edges and professional services to external parties. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following information on the Main Programme of PASS from August 2021 to November last year: the number of (i) funded and (ii) rejected projects, (iii) the number of beneficiary organisations, (iv) the average amount of grant for approved projects, and (v) the beneficiary sectors and their proportions;
- (2) given that according to the paper submitted by the Government to the Finance Committee of this Council on July 8, 2016, the funding of \$200 million allocated to PASS could sustain its operation up to around 2021-22, of the total amount of grants involved in the approved projects of PASS since its launch, and whether the Government has re-assessed up to when the funding can sustain the operation of PASS;
- (3) of the following information on the PSP since its launch: (i) the number of applications approved, (ii) the total amount of subsidies granted, and (iii) the number of beneficiaries;
- (4) as there are views pointing out that international legal and dispute resolution services are among the several industries in which Hong Kong can utilise its unique advantages under "one country, two systems", whether the Government has compiled statistics on the number of applications for PASS funding submitted by organisations in the legal sector and the proportion they account for, and analysed their reasons for applying; of the highest and lowest amounts of funding granted for such applications;

(5) whether it has reviewed if the number of applications under PASS has resumed to the pre-epidemic level after the Government's lifting of all mandatory mask-wearing requirements in March 2023; if the number of applications has resumed to the pre-epidemic level, of the details; if not, whether it has studied the reasons for that; and

(6) apart from issuing a press release on December 1 last year announcing that PASS would accept a new round of applications, whether the Government has formulated other promotion plans for PASS; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will formulate the relevant plans expeditiously?

Reply:

President,

The Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS), launched in November 2016 with a total commitment of \$200 million, aims to support Hong Kong's professional services sector in undertaking worthwhile projects to strengthen exchanges and co-operation with external counterparts, promote relevant publicity activities, and enhance service standards and external competitiveness. Since the launch of the Main Programme of PASS, nearly 120 projects have been funded, involving a total grant of about \$80 million.

In addition, it was announced in the 2020 Policy Address that the Government would set aside \$50 million under PASS to set up the Professionals Participation Subsidy Programme (PSP), which subsidises Hong Kong's major professional bodies to participate in relevant activities organised by the Government (e.g. Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices) and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council after the pandemic situation has stabilised, with a view to stepping up promotion of Hong Kong's competitive edge and professional services to Mainland cities and overseas markets.

My reply in response to the question raised by the Hon Maggie Chan is as follows:

(1), (3) and (4) From August 2021 to November last year, a total of 41 projects were funded under the PASS Main Programme, involving 24 applicants with a total grant of about \$24 million. The average amount of grant for each project is about \$600,000. A total of 25 applications were not funded. Among the beneficiary sectors, health-related services accounted for about 40 per cent, legal services accounted for about 20 per cent and building and construction-related services accounted for around 15 per cent. Beneficiary sectors of the remaining projects included design services, information and communications technology services etc. Projects related to legal services involved four applicants, with the highest and lowest amounts of grant approved being around \$1.1 million and \$270,000 respectively. As for the PSP, since the stabilisation of the pandemic and easing of travel restrictions at the end of 2022, a total of 14 activities were funded. Nearly 300 local professionals participated, involving a total subsidy of about \$3.4 million.

(2) As mentioned in the first paragraph above, since the launch of the PASS

Main Programme in 2016, the total amount of grant approved is about \$80 million, averaging around \$10 million of funding approved per year. With reference to the average annual funding approved in the past, it is expected that the funding of \$150 million designated for the Main Programme can sustain its operation until around 2031-32, though the actual situation will depend on the number of applications submitted by applicants and the amount of grant approved for each project.

(5) and (6) The number of applications under PASS during the pandemic was similar to those before and after the pandemic. Most of the applicants conducted their projects online during the pandemic, hence the relatively low amount of funding applied. The projects have now resumed in a physical format. We have been actively promoting PASS through various channels, such as holding quarterly briefing sessions, sending emails to post-secondary institutions, commercial and industrial organisations as well as professional bodies, issuing press releases, and providing application information on the PASS website. We also take the initiative to reach out to and meet with commercial and industrial organisations as well as professional bodies from time to time to brief them on PASS and encourage them to actively apply for funding. Relevant promotion work is on-going.

Red flags hoisted at Silverstrand Beach and Clear Water Bay Second 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 (February 19) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Silverstrand Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today

(February 19). The arrangements will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

A. Traffic arrangements before the commencement of the first race

The following road closure and traffic diversions will be implemented from 50 minutes before the start of the first race for day racing, or from 6pm onwards for night racing:

1. Road closure

Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp outside the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) will be closed, except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel.

2. Traffic diversions

- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the up-ramp outside the HKJC will be re-routed one way northbound;
- Traffic along eastbound Queen's Road East heading for Wan Chai and Happy Valley will be diverted to turn left to Morrison Hill Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along Queen's Road East cannot turn right to Wong Nai Chung Road, except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Queen's Road East will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Morrison Hill Road to turn right at the junction of Wong Nai Chung Road and Queen's Road East; and
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley or Racecourse will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, southbound Morrison Hill Road, Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road.

B. Traffic arrangements before the conclusion of race meeting

The following road closure and traffic diversions will be implemented from about 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

1. Road closure

- The up-ramp on Wong Nai Chung Road outside the HKJC leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the Public Stands of the HKJC;
- Westbound Leighton Road between Wong Nai Chung Road and Canal Road East; and
- Southbound Morrison Hill Road between Leighton Road and Queen's Road East.

In addition, southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel and the Public Stands of the HKJC will be closed from

about 10 minutes before the start of the last race.

2. Traffic diversions

- Eastbound Queen's Road East at its junction with Morrison Hill Road will be reduced to one-lane traffic heading for northbound Canal Road flyover;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Wan Chai will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, U-turn slip road beneath Canal Road flyover, Canal Road West and Hennessy Road;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road will be diverted to turn left to eastbound Leighton Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road; and
- Traffic along westbound Leighton Road will be diverted to Wong Nai Chung Road.

C. Learner drivers prohibition

Learner drivers will be prohibited to turn left from Caroline Hill Road to Leighton Road between one and a half hours before the start of the first race and one hour after the last race. In addition, learner drivers will be prohibited from accessing the following roads within the above period of time:

- Shan Kwong Road between Yik Yam Street and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Village Road between its upper and lower junctions with Shan Kwong Road;
- Percival Street between Hennessy Road and Leighton Road;
- Canal Road East; and
- The service road leading from Gloucester Road to Canal Road flyover.

D. Suspension of parking spaces

Parking spaces on southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Sports Road and Blue Pool Road will be suspended from 11am to 7pm for day racing, and from 5pm to 11.59pm for night racing respectively.

All vehicles parked illegally during the implementation of the above special traffic arrangements will be towed away without prior warning, and may be subject to multiple ticketing.

Actual implementation of road closure and traffic diversion will be made by the Police at the time depending on traffic conditions in the areas. Motorists should exercise tolerance and patience, and follow the instructions of Police on site.

Sham Shui Po Park Swimming Pool temporarily closed

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department said today (February 19) that Sham Shui Po Park Swimming Pool in Sham Shui Po District has been temporarily closed for cleaning and superchlorination following the discovery of a small amount of faeces in the pool.

It will be reopened at 1pm.

The department appeals to swimmers to be considerate and to keep swimming pools clean. They are advised not to swim after a full meal and should use the toilet facilities if necessary before swimming.

Hong Kong Customs detects a case involving possession of suspected "space oil drug" by passenger (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs today (February 18) detected a case involving possession of etomidate (the main ingredient of "space oil drug"), under the Dangerous Drug Ordinance, from an incoming passenger at the Hong Kong-Macau Ferry Terminal in Sheung Wan. Two vape sticks containing suspected "space oil drug" were seized.

A 30-year-old male passenger arrived Hong Kong from Shenzhen today. During Customs clearance, two vape sticks containing suspected "space oil drug" were found on him and his baggage. The man was subsequently arrested. The arrested person, claimed to be an architect, will appear at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (February 19).

Customs will continue to step up the enforcement and combat against the trafficking of "space oil drug".

Under the Dangerous Drug Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million

and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour report hotline 182 8080 or its dedicated crime reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

