

[HKMA announces details on extending Green and Sustainable Finance Grant Scheme and expanding subsidy scope to cover transition finance instruments](#)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) released today (May 3) the details on the extension of the Green and Sustainable Finance Grant Scheme (GSF Grant Scheme) as announced in the 2024-25 Budget.

Launched in May 2021, the GSF Grant Scheme provides subsidy for eligible green and sustainable debt issuance in Hong Kong. The Financial Secretary proposed in the 2024-25 Budget to extend the GSF Grant Scheme by three years to 2027, and expand the scope of subsidies to cover transition bonds and loans with a view to encouraging relevant industries in the region to make use of Hong Kong's transition financing platform as they move towards decarbonisation.

Following industry consultation, the HKMA has updated the guideline on the GSF Grant Scheme ([updated Guideline](#)), which will be effective upon the extension of the scheme on May 10, 2024.

The Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Eddie Yue, said, "Hong Kong is a leading green finance centre in Asia, intermediating more than one-third of the region's international green and sustainable bonds in recent years. The GSF Grant Scheme has helped foster the adoption of sustainable finance, enrich the local ecosystem, and promote good market practice. The extension of the scheme, with an expanded scope to cover transition finance instruments, reaffirms Hong Kong's commitment to supporting the region's increasing efforts to tackle climate challenge through transition activities and financing."

The HKMA will continue to administer the GSF Grant Scheme, and keep in view market developments and industry feedback. The design of the GSF Grant Scheme, such as eligibility criteria, eligible expenses, grant amounts and application process, may be adjusted from time to time as needed.

[16 persons arrested during anti-](#)

illegal worker operations (with photo)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight" , and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion" and "Windsand", on April 29 and 30, and yesterday (May 2). A total of 10 suspected illegal workers, three suspected employers, and three suspected aiders and abettors were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 22 target locations including a massage parlour, premises under renovation, a residential flat and restaurants. Seven suspected illegal workers, one suspected employer, and three suspected aiders and abettors were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised three men and four women, aged 28 to 64. Among them, two women were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. In addition, two women were suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards. One man, aged 48, who was suspected of employing the illegal workers, was arrested. Two men and one woman, aged 34 to 44, who were suspected of aiding and abetting a person who breached the condition of stay in Hong Kong, were also arrested.

During operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 16 target locations in the Eastern district. Three suspected illegal workers and two suspected employers were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised one man and two women, aged 36 to 50. The arrested man was suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity card. One man and one woman, aged 45 and 49, who were suspected of employing the illegal workers, were also arrested.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him or her 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."

The spokesman warned, "As stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land is 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. Under the prevailing laws, 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 upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$100,000 and up to 10 years' imprisonment."

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. Under the Immigration Ordinance, the maximum penalty for an employer employing a person who is not lawfully employable, i.e. an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land, has been significantly increased from a fine of \$350,000 and three years' imprisonment to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment to reflect the gravity of such offences. The director, manager, secretary, partner, etc, of the company concerned may also bear criminal liability. 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. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and to imprisonment for one year. In that connection, the spokesman would like to remind all employers not to defy the law by employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to take resolute enforcement action to combat such offences.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening 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 ImmD 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 or temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



[CHP investigates one imported infection case of Zika virus](#)

â€‹The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 3) investigating an imported infection case of Zika virus, and urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene as well as to adopt strict anti-mosquito measures during travel. Pregnant women should pay close attention to the infection risk if they travel to affected areas.

The case involves a 38-year-old male patient with underlying illnesses, who had developed a fever and rash on April 24. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of North Lantau Hospital on April 25, and was admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital for management. His blood specimen tested positive for Zika virus today. He has been in stable condition all along.

After the case was confirmed by a laboratory test, the CHP immediately commenced epidemiological investigations. An initial investigation revealed that that the patient had stayed in Thailand from April 10 to 18. He recalled mosquito bites during his travel. His home contacts and travel collaterals have remained asymptomatic so far. Contact tracing and a follow-up investigation by the CHP are ongoing. The CHP will report the case to the health authority of Thailand.

According to the World Health Organization, multiple countries/areas in the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia (including Thailand) have recorded current or previous Zika virus transmissions. The CHP has informed the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department on vector surveillance and control. Zika virus infection is a statutorily notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong, and suspected or confirmed cases must be promptly notified for investigation, control and surveillance.

A spokesman for the CHP said that, Zika virus infection is a mosquito-

borne disease. To reduce the risk of infections spread by mosquitoes, apart from general measures, travellers returning from affected areas should apply insect repellent at least 21 days upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to the doctor.

The CHP's Port Health Division has been carrying out inspections and health promotions (including reminding travellers to adopt anti-mosquito measures when travelling) at boundary control points (BCPs) to maintain strict environmental hygiene with effective mosquito control, and keeping close contact with relevant stakeholders (e.g. airlines and the travel industry) to provide the latest disease information and health advice at appropriate times. Routine health surveillance on body temperatures of inbound travellers at all BCPs is ongoing.

The Zika virus is primarily transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected *Aedes* mosquito. *Aedes aegypti*, which is currently not found in Hong Kong, is considered the most important vector for Zika virus. Most people infected with Zika Virus Infection are asymptomatic. For patients with symptoms, they commonly present with rash, fever, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise and headache. Zika virus infection during pregnancy is a cause of microcephaly and other congenital malformations in infants, and it can also cause complications such as fetal loss, stillbirth and preterm birth.

The public should call 1823 in case of mosquito problems and may visit the following pages for more information: the Dengue Fever page of the [CHP](#) and the [Travel Health Service](#), [the Zika pages of the CHP](#), the latest [Travel Health News](#), [tips for using insect repellents](#), and the CHP [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

Build up hand hygiene habit for healthy living

In support of the annual Hand Hygiene Day on May 5, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 3) appealed to members of the public to develop habits of cleaning hands with appropriate techniques with a view to effectively enhancing personal and public health.

The theme of Hand Hygiene Day 2024 is "Power of Hand Hygiene", which aims to highlight hand hygiene practice which can prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases and multi-drug resistant organisms. Members of the public shall incorporate hand hygiene into their daily lives and remind family members and friends to perform proper hand hygiene, especially before eating and after using toilets.

It is important to clean hands with appropriate hand hygiene techniques. When hands are visibly soiled, it is advised to clean hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; when hands are not visibly soiled, hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub for at least 20 seconds until dry is also an effective alternative. When cleaning hands, all surfaces of the hands should be covered, including palms, backs of hands, between fingers, backs of fingers, thumbs, finger tips and wrists.

According to studies, handwashing can prevent around 30 per cent of diarrheal infections and about 20 per cent of respiratory infections. Maintaining hand hygiene and hence intercepting the chain of infection not only could protect the health of the public, but also effectively minimise the spread of multi-drug resistant organisms in the community.

Since 2005, Hong Kong has pledged support for the World Health Organization's advocacy, "Clean Care is Safer Care", by actively promoting hand hygiene in both healthcare settings and in the community. This year, a multi-layered poster and GIF-animated e-poster were produced and will be put up and displayed in hospitals, clinics and the community to remind healthcare workers and the public of the importance of maintaining hand hygiene.

The public may visit the CHP's [Hand Hygiene Day 2024 webpage](#) for the e-poster and more information on hand hygiene.

[CHP announces one new confirmed melioidosis infection case over past week](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 3) said that one new confirmed melioidosis infection case had been recorded in the past week (April 26 to May 2).

The case involves a 69-year-old female with underlying illnesses who lives on Lamma Island. She started coughing since early April and attended Gleneagles Hospital Hong Kong on April 16 due to worsening symptoms and a fever. She was admitted on the same day. She is in stable condition. Her clinical sample was confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing.

The CHP is investigating the infection source of the case. Epidemiological investigations are ongoing. So far, two melioidosis infection cases have been recorded in Hong Kong this year. In 2023, 17 melioidosis infection cases were recorded.

A spokesman for the CHP reiterated that person-to-person transmission and animal-to-human transmission are rare, but melioidosis bacteria can survive in the local environment. Melioidosis is an endemic disease in Hong Kong and melioidosis cases have been recorded in Hong Kong each year. According to literature, infection cases are more common after typhoons or storms. The bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei* of melioidosis in soil and muddy water may become exposed to the ground after typhoons or storms, and the bacteria could spread more easily with strong winds or storms. As such, the number of melioidosis cases may increase.

The CHP reminded members of the public that melioidosis can be spread by contaminated soil and water during and after typhoons and storms. Where practicable, people should stay indoors during typhoons and storms, avoid travelling to areas with potential flooding, and do not wade in or have contact with muddy water and soil. In addition, high-risk individuals should avoid paths near stormwater drains where aerosols may be generated from contaminated water.

Members of the public should also take the following preventive measures against infection:

- Avoid contact with contaminated soil;
- Wear appropriate protective clothing or footwear when participating in activities with possible contact with soil or water, e.g. using gloves and wearing boots. High-risk individuals may also consider wearing a surgical mask;
- Wash or shower after exposure to contaminated water or soil;
- Always clean any wounds as soon as possible and cover any cuts or grazes with waterproof dressings;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water after handling soil or gardening;
- Observe food hygiene and avoid drinking raw water; and
- Travellers can contract the disease through outdoor water sports. Risk of infection can be minimised by avoiding exposure to water sources (such as rivers, ponds or lakes) that might be contaminated.

â€‹The CHP appealed to members of the public to seek medical advice if they develop symptoms, in particular people with diabetes or other immunocompromised conditions, in order to receive appropriate medical diagnosis and treatment. For more information on melioidosis, please visit the website of the CHP at www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/101110.html.