

# Joint investigation conducted by SWD and Police to combat fraud cases involving Traffic Accident Victims Assistance

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) today (November 6) announced a joint investigation with the Police to combat fraud cases involving Traffic Accident Victims Assistance (TAVA). A total of 275 people have been arrested so far.

The Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Section of the SWD, while processing TAVA applications in March this year, detected suspicious elements in the medical certificates submitted by some applicants. Upon an investigation conducted by the SWD, it was revealed that the applicants concerned had not sought any medical treatment from the private medical institutions/clinics which allegedly issued the relevant medical certificates. The SWD immediately contacted the Police, referred the cases suspected of using false medical certificates for the Police's investigation, and ceased processing the relevant applications. The SWD will continue to assist the Police investigation and recover all the overpaid assistance payments from the relevant applicants, with the total amount being around \$14 million.

The SWD emphasised that it is a criminal offence to provide false information to obtain TAVA payments. Offenders may be prosecuted under the Theft Ordinance (Cap. 210) and be liable on conviction to imprisonment of a maximum of 14 years. Should any fraudulent element be detected in any application, the SWD will show no tolerance or leniency and make referrals to the enforcement agencies for investigation. The joint investigation was prompted by suspicious applications found by the SWD during the vetting of applications, upon which the fraud cases were discovered. Members of the public are urged not to defy the law. The SWD will continue to verify the information submitted for TAVA applications in a stringent manner to ensure the proper use of public funds.

The TAVA Scheme is a social welfare initiative administered by the SWD to provide financial assistance to road traffic accident victims or the surviving dependents of deceased traffic accident victims. An applicant must meet relevant conditions in order to be eligible for an assistance payment, including: (1) the accident must have been reported to the Police and determined by the Police as a road traffic accident; and (2) the victim is injured or killed in the accident. In case of injury, the injured victim must be certified by a registered doctor that such injury requires hospitalisation of no less than three days or is issued with proof of sick leave for no less than three days.