

## LCSD provides ex-gratia payment to personnel and commercial stall operators affected by cancellation of programmes and Hong Kong Flower Show under Anti-epidemic Fund

A spokesman for the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) said today (February 21) that to align with the Government's tightening of social distancing measures, the LCSD had closed its leisure and cultural venues/facilities from January 7, and the cultural, recreation and sports programmes to be organised or subvented by the LCSD were also cancelled, with the exception of "Online Interactive Sports Training Programmes" and online cultural programmes. Owing to the consistently worsening situation of the COVID-19 epidemic, to relieve the impact of the epidemic and with the new injection into the Anti-epidemic Fund, a new round of ex-gratia payments will be made again to personnel engaged in these cultural, recreation and sports programmes.

The ex-gratia payment is being offered to those directly engaged by the LCSD, or sports coaches and staff hired by National Sports Associations (NSAs) or sports organisations (SOs) subvented under the Sports Subvention Scheme, or sports coaches who were engaged by NSAs or SOs through the LCSD Direct Purchase Authority Management System to provide services. The ex-gratia payment is equivalent to the amount of their original full remuneration for the cancelled programmes scheduled to commence or to be held from February 4 to 28, 2022.

Coaches and personnel benefiting from this subsidy scheme are not required to submit applications. The LCSD will release the ex-gratia payment to the personnel directly or through the relevant NSAs and SOs. Disbursement of the ex-gratia payment is expected to start in March 2022 in batches.

In addition, the LCSD will make the same arrangement and provide the ex-gratia payment to speakers, storytellers and personnel who have been engaged by the Hong Kong Public Libraries and Music Office for extension activities which were cancelled and could not be rescheduled due to venue closures amid the epidemic. Part-time ushers and part-time ticketing assistants affected by the closure of cultural venues will also be provided with the ex-gratia payment.

Meanwhile, the LCSD will also provide a one-off ex-gratia payment of \$5,000 for each commercial stall operator affected by the cancellation of the Hong Kong Flower Show 2022.