

## LCQ20: Promoting the application of gerontechnology

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (July 3):

Question:

There are views that Hong Kong will become a "super-aged society" as defined by the World Health Organization, with the number and proportion of the elderly continuing to increase, and while the application of gerontechnology can effectively help the elderly to live more independently, healthily and comfortably, the Government should also endeavour to promote the use of gerontechnology among service providers and the elderly. To further promote gerontechnology and encourage the elderly to make good use of technology to enhance their quality of life, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will introduce elderly technology vouchers to provide subsidies for the elderly of grass-roots families to purchase gerontechnology products, digital devices or Internet services so that they can acquire technological products such as emergency alarm system, "AI home fall detection alarm devices", smart watches with tracking and health monitoring features, personal health dashboards to help them improve their lives and narrow the digital divide through new technology; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it has been reported that local start-ups and small and medium enterprises often encounter difficulties such as insufficient funds, lack of promotion platforms and manpower shortage in the research and development (R&D) as well as promotion of gerontechnology products, of the measures the Government has put in place to support and drive these enterprises in the R&D and promotion of gerontechnology products;

(3) as the Jockey Club "age at home" Gerontech Education and Rental Service funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust is a four-and-a-half-year pilot scheme providing one-stop gerontechnology services to the elderly, including education service, rental service together with cleaning and maintenance services, whether the Government will consider, by drawing reference from the model of the scheme, launching a similar pilot scheme in housing courts with a high elderly population, so as to build up the confidence and capability of ageing in place among the elderly and their carers; and

(4) of the measures put in place to assist hidden elders in using gerontechnology products and carry out the relevant promotion; whether it will study the establishment of gerontechnology service teams and commissioners in all 18 districts across the territory and complement the

work of the District Services and Community Care Teams, so as to reach out to the community to assist hidden elders in choosing, purchasing/renting and applying gerontechnology products?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been encouraging elderly persons to make better use of gerontechnology, enhancing digital trainings for them, improving their quality of life, and relieving the burden of their carers.

In consultation with the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Housing Department, I reply to the Member's question as follows:

(1) and (3) The Government allocated \$1 billion in 2018 to set up the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care (I&T Fund), which subsidises eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure, rent or trial technology products, including sensor systems which can detect a frail elderly person who has left his/her bed and monitor the risk of him/her falling or encountering accidents, wearable sensors which can measure biological signs such as heart rhythm and blood pressure, body composition analysers which can measure health parameters, intelligent anti-wandering systems which can be integrated with indoor positioning and wireless gate sensor. As at June 2024, the I&T Fund has approved grants totalling about \$750 million, subsidising about 2 000 service units to procure or rent over 21 000 technology products.

The 2023 Policy Address announced that the Government would inject additional \$1 billion into the I&T Fund in 2024-25 and expand its scope to cover gerontechnology products suitable for household use. Eligible service units can procure suitable technology products for lending to elderly persons and carers for use at home. In addition, the SWD has expanded the coverage of the Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly to the rental of assistive technology products since September 2023. These two measures can extend the application of gerontechnology from residential care homes (RCHs)/community service units to elderly persons' residence.

The Government launches different measures to assist elderly persons in need to install indoor emergency alarm systems (EAS) such that they may call for help promptly during emergencies. The SWD launched the District Services and Community Care Teams – Pilot Scheme on Supporting Elderly and Carers in March 2024, which would refer needy elderly persons, persons with disabilities and their carers to install and use EAS. The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) and the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) have been providing subsidies to eligible elderly households residing in their housing estates to install and use EAS since 1996 and 1997 respectively. The HA and the HKHS have expanded the coverage of the subsidies concerned to mobile/wireless EAS since February 2021 and January 2020 respectively. In addition, the SWD provides similar subsidies to eligible elderly persons receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance.

Jockey Club "age at home" Gerontech Education and Rental Service is funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, administered by The Hong Kong Council of Social Service and operated by three social welfare organisations. The Government welcomes non-governmental organisations in launching this kind of pilot scheme which provides education, rental as well as cleaning and maintenance services related to gerontechnology products, and will keep in view the implementation effectiveness of and stakeholders' feedback to such services.

(2) Eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units can apply for the I&T Fund and partner with technology research and development (R&D) companies to trial their newly developed technology products designed specifically for the nursing and rehabilitation needs of elderly persons or persons with disabilities. The ceiling for the relevant grant is \$5 million per application.

The annual Gerontech and Innovation Expo cum Summit (GIES) promotes the use of technology by all sectors to address the challenges brought about by an ageing population and the rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities. Since its launch in 2017, the event has attracted over 1 000 exhibitors to showcase more than 3 500 gerontechnology products and application solutions from both Hong Kong and other places around the world, attracting over 230 000 visitors. The GIES comprises forums/thematic talks and workshops, which serve as a platform drawing together stakeholders from Hong Kong, the Mainland and abroad, including representatives of the innovation and technology sector, the academia, the social welfare sector and technology product users, to engage in dialogue and collaboration for broader adoption of gerontechnology. The GIES also provides a platform for businesses to exhibit the inventions and design concepts of gerontechnology products, allowing the public to get close to and learn about gerontechnology products and solutions as well as driving the public and different sectors to actively adopt gerontechnology and promote the industrialisation, marketisation and popularisation of gerontechnology.

The Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) endeavours to promote and support applied R&D activities which can contribute to exploitation of innovative ideas as well as upgrading of technology levels by industries. Through funding schemes under the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), the ITC subsidises and encourages universities, local public R&D institutes (such as R&D Centres), and private enterprises to conduct R&D in various technology areas (including gerontechnology), and conduct trials on the R&D results in the public sector, including over 70 projects that involve gerontechnology, with a total approved funding of over \$250 million. The Research Talent Hub under the ITF also provides funding support for technology companies conducting or planning to conduct R&D activities in Hong Kong to engage research talents to carry out R&D work.

In addition, the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund funded the establishment of the Gerontechnology Platform in 2021 to promote the development and application of gerontechnology by way of promoting engagement, cross-sector partnership and collaboration. The Platform has provided start-ups and small and medium enterprises with over 1 800 support

and consultancy services on the design or development of gerontechnology products to date. It also completed the testing of 10 theme-based gerontechnology products in RCHs in end 2023, including fall prevention, companion robot, health monitoring, transferring and lifting, infection control, anti-wandering, communication, care food, smart environment and cognitive training. With reference to the experience of product testing, the Platform and industry partners have jointly developed the Gerontechnology Product Evaluation Frameworks, covering the essential elements, workflow, reference test plan, etc, of gerontechnology product evaluation, for reference and adoption by the sector. This allows product developers to understand user requirements for different types of gerontechnology products, and improve the products' functionalities based on users' feedback.

(4) The SWD has expanded the service scope of all 214 subvented elderly centres in the territory to the promotion of gerontechnology since October 2023, in order to drive the application of gerontechnology in the community. Elderly centres organise different activities such as seminars and workshops to promote digital technology, so as to keep the elderly abreast of the latest technological developments, and enable them to access and learn to use technology products, such as smart phones, tablets and applications. Elderly centres will also provide support to their members when they encounter difficulties in using digital technology. In addition, Support Teams for the Elderly set up under District Elderly Community Centres identify hidden elderly and other elderly persons with potential service needs through outreaching and networking, and provide suitable assistance to them, including assisting them in using technology products.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer has also launched the ICT Outreach Programme for the Elderly across different districts in the territory, organising various activities for the elderly to experience digital living. Service organisations have incorporated gerontechnology elements into their activities, such as providing cognitive training and functional strengthening activities for the elderly through motion sensing games and gerontechnology products, so that they can experience the benefits of digital technology to daily life.

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## [Ombudsman safeguards public administration for continuous community betterment \(with photo\)](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

â€‹ The Ombudsman, Mr Jack Chan, presented the 2023/24 Annual Report of the Office of The Ombudsman to the public today (July 3). The Office fully

met all 11 of its targets on service standards in handling enquiries, complaints, reassessments and complaint reviews and exceeded 10 of those targets in the reporting year.

With the lifting of the mask-wearing requirement in March 2023, the year 2023/24 was the first full year since the COVID-19 pandemic where life in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region returned to normal. The Office received 4 351 cases of complaints. Pandemic-related complaints plummeted from 766 to 33 year on year. The Office also received 8 599 enquiries.

During the year, the Office completed 4 397 cases, including some carried over from the preceding year. Among these cases, 2 053 were pursued and concluded, while the rest of the complaints (2 344) were closed after assessment due to insufficient grounds to pursue or being outside the statutory purview of the Office.

In the year, the Office conducted 95 full investigations, of which 52 (54.7 per cent) were substantiated, partially substantiated, or unsubstantiated but with other inadequacies found, and the rest were unsubstantiated. Among the 1 771 inquiry cases concluded, inadequacies were found in 335 (18.9 per cent) cases. During the year, the Office conducted and completed 10 direct investigation operations.

During the year, the Office made a total of 186 recommendations upon completion of full investigations and direct investigation operations. Of these, a total of 169 (90.9 per cent) were fully accepted by the government departments and public organisations for implementation, while 17 (9.1 per cent) remained under consideration as of June 30, 2024, with no rejection expected.

In the year, the Office resolved 187 complaints by mediation. The average time taken was 13.5 days, with many cases only taking a few days. Over 92 per cent of the respondent complainants and participating government departments and public organisations were satisfied with the mediation service provided by the Office, and over 94 per cent were satisfied with the performance of the mediators. The Ombudsman will allocate more resources to mediation work and has instructed his officers to press ahead at full steam with the use of mediation to resolve complaints in the coming year. By using mediation to alleviate public grievances and address contradictions in society, he aspires to foster harmony and social cohesion, improve people's livelihood and contribute to the development of Hong Kong.

During the year, there were 79 complaints cases related to access to information (ATI). Among the 72 ATI cases concluded, inadequacies were found in only 23 cases (32 per cent).

As this year marks the 35th anniversary of the Office of The Ombudsman, Mr Chan said, "I will lead the Office to serve the public with vigour and dedication. We shall set targets, strive for results, and perform our gatekeeping role conscientiously for the continuous betterment of the community."

The full text of the Annual Report can be viewed or downloaded from the Office of The Ombudsman website at [www.ombudsman.hk](http://www.ombudsman.hk).



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## **Red flag hoisted at Pui O 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 (July 3) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Pui O Beach in Islands District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.

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## **First batch of visa applications approved under the New Capital Investment Entrant Scheme – Immigration Department and Invest Hong Kong partner up to boost business**

## friendliness (with photos)

“In June, the Immigration Department approved the first batch of visa applications under the New Capital Investment Entrant Scheme (CIES), with Formal Approval granted in less than three months. The Immigration Department and Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) work closely together on the New CIES and are actively exploring other collaboration opportunities to boost business travel convenience in Hong Kong.

Here are the key numbers of the New CIES since its launch on March 1 to June 30.

Number of enquiries	Over 3 700
Number of applications	339
Number of Approval-in-Principle (Granting of 180-day visitor visas for making investment)	88
Number of approved visa (Investment of HK\$30 million already made)	3
Expected investment amount to be brought into Hong Kong	Over HK\$10 billion

The Director of Immigration, Mr Benson Kwok, said, "The Government has introduced various policies to attract talent and capital to Hong Kong, including the New CIES. We have approved the first batch of entry applications and are actively processing other applications. I believe the New CIES will bring new vitality and opportunities to Hong Kong. The Immigration Department will continue to collaborate closely with InvestHK to create an even more business-friendly environment in Hong Kong."

The Director-General of InvestHK, Ms Alpha Lau, said, "The New CIES brings a vast pool of talents to Hong Kong, attracting successful businessmen and innovative entrepreneurs, and with current application numbers an expected investment of over HK\$10 billion (if more than 300 applications are all approved) to enhance the developmental strengths of Hong Kong's asset and wealth management industry. InvestHK and the Immigration Department have been working closely together on the New CIES and will continue to deepen co-operation to further strengthen Hong Kong's appeal as a business hub."

In addition, the country has announced that non-Chinese Hong Kong permanent residents will soon be eligible for a card-type document to enhance convenience of clearance at control points of the Mainland. Under this new measure, cardholders will be able to travel to the Mainland multiple times within five-year validity period, without the need to apply for a separate visa. They will also be able to enjoy self-service clearance at control points of the Mainland, significantly enhancing clearance efficiency. This serves to foster stronger economic ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland.





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## CHP reminds public on precautions against heat stroke during very hot weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (July 3) reminded members of the public, particularly those undertaking outdoor activities, to take heed of necessary measures against heat stroke and sunburn in very hot weather.

"The public should carry and drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration while engaging in outdoor activities," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Those engaged in strenuous outdoor activities should avoid beverages containing caffeine, such as coffee and tea, as well as alcohol, as they speed up water loss through the urinary system," the spokesman explained.

"Infants and children, the elderly, pregnant women, those with chronic illnesses such as heart disease or high blood pressure, outdoor/manual workers, and individuals who are overweight are more vulnerable to heat stroke. They should pay special attention," the spokesman added.

The public should adopt the following precautions:

- Wear loose and light-coloured clothing to reduce heat absorption and facilitate sweat evaporation and heat dissipation;
- Avoid vigorous exercise and prolonged activities like hiking or trekking as heat, sweating and exhaustion can place additional demands on the physique;
- Perform outdoor activities in the morning or the late afternoon, if possible;
- For indoor activities, open all windows, use a fan or use air-



conditioning to maintain good ventilation;

- Do not stay inside a parked vehicle; and
- Reschedule work to cooler times of the day if feasible. If working in a hot environment is inevitable, introduce shade in the workplace where practicable. Start work slowly and pick up the pace gradually. Move to a cool area for rest at regular intervals to allow the body to recuperate.

â€‹The public should also note the latest and the forecast Ultraviolet (UV) Index released by the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO). When the UV Index is high (6 or above):

- Minimise direct exposure of the skin and the eyes to sunlight;
- Wear long-sleeved and loose-fitting clothes;
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat or use an umbrella;
- Seek a shaded area or put on UV-blocking sunglasses;
- Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen lotion with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 15, preferably higher. Reapply every two hours if you stay out in the sun, and after swimming, sweating or towelling off; and
- While using DEET-containing insect repellents for personal protection against mosquito-borne diseases, apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent.

â€‹If symptoms develop, such as dizziness, headache, nausea, shortness of breath or confusion, rest and seek help immediately, and seek medical advice as soon as possible.

â€‹The public may obtain more information from the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111), [heat stroke](#) page and [UV radiation](#) page; the HKO's Dial-a-Weather (1878 200), latest [weather report and forecast](#), [UV Index](#) and weather information for [hiking and mountaineering](#); and [press releases](#) of the Labour Department on precautions against heat stroke for outdoor workers and their employers when the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force.