

Home and Youth Affairs Bureau launches new round of Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland

The Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB) and the Youth Development Commission (YDC) jointly launched the 2024-25 Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland today (November 13). Eligible non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are invited to submit applications.

The Government attaches great importance to youth development. The HYAB promulgated the Youth Development Blueprint in end-2022, which states that the Government will further strengthen the breadth and depth of the Mainland and international internship and exchange programmes with a view to enhancing young people's understanding of the country and supporting their integration into the overall development of the country. Through the Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland, the HYAB and the YDC provide funding for NGOs to organise youth exchange projects on the Mainland for Hong Kong young people to enhance their awareness and understanding of the country's development, foster exchange with Mainland people and strengthen their sense of national identity.

The 2024-25 funding scheme accepts two rounds of applications. Details and application forms of the first round are available on the YDC website (www.ydc.gov.hk/en/programmes/ep/ep_fundingscheme.html). Interested NGOs should submit their applications on or before December 11. The second round of application will be launched in mid-2024.

Housing Authority introduces multifunctional indoor construction robot to boost safety at public housing sites (with photos)

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

Since the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) introduced new requirements relating to construction robotics in its tender evaluation of new building contracts in 2020, there are different types of construction robots being used to perform various tasks in different public housing projects to improve site safety and enhance productivity and quality.

The indoor construction robot introduced today (November 13) demonstrated its multifunction to complete skim coating, grinding, and painting works, which is being deployed to four public housing projects.

The Head/Development and Construction InnoTech of the Housing Department, Mr Romeo Yiu, and Structural Engineer of the Housing Department Mr Arthur Leung mentioned today at a media briefing, "The multifunctional indoor construction robot can perform three different tasks by first using laser scanning to sense the surroundings, and use Artificial Intelligence vision and algorithm to detect ceiling, pipe duct, and other obstruction to plan the best working path to uplift efficiency."

The multifunctional indoor construction robot can collect dust during grinding works to keep a tidy site environment. Furthermore, the robot operator can remotely control the robot at ground level to avoid working at height and reduce exposure to paint, so as to enhance occupational safety and health. As the construction robot can estimate the construction materials more accurately, this in turn reduces waste and achieves environmentally friendly construction.

During the media briefing, the HA project team demonstrated two different sizes of the multifunctional indoor construction robot in a Yip Wong Road site. The larger-size robot is suitable for works at high headroom sites, such as carpark and bus terminus, while the smaller-size robot is suitable for works on domestic floors. The HA project team also demonstrated the actual operation of the multifunctional indoor construction robots at the briefing, namely skim coating, grinding, and painting works. The team also switched different working parts of the robots within few minutes.

Mr Yiu said, "To cope with the massive amount of public housing construction and to alleviate the ageing and shortage of construction manpower, the HA has been embracing innovation and technology, including the use of multifunctional indoor construction robots, to enhance site safety and attract new entrants."

He said the HA will continue to use different types of construction robots in more projects and tasks to boost site safety and unleash synergy effects with the adoption of construction robots, and promote upgrading and transformation jointly with the construction industry.





[Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (November 13) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From November 5 to 11, two community-acquired LD cases were reported:

1. A male patient, aged 87 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Yiu On House, Yiu Tung Estate, Shau Kei Wan; and
2. A male patient, aged 67 with underlying illnesses, who lives on 216 Sai Yeung Choi Street South, Mong Kok.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential

sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of November 11, 108 LD cases had been reported this year. In 2022 and 2021, there were 80 and 69 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of microorganisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;

- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 µm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
 2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
 5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

Update on cluster of Candida auris cases in Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on Candida auris carrier cases, the spokesperson for Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital (HKBH) gave the following update today (November 13):

Two more female patients, aged 94 and 99, in the medical ward of HKBH were also confirmed to carry Candida auris while not having signs of infection. One of the patients was discharged earlier, and the remaining patient is now being treated in isolation and is in stable condition.

The hospital will continue the contact tracing investigation of close contacts of the patients in accordance with the prevailing guidelines. A series of enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted to prevent the spread of Candida auris:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the ward concerned;
2. Enhanced admission screening for patients and environmental screening

procedures; and

3. Application of stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene of staff and patients.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation of the patient. The case has been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

[Money service operators convicted of operating money service without licence](#)

A female shop owner and a male shopkeeper of a money changer were convicted of operating a money service without a valid licence at the Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts today (November 13). The male shopkeeper was sentenced to imprisonment for seven weeks and one day while the female shop owner was sentenced to imprisonment for four weeks and five days, suspended for 12 months.

Customs officers in April last year conducted an investigation and discovered that a female shop owner and a male shopkeeper of a money changer in Kwun Tong had been operating a remittance business after its application for a Money Service Operator licence was rejected. Therefore, they were suspected of operating a money service without a licence.

This is the first custodial sentence imposed among unlicensed money service operator cases and Customs reckons that it has achieved a deterrent effect, with a clear warning issued to unlicensed money service operators.

Under the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance, a person who wishes to operate a remittance or money changing service needs to first obtain a licence from the Customs and Excise Department. The maximum penalty for such operators without a valid licence upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Customs reminds consumers to procure services from licensed money service operators. A register of licensees is accessible from the website of Customs' Money Service Operators Licensing System at eservices.customs.gov.hk/MSOS/wsrh/001s1?request_locale=en.

Members of the public may report any suspected unlicensed money service operation to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).