

Anti-epidemic Fund Steering Committee convenes fifth meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the fifth meeting of the Anti-epidemic Fund Steering Committee today (May 6) to examine the implementation progress of the host of measures launched under the two rounds of Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF).

The Steering Committee noted that, since the Legislative Council Finance Committee approved the \$120.5 billion injection to the AEF on April 18, the details of over 20 second-round relief measures have already been announced and/or opened for application. Other measures will be launched as soon as possible with a view to providing timely relief to the affected sectors and individuals.

The Steering Committee also noted that, to date, the AEF has paid out over \$13 billion, and many businesses and members of the public have gradually received subsidies.

Mr Cheung said that, with a wide coverage, the measures of the two rounds of the AEF aim to preserve employment and assist the self-employed irrespective of the sectors to which they belong, provide additional relief to those sectors hard hit by the pandemic and pave the way for the post-pandemic economic recovery.

"We will continue to process applications and disburse subsidies as soon as possible to help businesses and members of the public tackle the challenges caused by the pandemic and to support enterprises, safeguard jobs and relieve people's burden," he stressed.

The Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme under the first-round AEF provides a one-off subsidy of \$80,000 to eligible retailers hard hit by the pandemic. About 93 000 applications were received within the application period. The Steering Committee is pleased to note that the scheme has been disbursing subsidies progressively and over \$2.7 billion in subsidies have been approved so far, involving about 33 000 applications.

The Steering Committee is chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration to monitor the implementation of the measures and the use of AEF, and to examine the progress reports from relevant bureaux and departments on a regular basis.