

Anti-epidemic Fund Steering Committee convenes third meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the third meeting of the Anti-epidemic Fund Steering Committee today (March 26).

The Steering Committee examined the latest progress of the 24 measures under the \$30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund (the Fund). It also reviewed how to better support businesses and individuals affected by the epidemic on a wider basis through the existing 24 measures.

Among the 24 measures under the Fund, 10 measures are aimed at enhancing anti-epidemic capability and the remaining 14 measures are deployed with the objective to support enterprises and safeguard jobs to provide one-off subsidies to assist affected enterprises (such as the transport sector, travel agencies, eateries and retailers, etc) and to disburse special grants to the needy and disadvantaged groups. Various measures under the Fund have been rolled out progressively and are expected to benefit over 110 000 business establishments, 200 000 families and 1 470 000 persons.

One of the 24 measures under the Fund is the \$5.6 billion Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme which provides relief to retailers hard hit by the epidemic to help tide them over their financial difficulties and to continue their businesses. The Scheme has been open for applications since March 23 and each eligible retail store will receive a one-off subsidy of \$80,000. The Scheme is expected to benefit some 70 000 retail stores.

The Steering Committee is pleased to note the overwhelming response from the retail sector. As at 8am March 26, which is only a couple of days since the launch of the Scheme, the Scheme had already received nearly 40 000 applications, with most of them being from small-scale retail stores. The application period for the Scheme will end on April 12.

Mr Cheung said that the Government aims to give out the first tranche of payment to the first batch of eligible applicants in early April.

"We will process the applications and disburse the subsidies as soon as possible to provide timely relief to retailers hard hit by the epidemic to help tide them over the financial difficulties and continue their businesses," he stressed.

The Steering Committee is chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, and members include nine relevant Directors of Bureaux. The Steering Committee will continue to monitor the implementation of the measures and the use of Fund, and will examine the progress reports from relevant bureaux and departments.