

# BFAC appreciates Government's concerted efforts in launching support measures for small and medium-sized enterprises

The following is issued on behalf of the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee Secretariat:

The Business Facilitation Advisory Committee held its 52nd meeting today (September 22). At the meeting, members were briefed by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB), Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited (the Cyberport) and the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) on a series of measures to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and trawl for outside talents.

The CEDB briefed members on their measures to support SMEs. These include:

- the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme;
- the launch of "Easy BUD" under the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales (BUD Fund); and
- the enhancement of the "SME ReachOut" service to assist SMEs in building their capacities, enhancing their competitiveness through leveraging new technologies.

The Cyberport briefed members on the Digital Transformation Support Pilot Programme (the Pilot Programme) which aims to accelerate the pace of digital transformation of SMEs. The Pilot Programme will operate on a one-to-one matching basis to support SMEs in the food and beverage and retail industries to acquire off-the-shelf basic information technology (IT) solution packages. Three designated categories of digital technology solutions (i.e. point of sale and payment systems, online promotion, and customer management and discount systems) will be available for selection by enterprises. The maximum amount of funding support for each eligible SME is \$50,000. It is anticipated that, within two years, at least 8 000 enterprises will be able to enhance their productivity and undergo business upgrading and transformation through the Pilot Programme.

The LWB briefed members on the Government's initiatives to proactively trawl for global talents. Launched on December 28, 2022, the Top Talent Pass Scheme (TTPS) aims to attract talents of high-income and with good academic qualifications from all over the world. A two-year pass will be granted to outside talent fulfilling the application criteria to allow them to stay in Hong Kong to explore career opportunities. As of July 31, 2023, over 40 000 TTPS applications were received, among which some 30 000 applications have been approved. In addition, the LWB also introduced the details of the updated talent list promulgated by the government on May 16, 2023, with an

expanded coverage from 13 to 51 professions. The expanded list is expected to help attract more high-quality talents in fostering high-quality economic and social development of Hong Kong.

The Committee appreciated the Government's concerted efforts in launching a series of measures to support SMEs and trawl for outside talents in coping with the changing business environment and augmenting their competitiveness.

The Committee also received the work reports of its three task forces:

#### Joint meeting of the three task forces

- The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) briefed the three task forces on the charging framework and legislative requirements of the Waste Disposal (Charging for Municipal Solid Waste) (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 (Amendment Ordinance) for the implementation of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) charging. MSW charging will be implemented on April 1, 2024. The EPD has formulated the best practice guides, and has uploaded them to the thematic website for MSW charging for the reference of relevant stakeholders. The EPD is also arranging briefings and specialised trainings for frontline staff of the relevant trades in preparation for the implementation of MSW charging. The Task Forces well-noted the charging framework and legislative requirement of the Amendment Ordinance, and appreciated the exchanges made on the implementation arrangements of the Amendment Ordinance.

#### Wholesale and Retail Task Force (WRTF)

- The Trade and Industry Department (TID) briefed the WRTF by circulation of paper on the enhancements to various support measures for SMEs administered by the department. Among them, the "Easy BUD" was launched in June 2023 to expedite the application and processing procedures for projects with a smaller funding amount, while the cumulative funding ceiling per enterprise under the SME Export Marketing Fund has been raised. The TID also briefed the WRTF on strengthening the services of the "SME ReachOut" in the next five years to provide SMEs with capacity building services and enhance assistance to them in preparing the government-funding applications. The WRTF welcomed the support measures provided by the TID, which assisted SMEs in exploring export markets and enhancing competitiveness.
- As travel fully resumed in early 2023, the tourism industry is recovering steadily in an orderly manner. A paper was circulated to the WRTF on the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB)'s work and progress in driving the tourism recovery, and the strategic focus for the future. Launched in February 2023, the Hello Hong Kong global promotional

campaign has successfully delivered the message that Hong Kong is back to normalcy and has returned to the world stage. The HKTB also encourages tourism-related sectors to provide professional quality tourism services, and will continue to provide support to the tourism industry to step up its recovery. The WRTF welcomed the HKTB's work on promoting tourism recovery and facilitating the full recovery of the tourism industry.

#### Food Business and Related Services Task Force (FRSTF)

- The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) briefed the FRSTF on the enhancement measures to shorten the processing time for licence applications and to facilitate the food trade's compliance with the licensing requirements. These measures include: relaxation of the licensing requirements for specific types of automatic food vending machines; acquiring no connected bakery licence for preparation of bakery products for retail sale and consumption in licensed restaurants; streamlining requirements on the submission of particular documents for food business licence applications; and relaxing the restrictions on food preparation for temporary food factories. The FRSTF thanked the FEHD for launching these measures to facilitate compliance and reduce the operational burden of the food trade.

#### Task Force on Business Liaison Groups (BLGTF)

- The Companies Registry (CR) briefed the BLGTF on the implementation of the Unique Business Identifier (UBI) and its Next Generation of Integrated Companies Registry Information System (Revamped ICRIS). The business registration number (i.e. the first eight digits of the Business Registration Certificate number) will be adopted as the UBI of companies/entities for the Government and businesses to uniquely identify legal entities in various transactions and regulatory interactions, while the Revamped ICRIS will enable customers to interact with the CR through a single integrated online platform. Both measures will be fully rolled out on December 27, 2023. The BLGTF thanked the CR for implementing the new measures to facilitate businesses.

The Committee also expressed appreciation of the commitment and achievements of the bureaux and departments in continuously implementing the business facilitation measures under the Be the Smart Regulator Programme to enhance their business licensing services.

Papers for the Committee meeting are available at [www.gov.hk/en/business/supportenterprises/bf/advisory/index.htm](http://www.gov.hk/en/business/supportenterprises/bf/advisory/index.htm) for public access.