

Budget: Advance with Confidence, Seize Opportunities, Strive for High-quality Development

The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, unveiled today (February 28) his 2024-25 Budget. He emphasised the need to advance with confidence, seize opportunities and promote high-quality development amid a complicated and ever-changing international environment, noting that "with our economy and society constantly evolving, more strenuous efforts are required to strengthen momentum of our economic recovery."

The Budget presents a series of measures aimed at bolstering confidence and creating favourable conditions for recovery. These include continuing to attract enterprises, capital and talent on all fronts, as well as providing assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through various measures, such as extending the application period for the 80% and 90% Guarantee Products under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme for two years.

For the property market, the Budget announced the immediate cancellation of all demand-side management measures for residential properties, including the Special Stamp Duty, the Buyer Stamp Duty and the New Residential Stamp Duty. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority will also adjust the countercyclical, macroprudential measures for property mortgage loans and relevant supervisory policies pertinent to property lending, where appropriate.

The Budget also highlights establishing Hong Kong as a premier destination for business and tourism through hosting more mega events and thematic annual conferences. This includes making good use of Victoria Harbour by holding monthly pyrotechnic and drone shows and revamping "A Symphony of Lights". Immersive and in-depth tourism, as well as local group-tour activities, will also be promoted.

The Budget continues to focus on green development and the digital economy, and includes measures to guide industries towards high-quality development. In addition to developing sectors such as innovation and technology and finance, the Budget suggests positioning Hong Kong as a multinational supply chain management centre, focusing on serving Mainland enterprises going global. This includes studying the establishment of a trade window to provide one-stop services for enterprises. Efforts will also be stepped up to attract Mainland manufacturing enterprises to set up offices in Hong Kong as headquarters for managing their offshore trading.

Regarding public finance, Mr Chan expressed the Government's determination to maintain the sustainability of public finances. The Government is implementing a comprehensive fiscal consolidation programme to achieve fiscal balance gradually and maintain fiscal reserves at a prudent level. Taking into account the need to strengthen momentum on economic growth

as well as the burden on businesses and the public, the programme focuses on expenditure cuts, although some revenue measures have been included in a pragmatic manner.

Mr Chan concluded that the unique positioning and distinctive functions make Hong Kong irreplaceable as the country strides towards high-quality development and the building of a great modern nation. It is also the only place in the world where the global advantage and the China advantage come together in a single economy. So long as Hong Kong knows where it stands and charts the right direction, it will be able to give full play to its unique strengths. By blazing new trails and firmly pressing ahead, Hong Kong will certainly thrive and prosper, like a dragon soaring far and high in the boundless sky.

For more details on the 2024-25 Budget, click [here](#).