

Budget Speech by the Financial Secretary (9)

Quality Living

162. In order that Hong Kong people and tourists can enjoy the diverse cultural heritage, the beauty of the harbourfront and the enhanced cultural, sports and recreational facilities in Hong Kong, we will take forward our work in the following areas.

Enhance Harbourfront

163. The current-term Government has allocated \$6.5 billion for developing new harbourfront promenades and open space as well as improving harbourfront facilities. In 2021, a total of 13 new harbourfront sites, including the harbour steps at Wan Chai harbourfront, were opened, providing the public with more well-connected open space in close proximity to the Victoria Harbour and giving them a variety of water-friendly experience. In the coming year, we will continue to adopt the incremental approach in taking forward our plans to open the Hoi Sham Park Extension in Kowloon City and the first section of the promenade under private development in the Kai Tak former runway area. This will extend the Victoria Harbour promenade by one kilometre to a total length of 26 kilometres.

Sports Development

164. The Government has been proactively promoting sports development with new resources allocation of more than \$60 billion since 2017 for promoting sports in the community, supporting elite sports and maintaining Hong Kong's status as a centre for major international sports events, as well as for providing more sports and recreational facilities. These efforts encourage collaboration among different sectors of the community in fostering a strong sports culture. In 2019, the Government injected \$6 billion into the Elite Athletes Development Fund to subsidise the provision of comprehensive support to athletes through the Hong Kong Sports Institute. We also injected \$250 million into the Hong Kong Athletes Fund in 2020 to encourage more athletes to commit to full-time training as well as dual-track development in sports training and academic studies. I am delighted to see that Hong Kong athletes achieved outstanding and encouraging results in international sports events last year, and I hope more young people in Hong Kong will pursue a career in sports, develop their potential and bring glory to Hong Kong.

165. Besides, we are pressing ahead with the Kai Tak Sports Park project, which is scheduled for completion by the end of next year. We are also actively implementing the \$20 billion Five-year Plan for Sports and Recreational Facilities, and taking forward the construction and upgrading of community sports and recreational facilities. Meanwhile, we are progressively carrying out the five-year plan to transform the public play spaces managed by the LCSD.

Cultural Facilities

166. As announced in the 2018-19 Budget, the Government would set aside \$20 billion for the improvement and development of cultural facilities in the following 10 years. We plan to seek funding approval this year for taking forward the main works of a cultural centre in Fanling, the construction of Yau Ma Tei Theatre Phase 2 as well as the main works of the Leisure and Cultural Complex at Tin Yip Road, Tin Shui Wai project Phase 1.

Community Arts Scheme

167. Popularisation of arts can enrich people's quality of life. Starting from the 2024-25 financial year, I will allocate \$20 million per year for regularising the LCSD's Community Arts Scheme, with the aim of providing more opportunities for members of the public to take part in arts and cultural activities, thereby promoting the integration of arts into our community.

Heritage Conservation

168. Over the past decade or so, we have allocated a total of \$2.4 billion for the Revitalising Historic Buildings through Partnership Scheme, under which 19 historic building conservation projects have been launched so far. Through the Financial Assistance for Maintenance Scheme on Built Heritage, we have also assisted private owners in carrying out proper maintenance works for 71 historic buildings. Moreover, we are committed to enhancing public awareness of conservation of historic buildings and supporting relevant academic research.

169. The Built Heritage Conservation Fund has subsidised many successful revitalisation projects, such as Tai O Heritage Hotel, Lui Seng Chun and Jao Tsung-I Academy since its establishment. These revitalisation projects have become local highlights, attracting many people to visit during leisure time. They also enhance Hong Kong's appeal as a tourist destination, and many of them have won international awards for heritage conservation. I propose to earmark an additional funding of \$1 billion for the Fund, with a view to further promoting the conservation of heritage and historic buildings.

Caring and Inclusion

170. We will continue to strengthen community and residential care services as well as social work services to support the elderly, persons with disabilities and children, involving an additional annual expenditure of over \$1.9 billion.

171. On residential care services, we will regularise three pilot schemes, namely the Pilot Scheme on Multi-disciplinary Outreaching Support Teams for the Elderly, the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly and the Pilot Scheme on Professional Outreaching Teams for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities. We will also allocate additional resources to upgrade the standard of EA2 homes under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme.

172. On community care services, we will regularise the Pilot Scheme on Home Care and Support for Elderly Persons with Mild Impairment and the speech therapy service of the Enhanced Home and Community Care Services, so as to help the elderly in need age in place.

173. On the provision of additional welfare facilities, we will set up seven contract residential care homes in the Multi-welfare Services Complex, which is near completion, at Kwu Tung North NDA, as well as a new contract residential care home under the development project at Queen's Hill in Fanling. In addition, a neighbourhood elderly centre, a special child care centre and an early education and training centre will also be set up in Area 54, Tuen Mun to provide community support and training services for the elderly, carers of elderly persons and children with special needs in the area.

174. We will also regularise the Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions to facilitate early identification of and provision of assistance to pre-primary children and their families with welfare needs. Moreover, persons with disabilities receiving subsidised residential care and community rehabilitation services will be provided with soft meals from October this year onwards to cater for the needs of users with a swallowing problem.

Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project

175. Under the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project launched in 2008, service operators recruit child carers to provide families in their neighbourhood with flexible day child care services at home, as a way to foster the spirit of mutual help in the community. To better meet the keen demand for day child care services, the Government will review the implementation mode and effectiveness of the project, including the need for home-based child carers to undergo certified training and the level of their pay, with a view to enhancing service quality as well as attracting more people to become home-based child carers. The review is expected to be completed by mid-2023.

(To be continued.)