

Fifth-term Commission on Poverty convenes second meeting

The fifth-term Commission on Poverty (CoP) convened the second meeting this afternoon (June 16).

At the meeting, members were briefed on the implementation progress of the strategy of targeted poverty alleviation. Members noted that after multidimensional analyses of different socio-economic characteristics of household groups, the Government has initially identified certain groups for targeted poverty alleviation, namely households residing in subdivided units (SDUs), single-parent households and elderly households. The Government is preparing various targeted poverty alleviation projects to cater for the needs of these groups, and will implement them as and when ready.

To provide support for SDU households, members were pleased to note that the first round of the Strive and Rise Programme, launched last October to support junior secondary school students from underprivileged families, particularly those living in SDUs, to broaden their horizons and strive for upward mobility, has been progressing well. The Government will establish an alumni club for participating students who have successfully completed the Programme such that they can keep in touch with mentors and other graduates, and provide them with activities and internship opportunities; and will enhance details of the second round of the Programme based on the implementation of the first round. In addition, the Government is planning a Community Living Room project to provide additional living space in districts for SDU households and help them establish interpersonal networks through cross-sectoral collaboration, thereby enhancing their living standards and sense of belonging to the community; and planning a one-off subsidy to improve the living environment of low-income SDU households, so as to alleviate the hardship faced by those households waiting for public rental housing and those living in poor conditions. The Government will draw up and announce details of the various projects in due course.

To provide support for families in need, particularly single-parent families, the Government plans to launch a School-based After School Care Service Pilot Scheme in the new school year for one year. With venues provided by schools, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will be responsible for the operation at venues, allowing primary school students in need to stay after school to receive care services and learning support, while enabling parents to opt for work to improve their living. Members approved the pilot scheme under the Community Care Fund (CCF), with total estimated funding of \$99.02 million. The Pilot Scheme is expected to benefit about 3 000 children. The Government will firm up details of the Scheme, appoint NGOs to provide care services, and identify primary schools with a greater preponderance of target students as well as invite them to help identify target students from Primary One to Primary Six to participate in the Scheme.

To offer care to the elderly, the Government is considering inviting the District Services and Community Care Teams in the 18 districts to pay visits and deliver care to singletons, doubletons and households in which all members are elderly persons. Care Teams will introduce and encourage them to use the existing support services of the Government and resources of the community, and refer cases to the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for follow-up as needed. The Government will draw up and announce details of the project in due course.

At the meeting, members took note of the progress and financial position of the various assistance programmes under the CCF. In addition to the above-mentioned School-based After School Care Service Pilot Scheme, members approved under the CCF a Trial Scheme on Special Allowance for Households of Transitional Housing to be implemented by the Housing Bureau. The Trial Scheme will provide a subsidy to households residing in the transitional housing projects under the Funding Scheme to Support Transitional Housing Projects by NGOs in support of their removal and adaption to the new living environment and community. The total estimated funding for the Trial Scheme, expected to benefit about 35 000 persons, is about \$85.2 million. The Housing Bureau plans to introduce the Trial Scheme and receive applications from eligible persons in August 2023.