

First round Anti-epidemic Fund making good progress

The Chief Secretary for Administration and Chairman of the Anti-epidemic Fund Steering Committee, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, today (April 16) said that following the Legislative Council Finance Committee's approval of the \$30-billion funding application for the first round Anti-epidemic Fund, the 24 measures under the Fund had been rolled out progressively. Over \$8 billion has already been disbursed under the Fund. Good progress has been made and many businesses and members of the public are gradually receiving subsidies.

The application period for the Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme launched under the Fund ended on April 12. About 93 000 applications from retailers were received, and about \$800 million in subsidies have been approved. Depending on the vetting progress of applications, it is expected that the disbursement of subsidies could be largely completed by end April.

The Chief Executive announced on April 8 a series of measures to help businesses stay afloat, keep workers in employment, relieve financial burdens of individuals and businesses and assist the economy to recover once the epidemic is contained. To implement the relevant measures, the Government will seek the Legislative Council Finance Committee's funding approval of \$137.5 billion tomorrow (April 17). The funding includes an injection of \$120.5 billion to the Fund to roll out the second round of measures to provide further assistance or relief to members of the public and enterprises hard hit by the current epidemic or affected by anti-epidemic measures.

"I earnestly hope that Legislative Council Members would support and approve this significant funding application at the Finance Committee meeting tomorrow so that the relevant measures could be implemented as soon as possible to address the pressing needs of the community promptly," Mr Cheung said.