

## LCQ12: Supporting the operators of scheduled premises and their employees

Following is a question by the Hon Jeffrey Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, in the Legislative Council today (February 24):

Question:

To cope with the epidemic, the Government made the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirement and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) in March last year, and has since invoked the Regulation on a number of occasions to direct scheduled premises to suspend operation during a specified period. Some operators of such premises have relayed to me that their applications for subsidies made to the Anti-epidemic Fund (the Fund) have been approved but the subsidies have not been disbursed to them after a protracted period of time. As a result, they are on the brink of closing down due to cash flow problems, and their employees have to take prolonged no-pay leave and are unable to sustain their living. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the dates on which, and the total up-to-date number of days for which, the various types of scheduled premises suspended operation pursuant to the requirements of Cap. 599F, as well as the respective estimated numbers of affected employees in the various types of such premises;

(2) of the latest implementation situation of the various support measures for scheduled premises introduced by the Government under the Fund, including (i) the number of applications received, (ii) the number of applications for which subsidies have been disbursed, (iii) the number of applications for which approval has been given but subsidies have not yet been disbursed, (iv) the average amount of subsidy granted for each approved application, (v) the total amount of subsidies disbursed, and (vi) the current balance of the commitment (set out in a table by name of measure); and

(3) of the further measures in place to assist the operators of scheduled premises and their employees in tiding over the difficult times?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted relevant policy bureaux and departments, our response to the Hon Lam's question is set out below:

(1) The dates on which, and the total number of days for which, various scheduled premises suspended operation pursuant to the requirements of Cap. 599F are detailed at Annex. The Government does not compile statistics on the

number of employees for the scheduled premises.

(2) The Government established the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF) last year to enhance Hong Kong's capability in combating the coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) epidemic and to provide timely assistance or relief to enterprises and members of the public hard hit by the epidemic or affected by anti-epidemic measures. The AEF Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration considers and approves proposals for initiatives, and oversees and coordinates matters relating to the operation of AEF.

Since the establishment of AEF, the Government has been regularly submitting reports on the implementation progress of various AEF measures to the Legislative Council, including the number of applications received and approved, the amount of subsidy disbursed, etc. The latest report was submitted on February 19, 2021 and uploaded onto [www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/fc/fc/papers/fc20200221fc-115-1-e.pdf](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/fc/fc/papers/fc20200221fc-115-1-e.pdf). Members may make reference to the aforementioned report for the implementation progress of individual measures.

(3) The Government recognises that many businesses and individuals have done their part in complying with anti-epidemic measures of the Government since the onset of COVID-19. To prevent the spread of COVID-19 in time, it is still necessary for the Government to impose restrictions on certain premises in response to the development of the epidemic. These restrictions have inevitably affected the business operators of the relevant premises. Therefore, the Government has rolled out various measures to provide relief for affected businesses and individuals over the past year or so.

As the epidemic is continuously evolving and numerous businesses and individuals are affected, the Government must take into account the affordability on the public purse when considering relief measures. We will continue to provide timely relief in a targeted approach to businesses and individuals hard hit by the pandemic based on the pandemic development, and at the same time, ensure healthy public finance to cope with unforeseen needs.