

## LCQ18: Measures to create strong impetus for growth

Following is a question by the Hon Adrian Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

There are views that Hong Kong needs to create strong impetus for growth in various aspects so as to boost the confidence of members of the public and investors in the future development of Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views pointing out that diversity in shop and product type is an important factor in elevating the consumer sentiment of members of the public, whether the authorities have studied the introduction of measures to nurture and support local creative brands and brands run by small business, with a view to expanding the scope of business development for the operators concerned and enhancing the attractiveness of the relevant brands to consumers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether survey studies have been regularly conducted on the patterns and types of night time leisure activities of interest to members of the public, in order to serve as an important basis for formulating and adjusting various short and medium term plans for "Night Vibes Hong Kong" activities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it has plans to create new tourism attractions and brands for Hong Kong in a holistic manner, such as actively lobbying the organisers of major international sports events to stage championship series in Hong Kong, as well as actively inviting world-renowned singers to hold concerts in Hong Kong, so as to transform Hong Kong into a genuine "events capital"?

Reply:

President,

There are currently over 360 000 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Hong Kong, accounting for over 98 per cent of the total number of enterprises and contributing significantly to the economic development of Hong Kong. The Government strives to maintain a free, open and business-friendly environment, and provides multi-pronged support for SMEs' innovation and development of diversified markets. The Chief Executive announced in the 2023 Policy Address a number of industry policies to develop a diversified economy, with a view to creating a strong impetus for growth and enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness.

Having consulted the Financial Secretary's Office, the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau and the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau

(CSTB), our reply to the three parts of the question is set out below:

(1) To assist SMEs in developing their businesses, the Trade and Industry Department (TID) encourages SMEs to develop brands, explore more diversified markets, and enhance their competitiveness through various funding schemes. Among others, the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales (BUD Fund) provides funding support to non-listed enterprises to develop their brands. As at end-October 2023, over 6 700 applications have been approved under the BUD Fund, involving a funding amount of over \$4.1 billion. Around 35 per cent of these applications involve projects related to developing brands. In addition, the SME Export Marketing Fund (EMF) also provides funding support for SMEs to develop their brands and businesses in overseas markets through participating in export promotion activities. As at end-October 2023, over 290 000 applications have been approved under the EMF, involving a funding amount of over \$5 billion.

Cyberport will also launch the Digital Transformation Support Pilot Programme to provide funding support for SMEs in the retail and food and beverage sectors to apply electronic payment and other digital solution packages with a view to promoting their digitalisation and enhancing their competitiveness.

In addition, the Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs under the TID and the other three SME centres (the "SME Centre" under the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, the "SME One" under the Hong Kong Productivity Council, and TecONE under the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation) also provide free information on business and government funding schemes for SMEs, as well as consultation services on different industries, including information and consultation services that assist SMEs in starting businesses.

(2) The Government launched the "Night Vibes Hong Kong" campaign in mid-September 2023, staging in collaboration with various organisations a wealth of attractive night-time events with local characteristics, covering entertainment, arts, culture, consumption and more across the city, to unite different sectors of the community and create a dynamic vibe in Hong Kong. "Night Vibes Hong Kong" provides more choices of night-time activities in Hong Kong, allowing the participation of the public and tourists according to their interest while revitalising the city's nightlife at the same time. We will continue to consider the views of the public, review the effectiveness of the campaign in a timely manner and listen to stakeholders' views on the potential future development.

All along, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) provides healthy and diverse cultural and recreational services and activities to the public, and from time to time collects views of the public on the activities provided in order to improve its services. However, it has not conducted regular surveys on services that it does not provide.

(3) The CSTB and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) have been taking proactive efforts in strengthening Hong Kong's status as the Events Capital of Asia, not only organising a series of mega events, but also supporting the

staging of large-scale events and activities in Hong Kong, including cultural, arts and performance activities, international sports competitions, international conventions and exhibitions, etc. Through promotion and publicity, we intend to attract tourists to visit Hong Kong to participate in events and experience the city and create a vibrant ambience.

For cultural and arts activities, the CSTB and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council will host the first "Hong Kong Performing Arts Expo" from October 14 to 18, 2024. It will bring together selected performing arts programmes from the international community, build a platform for outstanding performing arts of the Mainland and Hong Kong to expand overseas opportunities, and enrich tourists' experiences at the same time. In addition, the LCSD will continue to organise the "Hong Kong Pop Culture Festival" in 2024, as well as the "Asia+ Festival" which showcases the essence of culture and arts from different countries and regions. Programmes include stage performances, film screenings, exhibitions, outdoor carnival, etc., allowing tourists to experience the cultural uniqueness of Hong Kong and different regions.

The CSTB also plans to organise the "Hong Kong Fashion Design Week" in 2024 by consolidating the fashion and design promotional activities that used to be held in different months of a year. We will invite members of local fashion design, industrial and commercial sectors, as well as prominent and influential fashion brands and industry practitioners from the Mainland and overseas to join.

The six events supported by the Mega Arts and Cultural Events Fund have been successfully organised in 2023 (including Art Basel Hong Kong 2023 and Art Central 2023, etc.), and four approved events will be held in the coming months.

For sports activities, there is a record high of over 15 major international sports events with funding support through the "M" Mark System being held in Hong Kong in 2023, such as the Aramco Team Series Hong Kong, the FIA World Rallycross Championship, as well as the Hong Kong Tennis Open, attracting many tourists and members of the public to participate.

The HKTB has also launched a series of festive promotions and large-scale events with Hong Kong cultural characteristics, including the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance, "Hallo" Hong Kong Halloween, Hong Kong Cyclothon, Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, Taste Around Town, as well as the recently launched Hong Kong WinterFest and the Hong Kong New Year Countdown Celebrations to be held at the end of the year, etc. The CSTB promotes the integrated development of culture, sports and tourism, and will continue to work with the HKTB to stage large-scale local and international cultural, sports and tourism events in Hong Kong and promote these events to Mainland and overseas visitors to attract them to come to Hong Kong and participate. As and when an individual event is confirmed, we would announce the details as soon as possible.