
Chapter 3

Investing for a Caring Society

Preamble

Last year, the financial tsunami struck hard at all sectors of our community. In response, the Chief Executive put forward the strategy of “stabilising the financial system, supporting enterprises and preserving employment” to reduce unemployment. The Government also introduced a series of short-term measures to alleviate the difficulties faced by our people. Although the situation has now stabilised, the Government, in the long term, will continue to enhance the competitiveness of the grassroots through education and retraining. We will also safeguard the well-being of workers at the grassroots level and seek to prevent excessively low wages by putting in place a statutory minimum wage. As regards the disadvantaged, they need support from the Government. As Hong Kong is moving towards an ageing society, we also have to provide better support to the elderly in need. To help persons with disabilities integrate more fully into society, we need to strengthen services and support for them and their carers. All sectors of society have been mobilised to tackle the increasingly serious youth drug abuse problem. We will continue to join hands with them to combat drug abuse.

New Initiatives

We will:

- On the review of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, put forth relevant proposals on legislative amendments.
- Launch in partnership with the Family Council a “Family Friendly Company Award Scheme” to give recognition to family-friendly companies with a view to raising awareness of the business sector in promoting family core values and fostering a pro-family environment.
- Enhance access to legal aid and free legal advice service to benefit more people who cannot afford private legal fees.
- Earmark \$100 million for injection into the Supplementary Legal Aid Scheme (SLAS) fund when necessary to facilitate expansion of the scope of SLAS, so that legal aid will be made available to cover more types of cases and benefit more needy in the middle class.
- Further enhance our efforts in the development of social enterprises (SEs) by –
 - (a) introducing a “Be a Friend to Social Enterprise” Campaign to encourage corporations to pledge support for SE development;
 - (b) launching an award scheme to recognise the efforts of social entrepreneurs and to encourage successful SEs;

- (c) instituting a series of structured training programmes on SE to nurture young social entrepreneurs; and
 - (d) launching SE Fairs to raise community awareness in SEs and promote conscience consumption.
- Set up a dedicated group to enhance the support for new arrivals and ethnic minorities, to monitor the service needs of new arrivals during the adaptation period and the difficulties faced by ethnic minorities in daily life, to ensure that the support services provided by the relevant government departments could meet their needs, and to enhance co-operation with non-government organisations (NGOs) and local organisations to assist new arrivals and ethnic minorities in integrating into the society as soon as possible.
 - Provide additional places for pre-school, day and residential rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities.
 - Enhance the services of the integrated community centres for mental wellness to strengthen support for persons with mental health problems.
 - Strengthen medical social services for persons with mental health problems.
 - Provide additional pre-school rehabilitation places and strengthen medical social services for autistic children.
 - Increase the provision of subsidised places in existing and new residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs).

- Provide additional higher-quality subsidised places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme.
- Fully implement the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients and provide additional subsidised home care and day care places for the elderly.
- Enhance the support for demented elders by providing or increasing relevant supplements for subsidised RCHes and day care centres/units for the elderly.
- Relax the permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong for Old Age Allowance, so that recipients can receive a full-year allowance if they reside in Hong Kong for no less than 60 days a year.
- Launch a territory-wide Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme to subsidise employed members of low-income families in meeting their travelling expenses commuting to and from work.
- Further enhance the child care services and support for families and children in need by -
 - (a) regularising the pilot Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project and extending its geographical coverage to all 18 districts; and
 - (b) extending the Comprehensive Child Development Service to all 18 districts.
- Extend the 3,000 temporary job opportunities in subvented welfare NGOs for one year to assist young people in joining the labour market for open employment.

- Introduce pilot Cyber Youth Outreaching Projects to address the changing needs of youths, in particular the at-risk youths and hidden youths with funding support from the Lotteries Fund.
- Inject additional funds into the Trust Fund on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) to provide continued financial assistance to incumbent recipients who would likely suffer from permanent SARS-related dysfunctions.
- Introduce a bill into the Legislative Council to expand the scope of the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund to cover pay for untaken annual leave and statutory holidays under the Employment Ordinance.
- Launch extensive public education-cum-promotion campaigns and carry out rigorous enforcement action to deter breaches and tackle offenders with a view to improving employees' protection to tie in with the implementation of the statutory minimum wage and criminalisation of wilful defaults of Labour Tribunal or Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board awards.
- Intensify systematic preventive and enforcement measures, as well as enhance the regulatory system for mandatory safety training courses, so as to forestall high accident toll in the construction sector which may arise from the commencement of major infrastructure projects and expected rapid growth in building renovation and maintenance works.
- Review the existing arrangement for replacement holiday in the event a Lunar New Year holiday falls on a Sunday.

- Enhance the school social work service in secondary schools to help prevent and tackle the student drug abuse and other related problems.
- Formulate the way forward for school drug testing.
- Establish a cadet corps under the Auxiliary Medical Services to encourage young people to develop skills and leadership through participating in group activities and training.
- Further enhance public safety by bringing the United Nations (Anti-terrorism Measures) Ordinance into full operation.
- Implement the Law Reform Commission's interim proposals of launching a sexual conviction record check mechanism for child and mentally incapacitated person related work in order to enhance protection for children and mentally incapacitated persons against sexual assault.

On-going Initiatives

We are:

- Co-ordinating cross-bureau efforts in taking forward and completing HKSAR's post-quake reconstruction support work in Sichuan. Following Legislative Council's approval to inject \$9 billion into the Trust Fund in Support of Reconstruction in the Sichuan Earthquake Stricken Areas (the Trust Fund), the HKSAR Government has in three stages undertaken 151 reconstruction support projects in Sichuan. These projects cover education, medical and rehabilitation, social welfare, highway infrastructure and reconstruction of the Wolong Nature Reserve. The Trust Fund has also provided funding to Hong Kong NGOs to undertake reconstruction support projects in Sichuan.
- Continuing our work on the promotion of human rights.
- Continuing our work on facilitating ethnic minorities to integrate into the community, including sponsoring NGOs to operate support service centres and other specific support services for ethnic minorities and monitoring the implementation of the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality.
- Make practical preparations for conducting public consultation on the proposed way forward on the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission on stalking.

- Consulting the public on legislative proposals to enhance protection for consumers against unfair trade practices. We will consider public views received and prepare legislative amendments. Our target is to introduce the legislative amendments into the Legislative Council within the 2010-11 legislative session. We will continue publicity and education efforts.
- Continuing with the implementation of the District Cyber Centres scheme, to extend the support service to more affiliated centres with a view to enabling needy local residents in more districts to gain access to the rich pool of information and knowledge in cyber space.
- Continuing with the implementation of the dedicated portal for the elderly to provide one-stop information service on elderly services and the silver hair market with a view to enhancing the elderly's access to the rich pool of online information and services and expanding their circles of life through the Internet.
- Actively planning for the launch of a five-year programme to help primary and secondary students from low-income families acquire suitable and affordable computers and Internet access for on-line learning at home, and to provide necessary training and technical support to these students and their parents on safe and healthy use of the Internet.
- Working closely with the Ping Wo Fund Advisory Committee on the use of the Ping Wo Fund to finance public education to prevent gambling-related problems, to provide counselling and support services to pathological gamblers, and to conduct research on studies on gambling-related issues.

- Together with the Social Enterprise Advisory Committee and other stakeholders, encouraging the further development of social enterprises to foster a caring society. We will continue to implement the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme.
- Continuing to work with the Family Council to promote pro-family environment; to further promote the importance of family education; and to study and address problems from a family perspective.
- Continuing to work with the Family Council on a territory-wide “Happy Family Campaign” to further promote family core values, with a view to encouraging the community to attach importance to the family, and to foster a culture of loving families.
- Continuing through the Family Council to co-ordinate and liaise with other relevant stakeholders in enriching the “Happy Family Info Hub”, to promote family core values, introduce family education and support services for the family.
- Continuing with the preparatory work for setting up a pioneer one-stop employment and training centre in Tin Shui Wai to streamline, integrate and enhance the existing employment and training/retraining services of the Labour Department, Social Welfare Department and Employees Retraining Board.

- Preparing legislative proposal, in consultation with stakeholders, to empower the Labour Tribunal to make a compulsory order for reinstatement or re-engagement of an employee who has been dismissed unreasonably and unlawfully, and to require the employer to pay a further sum to the employee for failing to comply with such an order.
- Undertaking a review of the definition of continuous employment under the Employment Ordinance based on the statistical data collected on employees not engaged under a continuous contract, and continuing to consult relevant stakeholders in the process.
- Continuing to promote family-friendly employment practices through publicity activities with a view to encouraging wider adoption of such practices in the workplace.
- Continuing to adopt an integrated approach to promote the awareness of employers and employees on how to differentiate between an employee and a self-employed person with a view to protecting employees' rights and benefits.
- Continuing enforcement action against wage offences.
- Continuing with intelligence-based and proactive strategy in combating illegal employment.
- Continuing to review the Code of Practice for Safe Use of Tower Cranes and consult stakeholders of the construction industry on the proposed amendments.
- Continuing to implement short-term food assistance services.

- Co-ordinating efforts across the Government in poverty alleviation through the Task Force on Poverty.
- Monitoring the implementation of the first two batches of Child Development Fund projects and considering the timing for rolling out subsequent batches.
- Providing support to the Women's Commission in promoting the interests and well-being of women through the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women, including the Capacity Building Mileage Programme, and public education.
- Continuing to apply the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist or the concept in different policy areas progressively, and working with the Women's Commission to further promote gender mainstreaming.
- Continuing with the study on long-term social welfare planning.
- Continuing to implement and further develop the batterer intervention programme; and continuing to implement the anti-violence programme for abusers as provided under the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance.
- Continuing to prevent and tackle domestic violence through public education and enhanced training for related professionals.
- Continuing to implement the pilot project on Child Fatality Review.

- Continuing to implement the Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence to enhance support services for victims of domestic violence, including those undergoing the judicial process.
- Monitoring the implementation of the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance.
- Enhancing transport services for persons with disabilities through improvements to rebus service, and examining ways of further improving accessibility of transport services.
- Promoting the spirit and core values enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, the rehabilitation sector and the community at large.
- Continuing to implement the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities so as to strengthen community support for persons with severe disabilities and their carers.
- Continuing the legislative exercise for the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Bill and undertaking preparatory work for implementation of a statutory licensing scheme on the residential care homes for persons with disabilities so as to ensure their service quality.
- Continuing to implement the Pilot Bought Place Scheme for Private Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities to help the market develop more service options for persons with disabilities.

- Upgrading subsidised residential care places to provide long-term care for frail elders.
- Subsidising outreaching services to help singleton and hidden elders develop social life, and strengthening the referral, counselling and support services to elders in need.
- Helping needy elders who live in dilapidated homes improve their home conditions through the Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly.
- Training additional Enrolled Nurses for the welfare sector.
- Working with the Elderly Commission to study how community care services can be enhanced to help elders age at home.
- Continuing with the pilot scheme to provide residential care homes for the elderly with visiting pharmacist services to strengthen their capability in drug management.
- Continuing with the District-based Scheme on Carer Training to strengthen the support to carers of elders.
- Continuing with the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders to provide tailor-made services for elders waiting for nursing home places.
- Continuing to develop elder academies and promote inter-generational integration in collaboration with the Elderly Commission and the Elder Academy Development Foundation Committee.

- Continuing to help Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients become self-reliant and integrate into the community through various support schemes.
- Continuing to implement in phases a series of measures to enhance training and retraining services, in accordance with the recommendations of the strategic review on the future directions of the Employees Retraining Board.
- Encouraging schools to collaborate with NGOs in providing school-based after-school learning and support services for needy students.
- Maintaining supply of public rental housing (PRH) for low-income households with housing needs with an average waiting time of around three years.
- Inviting NGOs for enhanced partnering functions with Estate Management Advisory Committees to promote community building and neighbourliness in public rental housing estates.
- Implementing a set of enhanced public housing arrangements to promote mutual family support and care for the elderly.
- Continuing to facilitate the implementation of an elderly housing project by the Hong Kong Housing Society on Tanner Road, North Point.
- Installing as far as practicable lifts/escalators connecting common areas in hillside public housing estates and lifts in low-rise public housing blocks without lifts to facilitate access of residents.

- Taking forward feasibility studies for the higher-ranking proposals under the assessment system for the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems.
- Implementing a series of measures to tackle the youth drug abuse problem, following long-term, holistic and sustainable policies recommended by the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse led by the Secretary for Justice; and sustaining the enhanced efforts championed by the Chief Executive's Anti-drug Campaign. Major initiatives include –
 - (a) sustaining the territory-wide campaign against youth drug abuse to enhance community awareness and mobilise support from different sectors to tackle the problem;
 - (b) continuing to organise youth anti-drug abuse community programmes in the 18 districts to cultivate positive values amongst youngsters to steer them away from drugs;
 - (c) encouraging a wider use of hair drug testing services in the community;
 - (d) drawing up proposals to invite new and effective models of drug treatment and rehabilitation services; and
 - (e) continuing with rigorous law enforcement action, notably against cross-boundary drug abuse and trafficking.
- Seeking to implement the recommendations put forward by the Working Group on Mediation taking into account the public comments received.