

SAR Government implements measures to strengthen support for SEs

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, said today (November 21) that as the operating environment of social enterprises (SEs) would become more difficult amid the financial tsunami, the SAR Government would implement various measures to strengthen the support for them.

“In these difficult times, we are more in need of SEs,” he said.

Speaking at the Social Enterprise Summit – International Symposium on Social Entrepreneurship and Social Change today, Mr Tsang said the aim of the SAR Government in promoting SEs was to enable the socially disadvantaged to be self-reliant through employment. In these difficult times, SEs can cultivate a caring culture as well as promote social cohesion and mutual help. The objective of developing SE is to build the values of a civil society.

He said the SAR Government would, therefore, step up efforts in various areas to support SEs:

Operational support

- The SAR Government will monitor the overall economic situation and the financial position of the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme to ensure that the grants are adequate in the next few years and will consider allocating more funding to the programme if necessary.

- If the SEs supported by the Partnership Programme may not be able to achieve a fiscal balance in view of the worsening operating environment amid the financial tsunami, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) will help arrange voluntary mentors from the business and professional sectors to assist SEs in examining their operations and carrying out reforms. If a practical and feasible improvement plan could be worked out, the Government will consider providing extra financial support for SEs.

Enhance promotion of SEs

- Introducing measures to further enhance public understanding of SEs. The HAD has set aside \$8 million in 2008-09 to promote SEs by launching promotional work in all 18 districts.

- Preparing for the publication of a new SE booklet to introduce more SE cases; and updating the information on the SE website and directory.

Promote cross-sector collaboration

- Encouraging more private enterprises and professionals to participate in promoting SE development; launching new SE projects through the matching forum.

Nurture more social entrepreneurs

- Commissioning the Centre for Entrepreneurship of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to collaborate with eight other tertiary institutions to organise the “Hong Kong Social Enterprise Challenge 2008” to encourage tertiary students to submit business plans so as to nurture social entrepreneurship from a young age.

Procurement policy

- The measure of giving eligible SEs priority in bidding Government service contracts will continue next year.

Under four phases of applications, the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme has approved a total grant of about \$76 million to some 80 SE projects, creating about 1,400 job opportunities for the socially disadvantaged.

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