

## Economic Development Commission holds fourth meeting

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The Economic Development Commission (EDC), under the leadership of the Chief Executive, Mr C Y Leung, held its fourth meeting at the Central Government Offices today (February 20).

The meeting discussed issues relating to talents and manpower for future economic development in Hong Kong. Members also provided views on the ongoing population policy consultation.

The EDC was also briefed on the work progress of its four working groups, namely the Working Group on Transportation (TWG), the Working Group on Convention and Exhibition Industries and Tourism (CETWG), the Working Group on Manufacturing Industries, Innovative Technology, and Cultural and Creative Industries (MICWG), and the Working Group on Professional Services (PSWG).

The MICWG has made the following specific recommendations: (i) allow more young design talents to attend overseas work attachment; (ii) further refine the current Innovation and Technology Fund to better encourage research and development (R&D) activities and commercialisation of R&D outcomes; (iii) encourage companies to employ R&D talents; and (iv) strengthen the incubation programmes administered by quasi-government or Government-funded bodies (including the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, Cyberport and the Hong Kong Design Centre).

The PSWG has drawn up preliminary proposals under five themes, namely (i) to pursue trade agreements for further trade liberalisation in professional services by enhancing government-to-government liaison with the Mainland and overseas economies; (ii) to identify opportunities for Hong Kong's positioning in the National Five-Year Plans to enhance collaborative development between the two places' professional services; (iii) to promote the Hong Kong brand and elevate competitiveness of the professional services; (iv) to support the professional service sectors to access emerging and other potential markets; and (v) to foster cross-sectoral support to professional services. In collaboration with the stakeholders, the PSWG is developing these proposals in detail.

The TWG supports the Government's establishment of the Maritime and Aviation Training Fund and proposal to consider setting up a civil aviation training institute in Hong Kong. The TWG also supports the consultancy recommendation to set up a new

statutory maritime body to drive the long-term development of the maritime industry, and is exploring the potential of promoting aircraft financing and the measures for promoting maritime arbitration in Hong Kong.

The CETWG has discussed tourism development in Hong Kong and agreed that Lantau Island has great potential for developing tourism attractions and facilities for tourists from our preferred market segments. It also notes that the Government has just commissioned a demand study for new convention and exhibition facilities in Hong Kong.

"The working groups are making good progress. I am delighted to see that all working groups have laid down their initial directions or recommendations. The MICWG has made some specific recommendations which have been endorsed by the EDC at this meeting. The Government will proceed with the planning of the implementation arrangements for the recommendations. I am confident that the working groups will put forward further concrete recommendations to the EDC to assist the Government in promoting and broadening the economic base of Hong Kong," said Mr Leung.

Relevant government bureaux and departments will continue to work closely with the four working groups with a view to assisting them in drawing up further recommendations to support the development of the industries concerned.

The terms of reference of the EDC are to provide visionary direction and advice to the Government on the overall strategy and policy to broaden Hong Kong's economic base and to enhance Hong Kong's economic growth and development, and in particular explore and identify growth sectors or clusters of sectors which present opportunities for Hong Kong's further economic growth and recommend possible policy and other support for these industries.

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