

2021 Policy Address: Normalise epidemic-control and expedite economic recovery

The Chief Executive, Mr Ho Iat Seng, today said the overall direction of public policy for 2021 would cover: epidemic prevention and control; revitalising the economy; caring for people's livelihoods; promoting economic diversification; facilitating reform; and pursuing innovative development.

Mr Ho delivered this afternoon at the Legislative Assembly the Policy Address for the Fiscal Year 2021, titled "Strengthening the foundation for consolidation, tackling challenges head on", in which he outlined 10 major strands of public policy.

This is the second policy address since the Chief Executive took the office on 20 December 2019.

The first strand was to "normalise epidemic prevention and control". Prevention of imported cases and of a rebound of the epidemic in Macao were to be priorities of the epidemic prevention strategy. Meanwhile, the Government would reinforce regional joint prevention and control efforts; strive to expedite vaccine supplies; and plan for a temporary hospital facility constructed from portable cabin units as a contingency measure.

The second strand of public policy was to “expedite economic recovery and revitalisation” . The Government would actively participate in the country’ s dual economic cycle; and step up effort to expedite recovery and development of the local tourism industry.

To accelerate recovery of the local economy, the Government has proposed to increase investments in infrastructure, including implementing the construction of transport infrastructure such as the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) East Line, the LRT Hengqin Port Connection, and the fourth Macao-Taipa cross-harbour route.

The Chief Executive also pointed out the need to promote stable and healthy development of the gaming industry, and to commence preparatory and preliminary work for the new gaming concessions.

In the third strand of public policy for 2021 – “promote adequate economic diversification” – Mr Ho said the Government would bolster effort in the repositioning of industrial development; expedite development of a modern financial services industry and the establishment of a bond market; promote industrialisation of traditional Chinese medicine; facilitate professional and market-orientated development of the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) industry; gradually foster cross-boundary e-

commerce businesses; promote commercialisation of culture and sport; enhance support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); perfect technological innovation mechanisms and systems; and facilitate integration of the industrial, academic and research and development sectors.

When introducing the fourth strand – “continue optimising work for people's well-being” – the Chief Executive stressed that welfare and livelihood expenditures would not be affected by the Government’s austerity measures, and the Government would continue implementing existing basic beneficial measures for the public.

A number of welfare measures would be continued in 2021. They included: the Wealth Partaking Scheme; personal income tax waiver and deduction initiatives; a property tax waiver; water and electricity tariff subsidies for eligible residential and general non-residential users; a healthcare voucher scheme; and subsidies for disadvantaged families.

Mr Ho also pledged to safeguard giving priority to local residents regarding employment, while enhancing medical and healthcare facilities and systems.

Regarding public housing policies, the Government would spare no effort in guaranteeing minimum living conditions for

local residents, and the orderly implementation of the housing ladder policy.

In 2021, the Government planned to: commence the process for detailed assessment of the applications for the first batch of 3,011 Home-Ownership Scheme housing units; expedite the design and construction of the housing project for senior citizens at Lot P of Areia Preta; implement the Venceslau de Moraes and Tamagnini Barbosa public housing projects; and complete the Mong Ha public housing project.

“Deepen public administration reform” was the fifth strand of policy outlined in the Policy Address. Mr Ho said the Government would step up effort for development of digital government – in particular such development for commonly-used public services – with a view to enhancing administrative effectiveness.

Regarding public services, the Government would continue to implement restructuring of public departments; amend the laws and regulations related to the delegation-of-authority mechanism; review the current system for deploying public servants; and implement management of government human resources; as well as enhance the mechanism for nurturing talented managers in public administration.

Mr Ho also stated the Government would optimise the legal system relating to corporations with public capital; strengthen supervision of autonomous funds, and reform the management and funding-approval systems of Macao Foundation as well as other autonomous funds; and strengthen auditing and supervision, and encourage public departments to optimise the use of public funds.

Mr Ho explained the Government' s vision for the sixth strand of public policy mentioned in the 2021 Policy Address – “develop Macao through cultivating and importing talented people” .

The Government would formulate the Medium- to Long-Term Plan for Non-tertiary Education (2021-2030) and the Macao Youth Policy (2021-2030), while pragmatically facilitating industrialisation based on research results of tertiary institutions and establishment of the University Industrial Park.

Macao would make use of Macao' s functions as a Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area tourism education and training base, and as a centre for cultivating talented individuals who are bilingual in Chinese and Portuguese. Macao would also make use of its function as a patriotic-education base for young people.

The Government would offer stronger support for youth entrepreneurship and innovative development; enable young people to learn, work, exchange ideas and knowledge, and live in mainland China; and participate in overall national development.

Meanwhile, the Government would formulate the overall strategy on talent development and the laws and regulations related to importing talented people, and develop an innovative mechanism for talent assessment.

According to the 2021 Policy Address, the seventh strand of public policy was in relation to the Government's effort to "promote the development of a smart and liveable city" .

It covered planning to promote the urban governance system and governance modernisation. Next year, the Government would announce Macao's Urban Master Plan (2020-2040), and commence the detailed planning for all functional zones; expedite the legislative process for the Legal System Governing Urban Renewal; improve cross-harbour traffic between Macao and Taipa; commence the Macao Road Traffic and Transport Planning Study (2021-2030); establish a new entry system for Macao's air transportation market; and study marine zoning based on functions and planning of maritime areas.

The Government would also: strengthen measures for the prevention of, or where necessary response to, disasters; improve flood control and resilience for the Inner Harbour; intensify environmental protection and waste reduction; and construct in phases a round-the-island leisure walkway on Coloane island.

“Establish a base for cultural exchanges and cooperation” was the eighth policy strand outlined by the Chief Executive during this afternoon’s session at the Legislative Assembly.

The Government proposed to set up the Committee for Establishment of a Base for Cultural Exchanges and Cooperation; facilitate legislation on protection and management of the Historic Centre of Macao; and merge the Culture Fund and the Cultural Industry Fund; as well as supporting development of sports; and revising the planning and optimising of selected sports facilities.

The ninth strand was to “safeguard national security and social stability”. The Government would strive to perfect the legal system and law enforcement system for safeguarding national security; continue promoting the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China and the Basic Law of the Macao SAR; ensure a fair, impartial, open and clean seventh Legislative Assembly election of the Macao SAR; enhance law enforcement capability to maintain law and order in the Macao

SAR; strengthen cybersecurity protection capability; strengthen the regional police collaboration mechanism; and prevent infiltration and interference by external forces.

The tenth strand of public policy for 2021 was “proactively integrate into the overall national development plan” . The Chief Executive gave fresh insights regarding how to align with the country’ s 14th Five-Year Plan; facilitate the establishment of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin; expedite the establishment of the Macao New Neighbourhood project in Hengqin; pragmatically promote the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; and participate in, and support, the development of the “Belt and Road” initiative

Part of phase-two of the Macao boundary-crossing area at the Hengqin Port and adjoining areas was expected to commence operations by the end of 2021; while a new Guangdong-Macao boundary-crossing checkpoint, called Qingmao Checkpoint, would be inaugurated in 2021.

Mr Ho said the Government would study how to enable Macao vehicles to enter and travel around Guangdong via the Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macao Bridge. In addition, the Government would explore initiatives to improve measures that enhance the convenience of Macao residents wishing to

work and reside in mainland China cities of the Greater Bay Area.

The Government would foster effort to facilitate the establishment of a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, and spare no effort in assisting with organising the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries.