

Government launches measures to energise HK films

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau announced today (July 13) that the Government will earmark around \$260 million under the Film Development Fund (FDF) to implement five major measures to increase the number of local film productions, nurture young directors and scriptwriting talents and enhance professional training, with a view to adding value to the trade, helping the trade tide over this difficult period and re-energising Hong Kong's film industry.

The five major measures are the Directors' Succession Scheme; relaxation of the Film Production Financing Scheme (FPFS); the Scriptwriting Incubation Programme; short-term advanced training programmes, organised by the Federation of Hong Kong Filmmakers and the Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild; and implementation of the enhanced First Feature Film Initiative (FFFI).

"As a result of social events and the epidemic, local film production and investment have shrunk, posing acute challenges to the trade and practitioners in the past year. The Government is therefore committed to providing multi-pronged support for the trade to go through this difficult period and sustaining the success story of Hong Kong films," the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said.

"The measures respond to the needs of film practitioners of different fields and provide platforms for them to showcase their talents, thereby injecting fresh impetus into the industry," the Chairman of the Hong Kong Film Development Council, Dr Wilfred Wong, said.

The five major measures to energise Hong Kong films are set out below:

(1) Directors' Succession Scheme

Qualified directors are invited to partner with one to two young directors to co-produce films, with earmarked funding of around \$100 million to subsidise 10 to 12 local film productions. Each film will be granted a subsidy of around \$9 million. The Scheme serves the purpose of encouraging directors to groom young talents, and to enhance the quality and quantity of local film productions. Directors who have accepted invitations to join the first round of the Scheme include Derek Yee, Wong Kar-wai, Peter Chan, Gordon Chan, and Mabel Cheung and Alex Law (as a duo). They will partner with young directors Keane Wong, Ronald Zee, Wong Chun, Ralph Chau and Norris Wong respectively.

(2) Relaxation of the FPFS

To increase the number of local film productions in the short term and

render relief to film practitioners, the Government will increase the actual financing amount, investors will be granted priority to recover half of their investment, and disbursement will also be made earlier. The measures are expected to benefit over 10 film productions, involving government financing of \$100 million.

(3) Scriptwriting Incubation Programme

The Programme encourages current scriptwriters and would-be scriptwriters to join the profession and/or produce high-quality scripts. With earmarked funding of around \$8 million, it is expected that around 40 quality scripts will be incubated.

(4) Sponsoring the trade to provide free short-term advanced training courses

The Federation of Hong Kong Filmmakers and the Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild have been subsidised with a total of \$20 million to organise for the trade, with tuition fees exempted, the Skills Programme for Hong Kong Filmmakers and the Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild's In-depth Professional Training respectively, so as to add value to the industry.

(5) Enhancement of the FFFI

In the sixth edition, the maximum number of winning teams under the FFFI was increased to six, and the production budget for the Higher Education Institution Group has been raised to \$5 million (previous cap: \$3.25 million) and that of the Professional Group to \$8 million (previous cap: \$5.5 million).

The 6th FFFI saw a total of 55 applications, representing an 80 per cent increase. The winning teams will receive funding from the FDF to implement their winning film proposals and make their first commercial feature films. They are required to complete the whole film production and sales process, which involves planning, shooting and distribution, and the teams will be provided with ample opportunities to acquire practical knowledge in making a feature film along the way. Details of the winning entries are in the Annex.

The FDF was first set up in 1999. Over the years, it has funded about 60 film productions and groomed about 40 new directors and 19 new producers through various FDF subsidy schemes, and the productions have won in total more than 110 local and overseas awards. Since 2005, together with the \$1 billion injection in 2019, the Government has injected a total of \$1.54 billion into the FDF to support the local film industry along four strategic directions, namely nurturing talent, enhancing local production, expanding markets and building the audience.