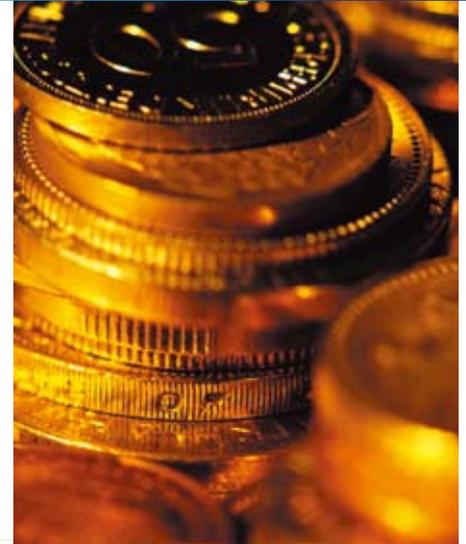


National budget brings better standard of living

Civil Service Training and Development Institute,
Civil Service Bureau

■ THE draft central and local budgets for 2008 were approved by the National People's Congress on March 18. According to the draft budgets, total national revenue for this year will amount to about 5.85 trillion yuan, approximately 720 billion yuan more than that in 2007; national expenditures will reach more than 6.07 trillion yuan, an increase of over 1.12 trillion yuan; expenditures in the central budget will be above 3.48 trillion yuan.



According to the draft budgets, funds are allocated to the following areas to improve people's livelihoods:

Agriculture, rural areas and farmers

Expenditures in the central budget for agriculture, rural areas and farmers will total nearly 563 billion yuan, a substantial increase of more than 130 billion yuan or 30% over last year, an historic high. Various subsidies to grain-producing farmers will reach almost 74.4 billion yuan; this is up from some 13 billion yuan when the subsidy policy was first implemented in 2003.

Education

Education spending will exceed 156 billion yuan this year, an increase of 45%. A total of over 57 billion yuan, an increase of about 20.5 billion yuan over last year, will be allocated by the Central Government to guarantee funding for operating expenses for compulsory education in rural areas. An allocation of 22.3 billion yuan, an increase of 12.5 billion yuan over last year, will be made to fund assistance to students from poor families attending regular undergraduate institutions, vocational colleges and secondary vocational schools. The Central Government will also allocate 8.4 billion yuan to exempt all urban students from paying tuition and miscellaneous education fees for compulsory education beginning in the 2008 autumn school term.

Medical and health care

To address the problem of ordinary citizens not receiving proper health care because it is "too difficult and too

expensive to see a doctor", nearly 250 billion yuan will be spent on medical services and health care. Of this sum, about 83.2 billion yuan, an increase of 25% over the same period last year, will be spent by the Central Government mainly to support improvements in the system of public health services and deepen reform of drug and health management systems.

Social safety net

In 2008, national expenditures on the social safety net and employment efforts will total more than 668.4 billion yuan. Of this, over 276.1 billion yuan, an increase of more than 24%, will be spent on increasing minimum living allowances, raising old-age pensions and promoting employment. Minimum living allowances for rural residents will be raised from 30 yuan to 50 yuan per person per month while allowances for urban residents will be doubled from their 2007 level. In addition, the Central Government will, for the first time, appropriate 6.8 billion yuan for the establishment of a sound guarantee system for low-rent housing.

Chen Zhiyong, Dean of the School of Finance and Taxation, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, pointed out that the Central Government's allocations to low income areas have increased by more than 22.6%, it is therefore evident that the central budget this year is focused on improving people's living standards.

Source: Xinhua.net

Senior staff on the move



Name	Post	Effective from
Ma Lee-tak	Director of Water Supplies	March 3, 2008
Peter Lau Ka-keung	Director of Drainage Services	March 10, 2008
Michael Chan Chi-pui	Controller, Government Flying Service	March 27, 2008
Jeremy Richard Godfrey	Government Chief Information Officer	April 7, 2008

Reappointment of Chairman of the Public Service Commission

The Government has re-appointed Nicholas Ng Wing-fui as the Chairman of the Public Service Commission for a term of three years with effect from May 1, 2008. He was first appointed as Chairman of the commission in May 2005.