

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

Maintenance and development of cordial and constructive working relationships with the Central People's Government, other Mainland authorities and the Macao Special Administrative Region Government

Introduction

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs held on 31 October, Members requested the Constitutional Affairs Bureau (CAB) to provide information on how CAB assists bureaux and departments of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government in maintaining and developing cordial and constructive working relationships with the Central People's Government (CPG), other Mainland authorities and the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government. This papers aims to furnish Members with the relevant information.

Working relationships with CPG and other Mainland authorities

2. In the past three years, many bureaux and departments of HKSAR Government have established working contacts with CPG and other Mainland authorities in accordance with the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle. Such contacts have enhanced our mutual understanding with each other.

3. In the Mainland, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council (HKMAO) is responsible for co-ordinating matters relating to contacts

between Mainland authorities of various levels and the HKSAR Government. Within the HKSAR Government, CAB is responsible for liaising with the HKMAO to assist the relevant parties on both sides in establishing contacts expeditiously and effectively, organizing visits as necessary, and to ensure that these contacts are conducted in line with the principles of “One Country, Two System” and “a high degree of autonomy”. Our task is to maintain the smooth functioning of the existing channels of co-operation and communication, so that officials on both sides can enhance mutual understanding and promote exchanges and co-operation through various forms of contact. In addition, we will continue to assist bureaux and departments to establish new communication channels and develop working relationships with the relevant Mainland authorities.

4. Official contacts between Hong Kong and the Mainland and co-operation have been on the increase since Reunification. The total number of official visits to and from the Mainland in the past five years are as follows –

	Hong Kong official delegations visiting the Mainland	Mainland official delegations visiting Hong Kong	Total number of delegations
1996	846	921	1,767
1997	1,152	836	1,988
1998	1,121	909	2,030
1999	1,581	1,046	2,627
2000 (Jan-Sept)	981	858	1,839

5. Through various forms of contact, such as conferences, training and study visits, officials on both sides have not only gained a better understanding of their counterparts, but also established a solid basis for cordial co-operation. For examples, Hong Kong and Mainland courts have made arrangements for the reciprocal service of judicial documents and enforcement of arbitral awards; we have strengthened our co-operation with the Mainland in combating smuggling activities as well as in protecting intellectual property; a joint trade liaison commission has been set up to provide a direct communication channel between trade and economic departments on both sides; we have also established a notification mechanism to inform each other cases involving criminal compulsory measures taken against Hong Kong residents in the Mainland or Mainland residents who have been prosecuted for criminal offence in Hong Kong.

Working relationship with the Macao Special Administrative Region

6. Since Macao's reunification in December 1999, like Hong Kong, it has become a special administrative region directly under the CPG which enjoys a high degree of autonomy. CAB plays the role of co-ordinator in assisting bureaux and departments of the HKSAR Government to establish contacts with their counterparts in MSAR Government. From January to September, 2000, a total of 210 official visits to and from Macao were recorded. Through these contacts, officials on both sides have exchanged views on various areas, including mutual exchanges of the police forces and the promotion of occupational safety.

7. CAB will continue to advise bureaux and departments on matters relating to official contacts between Hong Kong and Macao. Acting as a bridge between HKSAR Government departments and their counterparts in MSAR Government, CAB will assist both sides to establish initial contacts and encourage them to develop channels of direct communication on matters of mutual concern.

Constitutional Affairs Bureau

December 2000