

15.1 At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA), Mr LAM Woon-kwong, highlighted the key programme areas of the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) for which provisions were being sought in 2002-03 (Appendix V-14).

Training for elite athletes

15.2 Mr IP Kwok-him noted that the provision for elite training by the Hong Kong Sports Development Board (SDB) in 2002-03 was \$135 million, of which \$87.9 million (i.e. 3.58% of the overall provision for recreation and sport in 2002-03) would be funded by the Government. He questioned whether this level of provision would be adequate for providing training to enable Hong Kong athletes to achieve good results in forthcoming major events such as the Asian Games and the Olympics. Mr NG Leung-sing expressed similar concern over the reduction in recurrent subvention to SDB from \$190.5 million in 2001-02 to \$189.7 million in 2002-03 and asked whether training resources would be targeted at certain sports.

15.3 In response, SHA clarified that although the overall government subvention to SDB would be slightly reduced in 2002-03, the total amount allocated for elite training in 2002-03 would be of a similar level to that in 2001-02. Moreover, the amount provided for elite training by SDB in 2002-03 would also be increased by \$3 million over that for 2001-02. SHA further advised that apart from funding support, both the Administration and SDB had carried out a lot of work to promote the training for elite athletes and this had contributed to the good performance of Hong Kong athletes in major international events. To raise the professional standards of athletes and to rationalize the allocation of resources to meet the needs of sports development in Hong Kong, the Administration had initiated a review of the policy on sports development in 2001. A consultation paper would be published to solicit views of the community upon completion of the review shortly.

15.4 Regarding Mr NG Leung-sing's concern about the cost-effectiveness of the resources put into elite training, SHA stressed that the performance of the athletes should not be judged solely by the number of medals they won. Whether the athletes had done their best and broken their own records was equally important. He undertook to provide a breakdown of the allocation for elite training for members' reference after the meeting.

Rights of the individual

15.5 Ms Emily LAU enquired about the results of the consultation on the review of the need for legislation against racial discrimination in the private sector and the way forward.

15.6 In response, SHA advised that the first phase of consultation ended on 30 September 2001. The business community was consulted and 25 responses were received. While all the respondents agreed that education should be stepped up, 16 of them, mostly overseas chambers of commerce, were broadly in favour of legislation. Of the remaining nine respondents, mostly local trade associations, six were opposed to legislation and three had no views. The second phase ended on 28 February 2002. Views were sought from more than 50 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations with an interest in the issue and some of the responses were still awaited. The Administration would report the results of the consultation to the Panel on Home Affairs once they were available. No new provision would be required for the review in 2002-03 as the related work would be undertaken by existing staff of the Bureau.

15.7 Referring to the establishment of the new Race Relations Unit, Ms Emily LAU asked whether the Administration had decided to tackle the issue through education and publicity work of the Unit instead of by legislation. In response, SHA confirmed that the HAB had all along planned to establish the Unit to enhance race-related services, irrespective of whether or not legislation against racial discrimination would be introduced. Pending the results of public consultation, the Administration had not decided on whether a legislative approach should be taken.

15.8 In reply to Mr Albert HO 's question about how enquiries and complaints related to racial discrimination received by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) would be followed up and the resources allocated for such work, the Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1) (DS(HA)1) advised that since racial discrimination was outside the jurisdiction of EOC, the latter had been referring such enquiries and complaints to HAB for follow-up. He supplemented that at present, co-ordination of racial issues was the responsibility of a Principal Assistant Secretary in HAB who was underpinned by one Assistant Secretary and two Executive Officers. The number of staff responsible for racial issues would

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be increased to eight with the establishment of the Race Relations Unit.

15.9 On the protection of the rights of the individual, in particular the enhancement of the public's knowledge of their legal rights, Miss Margaret NG pointed out that volunteer lawyers had spent considerable time to provide free legal advice to the public each year. She considered that the Government should allocate more resources to strengthen similar services to the community.

15.10 SHA advised that the Government had all along worked closely with NGOs in organizing activities to promote human rights and civic education. To supplement, DS(HA)1 confirmed that a total of \$10,672,000 (an increase by \$952,000 i.e. 9.8%) would be allocated to the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education in 2002-03. Its Community Participation Scheme would thus be able to fund more NGOs to organize civic education projects.

15.11 On the review of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance to address the difficulties encountered by relevant parties in the application of the Ordinance, Ms Cyd HO sought clarification on what constituted a "nearly impossible" burden on certain data users. Noting that the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCO) had recently completed a study on monitoring of employees at work, she enquired whether PCO would conduct a similar study on the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF)'s recent proposal to install closed circuit television systems in public places. In this regard, DS(HA)1 undertook to seek the advice of PCO and provide the requested information after the meeting.

Rural elections

15.12 On the reform of village representative elections, Mr Albert HO enquired on the latest progress of the review and whether the relevant legislation could be enacted in time for the next elections. In reply, SHA informed members that consultation was being conducted with Heung Yee Kuk on the details of the elections. The Administration would consult the Panel on Home Affairs before introducing the relevant bill into the Legislative Council. It was estimated that the legislative process would be completed by early 2003, before the series of village representative elections commenced. SHA further confirmed that while existing resources would be redeployed to take up the preparatory work, HAB would work out the resources required for the actual

conduct of the elections once the procedures and arrangements were finalized.

Building management

15.13 Ms Audrey EU said that according to the feedback she had received from most of the owners corporations (OCs), the Government had not provided enough support to OCs, particularly in dealing with legal problems in building management. She asked whether the Administration would allocate resources to engage full-time lawyers to provide the much needed advisory service to OCs.

15.14 In response, the Director of Home Affairs (DHA) welcomed members' referral of enquiries or complaints related to building management to the Home Affairs Department (HAD). She pointed out that in the past three years, support to OCs had been strengthened through various promotional activities, free enquiry service and free professional advice by legal, building and related professionals. These services were currently provided by the new Division on Building Management set up under HAD in 2001, the District Building Management Liaison Teams (DBMLTs) in each of the 18 District Offices, and three existing Building Management Resource Centres (BMRCs). A lawyer would join the Division on Building Management on a full-time basis in April 2002 to strengthen professional support to HAD on building management matters. DHA assured members that HAD would continue its efforts to provide appropriate support to OCs.

15.15 Referring to the Regional Conference on Private Building Management to be organized by HAD in July 2002, Mr IP Kwok-him pointed out that the estimated number of participants for the conference was only 1 200 while the number of OCs in Hong Kong topped 6 000. He asked whether HAD would organize more activities to enhance knowledge in building management and suggested that training on legal aspects of multi-storey building management should be organized for OCs.

15.16 In response, DHA advised that the Regional Conference was only one of the various promotional activities organized by HAD for OCs. Each year, more than 100 courses were conducted by HAD, including district seminars and regional conferences and BMRC courses. In early 2002, DBMLTs began to provide outreach service to help OCs on building management matters. DHA said that she would provide details of the courses and educational activities

organized by HAD and BMRCs after the meeting.

District and community relations

15.17 Miss CHOY So-yuk considered that the costs for conducting opinion surveys under HAB's programme area of District and Community Relations were too high as the cost of the survey on civic education was as high as \$250 per respondent. In this connection, DS(HA)2 explained that irrespective of the number of respondents, each survey involved a number of key tasks including the design of questionnaire. Overall, the Administration considered the costs for these surveys reasonable. Miss CHOY maintained her view that the costs were on the high side and suggested that the Government might consider outsourcing the surveys at much lower costs to some of the political parties which also conducted opinion surveys from time to time.

Local environmental improvements

15.18 At the request of Mr Henry WU, DHA undertook to provide information on the expenditure and number of Urban Minor Works projects and Rural Public Works projects to be implemented in the 18 districts in 2002.

Community facilities

15.19 Dr TANG Siu-tong enquired whether HAB would earmark resources for the construction and redevelopment of civic centres and community halls (CHs) in various districts, in particular new towns. In response, Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (3) advised that a consultancy study on the provision of regional and district cultural and performance facilities in Hong Kong was being conducted and was expected to be completed by mid 2002. The public would be consulted once the report was ready and additional resources would be sought for implementing the recommendations of the study as appropriate. The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (DLCS) added that organizations were also encouraged to make use of the 15 civic centres managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) as not all of them were utilized to their capacity.

15.20 As regards Dr TANG's concern over the provision of CHs in new

towns, DHA explained that CHs were provided on a need basis. Funding had been secured for the construction of CHs in Ma On Shan, Kwun Tong, Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan. In accordance with the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, CHs would usually form part of an integrated development, instead of being stand-alone developments, to achieve the optimum use of resources. More time was therefore required for HAD to identify suitable joint users and coordinate the development of joint-user complexes.

Begging activities on the street

15.21 Miss CHOY So-yuk commented that there was an increase in the number of beggars on the street and asked whether resources would be allocated to tackle the problem. In response, DHA pointed out that while dealing with begging activities was not the direct responsibility of the HAD, she understood that other departments concerned would provide assistance as appropriate. For example, if the begging activities caused nuisance or obstruction, the matter would be followed up by HKPF or the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. Liaison officers of HAD would also report begging activities to the Social Welfare Department to see if the persons involved were in need of assistance.

Performing Arts

15.22 In response to Mr LAU Chin-shek's enquiry about the Government's policy on and the resources allocated for promoting Cantonese opera, DLCS confirmed that LCSD would spare no effort in promoting Cantonese opera and additional resources would be earmarked in 2002-03 for this purpose. In 2001-02, LCSD had spent more than \$10 million on sponsoring over 20 performing groups in staging Cantonese opera. LCSD also worked closely with the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) in promoting Cantonese opera and more than 200 organizations had applied to HKADC for sponsorship. While noting Mr LAU Chin-shek's remark that the Government should actively promote Hong Kong as a centre for Cantonese opera, DLCS pointed out that Hong Kong was in fact well positioned to become a centre for appreciation of Chinese opera and the Administration would also gear up efforts on this area of work.

15.23 On the financial provision for performing arts, Ms Cyd HO considered that LCSD should adopt a community-driven approach in the

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development of arts and culture as recommended by the Culture and Heritage Commission in its consultation paper issued in March 2001. She asked whether the Government would gradually reduce its direct involvement and management in cultural facilities and activities and encourage NGOs to take the lead in cultural development. By so doing, Ms HO said that the Government would be able to contain the expenditure on salary and other departmental expenses to make available more resources for sponsoring cultural activities organized by NGOs.

15.24 In response, DLCS confirmed that subvention to the four performing companies, as well as provision of more than \$100 million for arts performances by various local and visiting artists/groups had been included in the estimated expenditure of \$2,417.3 million on cultural services for 2002-03. Regarding the management of the performing companies, DLCS informed members that at present, the Government appointed not more than one-third of the directors of each company. There was no government official on the board of directors and the chairman of the board of each company was elected by the directors themselves. Ms Cyd HO maintained her view that the four performing companies could hardly be regarded as community organizations or NGOs since the community had very little participation in their operation. DLCS noted her concern and remarked that pending the Government's decision on the recommendations to be made by the Culture and Heritage Commission, LCSD would continue with its ongoing programmes in accordance with the existing policy.

Heritage

15.25 In reply to Dr TANG Siu-tong's enquiry on the financial provision for preservation and restoration of antiquities and monuments, the Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Culture) advised that a provision of \$38,900,000 had been allocated to the Antiquities and Monuments Office in 2000-01 to cover expenses of the Office, archaeological excavations, restoration of historical buildings, as well as non-recurrent expenses. Additional funding was also provided to the Office for conducting environmental impact assessments and related surveys and excavations. For 2002-03, funds had been earmarked for the increase of over 20 posts to strengthen the establishment of the Office.

Community values

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15.26 Mr Michael MAK expressed grave concern over the recent surge in suicides and asked how the HAB could help tackle this problem. In response, SHA stressed that suicide was a complicated social problem. Through educational and cultural activities launched in collaboration with other departments and related bodies such as the Culture and Heritage Commission, the Commission on Youth, the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education, the Government and the community were making concerted efforts to foster positive life values among the community, in particular young people. Promotion of sports would also better equip people in handling pressure in a positive manner. As regards the increase in cases of suicides which involved homicide of other family members, SHA informed members that a task force had been set up under the Health and Welfare Bureau to deal with family violence.

Public relations outside Hong Kong

15.27 On activities to promote Hong Kong overseas, Mr Albert HO asked whether any provision had been allocated for exploring new themes or projects which could best represent Hong Kong. In this connection, he noted that a memorial hall of Bruce Lee, a renowned Hong Kong movie star, was constructed in Guangzhou recently.

15.28 In reply, the Director of Information Services (DIS) advised that while Hong Kong's position as "Asia's world city" would continue to be the main theme for promotional activities in 2002-03, the Administration would publicize developments in Hong Kong under a number of themes, notably its economic and business opportunities. One such promotional theme recently identified was the development of logistics in Hong Kong. Regarding past discussions on the inclusion of a Bruce Lee memorial hall in the Hong Kong Film Archive, DLCS recalled that as construction of the Archive had reached an advanced stage at that time, it was not practicable to make alterations to incorporate the proposed memorial hall.

15.29 Ms Emily LAU questioned the cost-effectiveness of the provision of assistance to foreign media in Hong Kong given that there had been less coverage on Hong Kong by overseas media in recent years. In response, DIS pointed out that one of the reasons for fewer visits by overseas media to Hong Kong in 2001 was the September 11 incident. As past experience had proved that familiarization visits were an effective way to promote understanding about Hong

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Kong among overseas media, ISD would continue to organize such visits. In response to Mr NG Leung-sing's suggestion that Hong Kong's unique "one country, two systems" political system should be promoted overseas, DIS confirmed that promotional activities on this theme were undertaken.