

**Presentation by Secretary for Home Affairs
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on Wednesday, 27 March 2002**

Mr Chairman,

Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) is responsible for two Policy Areas, namely Policy Area 19: District and Community Relations and Policy Area 18: Recreation, Culture, Amenities and Entertainment Licensing. Owing to the constraint of time, I shall only give a broad overview of some of our key areas of work, especially where new money is involved.

Rights of the Individual

2. Members will have noted that we have included additional provision in the 2002-03 Estimates for enhancing the quality of our work and taking forward our initiatives in the promotion of the rights of the individual. For the promotion of race relations, we shall establish a new race relations unit. The Unit's main work will cover the production of public education materials, outreach work to schools, maintaining of a hotline for enquiries and complaints and taking follow up action. We shall also appoint a joint non-governmental organization (NGO)/Government committee to help us formulate proposals for race related public education and publicity, promote racial harmony in the community, and encourage all sectors of the community actively to promote awareness in this area.

3. We have also included additional provision in the 2002-03 Estimates for the Privacy Commissioner's Office and Equal Opportunities Commission to enhance their services.

Review on District Councils

4. We completed a review of the role and functions of District Councils (DCs) in 2001 and have commenced implementing the recommendations arising from the review. We will continue to explore ways to further enhance the role and functions of DCs.

Village Representative Elections

5. We are working closely with the rural community to devise new electoral arrangements for the village representative elections. The electoral arrangements should be consistent with the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance as well as take account of the lawful traditional rights of

indigenous villagers. We will consult the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Home Affairs once the details of the proposal are finalized.

Gambling Policy

6. In June 2001, HAB released the “Gambling Review: A Consultation Paper” to solicit views from the public on a number of gambling-related issues. On 22 March 2002, we released a report on the outcome of the public consultation. While the consultation exercise and the opinion polls indicated that the community in general agrees that soccer betting is widespread in Hong Kong and that simply tightening legislation and stepping up enforcement would not tackle the problem adequately, there are highly divergent views as to whether authorized outlets should be provided as a means to tackle the problem. In view of such markedly divided views on the proposition of regulating soccer betting through authorized outlets, we need more time to assess carefully whether we should implement it. We therefore do not consider it appropriate to rush to a decision at this stage. We will however continue to monitor the situation, particularly during the upcoming World Cup Finals.

7. The Gambling (Amendment) Bill 2000 was introduced into the LegCo in November 2000. The Bill seeks to combat cross-border gambling and the related promotional activities by offshore bookmakers in Hong Kong. The relevant Bills Committee is scrutinizing the provisions of the Bill in detail. We hope that the Bill could be passed before the World Cup Finals starts in late May, so that offshore bookmakers’ activities in Hong Kong could be deterred and curbed in time.

Building Management

8. During my last presentation at these meetings, I introduced to you the new building management services provided by the Home Affairs Department (HAD). We will continue our effort in this endeavour. Besides, we have been working closely with the Sub-committee of the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs in drawing up a package of amendments to the Building Management Ordinance which aim at improving the building management regulatory regime in different aspects. On the other hand, in July this year, the HAD will be organizing a regional conference on building management, which will be the first of its kind in Hong Kong, with a view to fostering the spirit of co-operation among different concerned parties in building management.

Celebration of the 5th Anniversary of the Establishment of the HKSAR

9. We will coordinate a number of activities to celebrate the 5th Anniversary of the Establishment of the HKSAR in July this year. The celebration programme has yet to be finalised but, in the face of the present

economy, it will be dignified but not lavish.

Youth Development

10. With the help of the Commission on Youth and NGOs, we will continue our work on youth development. We will also assist the uniformed groups to recruit more volunteer leaders and set up new units so that more young people can become members. We will also assist the uniformed groups to recruit more volunteer leaders and set up new units so that more young people can become members.

Civic Education

11. We will step up our civic education programmes to promote civic responsibility and good citizenship. Additional resources have been included in the 2002-03 Estimates for the Community Participation Scheme run by the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education to enable more NGOs to organize community education projects at the district level.

Review of the Policy on Sports Development

12. HAB commenced a review of the policy on sports development in 2001. The review covers a wide range of issues, including the ways to encourage wider public participation in sports, the enhancement of training for elite athletes, the assessment of the future needs for sports facilities and the improvement of the existing administrative structure for sport. Work on the review is nearing completion and we aim to publish a consultation paper later to solicit views of the community.

Entertainment Licensing

13. Currently, the entertainment licensing process cuts across four bureaux and seven departments. In order to encourage a more business friendly environment, a total of \$2.27 million has been included in the 2002-03 Estimates to set up a Task Force to study and find ways to rationalise the arrangements for entertainment licensing.

Culture

14. Members may wish to know the recent development of the Culture and Heritage Commission. The Commission conducted its first consultation exercise in 2001 to encourage the public to voice their opinions and expectations on cultural development in Hong Kong. The majority of respondents support the Commission's vision and strategies in promoting cultural development. This support lays an important foundation for the Commission's future work. The six Working Groups under the Commission are now deliberating on specific policy recommendations in respect of

culture and arts education, cultural exchange, cultural facilities, museums and library services. The Commission will consult the public in the second half of the year on its policy recommendations. A total of around \$5 million has been included in the 2002-03 Estimates for secretarial and other support to the Commission.

Conclusion

15. The above only covers some of our main tasks in the coming year. Members are welcomed to raise questions about any areas of work within HAB's responsibilities. My colleagues and I will try our best to provide you with the answers. Thank you.