

Presentation to the Finance Committee of Legislative Council
by the Secretary for Home Affairs
on 20 March 2007 at 2:15 p.m.

Chairman,

First of all, I would like to thank Members for their interest in the Draft Estimate of the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB). My respective Controlling Officers have provided answers to 286 written questions from Members accounting for the use of resources under their purview. They are here to respond to any further questions that Members may wish to raise.

2. HAB will face a number of new challenges in the coming year. 2007-08 will see additional resources for various programmes to meet new demands. I would like to take a few minutes to brief Members on several priority tasks of HAB in the new financial year.

The 10th Anniversary of the Establishment of the HKSAR

3. 2007 marks the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). This is a memorable occasion for Hong Kong. Therefore, the Government will organize a variety of events in Hong Kong in the second and third quarters to mark this important and joyous occasion. We will also encourage different sectors of the community to organize celebration activities with the aim of promoting community involvement. The celebration activities include ceremonial events, exhibitions and international conferences, commissioning of infrastructural projects, cultural and sports events, district events and activities organized by our Mainland and overseas Economic and Trade Offices. We will publicize details of the celebrations programme towards the end of this month.

4. A Steering Committee led by the Chief Secretary for Administration is overseeing the preparation work. A Celebrations Coordination Office has been set up under HAB in January 2007 to co-ordinate with respective bureaux and departments in organizing the ceremonial and major celebration events, and to facilitate and promote community involvement in the 10th Anniversary Celebrations.

2008 Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events

5. The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games is the first Olympics ever held on Chinese soil. Hong Kong has the honour and privilege to assist in organising the Equestrian Events. Preparatory work is overseen by a high-level Equestrian Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration. Although the competitions will take place in August and September 2008, we are intensifying our preparatory work on all fronts within 2007, with a Test Event planned for August 2007. The Equestrian Company, which is the executive arm of the Equestrian Committee, is responsible for the day-to-day organisation work. HAB will ensure effective co-ordination of all parties to ensure the success of the Events, particularly in discharging a range of Government functions. To this end, an institutional framework has been put in place through a Steering Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs which is underpinned by six Co-ordination Committees.

6. To cultivate Olympism and instil a sense of national pride into the community and educate the public about the equestrian sports, we have drawn up a comprehensive cultural, education and community involvement programme which will last until late 2008. There are about 20 partners organising over 70 cultural and community involvement activities to promote the Events.

7. The successful staging of the Events in the territory will not only reaffirm Hong Kong's status as the capital for major international events but also enhance Hong Kong's image as "Asia's World City". It could stimulate sports interests, and bring economic benefits as well as harmony to the community.

Promoting Sports Development on All Fronts

8. The Chief Executive's 2006-07 Policy Address has highlighted a strategy to promote sports development on all fronts. This has been welcomed by the sports community and the public at large. Additional resources have been included in the 2007-08 Draft Estimate to enable us to launch these initiatives.

9. To promote sports for all, additional recurrent subvention of \$30 million would be provided to National Sports Associations from 2007-08 onwards to help strengthen their administrative support as well as to expand the School Sports Programme and other community sports activities. Over the five-year period from 2006-07 to 2010-11, we will also provide about \$9 billion in capital works funding to develop district recreation and sports facilities.

10. To encourage and nurture more young sports talents to compete for Hong Kong in the international sports arena, from 2007-08 onwards, we will provide additional recurrent funding of \$40 million to enhance the support to athletes. Out of this, around \$20 million will be specifically used to enhance direct financial subsidy to athletes. These resources will not only support the existing elite athletes, but will also benefit disabled athletes and young people who have demonstrated potential in sports.

11. To enhance the quality of elite training and to enable the expanding elite sports squads to excel in international competitions, we are embarking on the redevelopment of the Hong Kong Sports Institute. With better infrastructure and a more modern training environment, we hope that more young people would be encouraged to devote their time and effort to sports and to strive for achievements for themselves and for the glory of Hong Kong.

12. Major sports events can help instil a sustainable sporting culture and bring tangible economic benefits to our community. It is our aim to develop Hong Kong as Asia's sports events capital. To this end, we will continue to encourage the commercial sector to support more major sports events, and will develop necessary sports infrastructure. In particular, with the support of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Finance Committee, over \$1 billion will be incurred for constructing new sports facilities and upgrading existing ones to support the hosting of the East Asian Games in 2009. The first ever bi-annual Hong Kong Games will be held in April this year.

Funding for the Performing Arts

13. As Members will notice from the 2007-08 Draft Estimate, from April 2007, funding responsibility for the ten major performing groups will be transferred from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) to HAB. This is to follow up a recommendation of the Committee on Performing Arts to unify funding arrangements for major performing arts groups and to implement a common set of assessment criteria. A Funding Committee has been set up to advise us on developing a clear and measurable assessment criteria on artistic excellence, community impact and good governance in addition to quantifiable output. The new funding mechanism would allow for upward and downward funding adjustment for the groups, and provide for an 'entry and exit' mechanism.

14. Meanwhile, HKADC will re-focus its work on supporting young and budding artists, as well as small and medium sized arts groups. The objective is to identify new blood and groom up-and-coming artists, which is essential to ensuring a sustainable and vibrant arts scene for Hong Kong. Additional recurrent funding of \$10 million will be provided to HKADC as from April 2007 for this purpose.

15. Arts education is instrumental to raising the artistic literacy of our young people which is conducive to whole person development. From 2007-08, we will provide new funding to the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) to establish a new 'Performing Arts Teaching Unit'. This new teaching unit in HKAPA will help raise the quality and standard of arts education in Hong Kong through curriculum design and teacher training. Additional funding is also made available to HKAPA to strengthen its programmes offered under the Chinese Traditional Theatre.

Built Heritage Conservation Policy Review

16. In response to recent public concerns and debate on built heritage conservation, HAB organised a series of public forums in January and February to discuss with the public again our built heritage conservation policy. Through these interactive discussions, we have explained to the public more comprehensively our current work on conserving built heritage, and have widely gauged views from districts and the community on the subject. Apart from organising public forums, we have made use of different channels (e.g. TV series, radio programmes, web forum and e-mail) to enhance public knowledge of built heritage conservation and to encourage discussion and exchanges among interested parties. I will also attend meetings of the 18 District Councils (DC) to discuss the subject in detail with all the DC members.

17. We reported to the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs in early March on the progress made so far. In general, the public response has been encouraging. We have received a lot of valuable suggestions covering a wide range of areas, including review of assessment criteria for built heritage, formulation of diversified measures to conserve and re-use built heritage, establishment of a heritage trust fund, and enhancement of public participation and co-ordination among government departments. We are in the process of consolidating these views and ideas. We will continue to keep an open-mind to listen to the views of the community. We expect that we will be able to announce concrete policy proposals and measures on built heritage conservation in the latter half of 2007.

Implementation of the 2006 District Council Review Recommendations

18. With effect from 1 January 2007, we have launched a pilot scheme to involve DCs in the management of district facilities in the four districts of Wan Chai, Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung and Tuen Mun. The pilot aims to test our protocols and working relationship amongst the various stakeholders to pave the way for effective roll-out to all 18 districts from the new term DC in January 2008. Meanwhile, to enhance the work of Government in districts, designated Heads of Departments are taking turns to personally attend District Council Meetings and a Steering Committee on District Administration has been set up to provide a more effective forum for resolving cross-departmental district management problems. We believe that the enhanced role and functions of District Councils will attract more people to take part in the District Council election later this year.

Conclusion

19. Chairman, this concludes my opening remarks. My colleagues and I will be happy to answer any questions that Members may wish to raise. Thank you.