

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
Meeting on 13 July 2007**

Speaking Note for the Secretary for Home Affairs

I. Introduction

- Madam Chairman, thank you for arranging this meeting for me to meet with Members of the Home Affairs Panel today. I assumed the duties of the Secretary for Home Affairs about a fortnight ago. During this period, I have met and exchanged views with colleagues of the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB). I would like to take this opportunity to brief Members generally on the main focus of our work in the years to come and listen to Members' views. I shall brief and consult Members further on the work plans for the major policy areas within the portfolio of HAB later this year after the Chief Executive has delivered his Policy Address.

II. New Principle of Governance

- The Chief Executive stated at the Question and Answer session at the Legislative Council last week (5 July) that the principle of governance for the new term of the SAR Government is to "reach out to the community". As our work has always been oriented towards the community and the grassroots, it is our responsibility to pay heed to public sentiment, we should naturally attach greater importance to "reaching out to the community" so as to better serve the public.
- HAB is firmly committed to this new principle of governance and will accord top priority to community work so as to ensure the effective implementation of policies at the district level and to better respond to the demands of the people.

- In this respect, District Councils (DCs) will continue to be our key partners in district administration. We are now making preparations for full implementation of the recommendation to involve DCs in the management of district facilities in all 18 districts from the new DC term starting January 2008. Drawing on the experience of the four pilot DCs, we are fine-tuning the arrangements to pave way for smooth implementation of the proposals to enhance the role of DCs in all 18 districts early next year.
- To support DCs' participation in the management of district facilities, we shall increase the resources for DCs in implementing various community involvement activities and district minor works projects. We shall also continue to encourage DCs to foster partnership with community organisations from different sectors and initiate proposals with district characteristics to serve various social objectives.
- To better provide cross-departmental services in districts, the Government will continue to strengthen the role of District Officers (DOs) and enhance the coordination function of the District Management Committees. A Steering Committee on District Administration has been set up to provide enhanced support for DOs, and inter-departmental district management issues, such as environmental hygiene and illegal occupation of government land, will be escalated to the Steering Committee for the prompt attention of Heads of Departments.
- The Heung Yee Kuk has always been our important partner in rural matters. The Home Affairs Bureau–Heung Yee Kuk Liaison Committee ensures that the distinct characteristics of rural communities will be fully considered in the formulation of public policies.

III. Promotion of the Arts and Culture

- We understand that the development of an arts and cultural district in West Kowloon has been a general aspiration of our community. We will take the launch of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) development project as an important step to implement the new principle of governance. In the second half of this year, HAB will start to roll out the WKCD project, which is not only an important investment by the Administration on cultural and arts infrastructure, but also a strategic plan to promote the long-term development of arts and culture in Hong Kong and enhance Hong Kong's position as a creative economy and Asia's world city.
- The WKCD Consultative Committee has recently submitted its recommendations report to the Chief Executive. The pragmatic recommendations of the Consultative Committee's report were arrived at after engaging in in-depth discussions and consultations with numerous stakeholders in the arts and cultural sector in the past ten months or so, and taking into account professional analysis of the financial advisor. The Administration will consider the recommendations by the Consultative Committee very carefully. We will also, in the coming two or three months, strengthen our communication and liaison with the cultural sector and relevant sectors and work with them in conducting a public engagement exercise, in which the public will be encouraged and invited to participate in the discussion and to express their views.
- Alongside with developing the WKCD project, we will continue to create an environment which is conducive to the freedom of artistic expression and creation, encourage wider participation in cultural activities by the public, and provide an environment that actively supports the development of cultural creativity. I fully understand that for the promotion of long-term development of culture and arts, while it is necessary to provide

the right "cultural hardware" infrastructure, appropriately enhancing our "cultural software" is just as important. Initiatives to enhance our "cultural software" include the nurturing of arts professionals, the development of arts organisations, the promotion of arts education and cultural exchange. My colleagues and I will liaise and cooperate closely with the arts and cultural sector so as to implement these initiatives.

- In the coming few months, we will follow up the recommendations previously put forward by the Committee on Performing Arts and conduct a comprehensive review on the subvention system of the major performing arts groups to develop a set of assessment criteria and subvention mechanism that is conducive to the development of the arts and cultural sector and that meets public aspirations. Just a few days ago, HAB conducted a brainstorming session with ten major performing arts groups to gauge their views and suggestions on this important issue. In studying the formulation of a new mechanism, we will continue to liaise closely with the performing arts sector.
- Besides, the implementation of the Venue Partnership Scheme in the 11 performing arts venues under the Leisure & Cultural Services Department (LCSD) allows venue operators to join hands with performing arts groups. Through optimal utilisation of the venue facilities, the Scheme helps build up the artistic character of individual venues, enlarge the audience base, and further facilitate the development of arts and culture.
- We will continue to work through the Cantonese Opera Development Fund (CODF) to support the research, promotion, education and continued development of Cantonese opera. Besides, CODF will allocate funds to support the setting up of the Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Troupe for New Talents to nurture new blood for Cantonese opera. For a dedicated venue

for Cantonese opera, we will maintain close liaison with the Cantonese opera sector to explore more performance venues before the completion of the WKCD project. We hope that with the Cantonese Opera Sector taking part in the LCSD's Venue Partnership Scheme and with the conversion of the Yau Ma Tei Theatre and Red Brick House into a Xiqu Activity Centre, the Cantonese opera sector will be provided with more performance venues.

- On the development of museums, we will establish a Provisional Museums Board, aiming at enhancing the service level of museums and preparing for the transformation in the mode of governance.
- Regarding the enhancement of public library service, the Administration will set up, in the second half of this year, an advisory committee on the overall development strategies of the Hong Kong Central Library and public libraries. This advisory committee will comprise professionals, academics, community personalities, government representatives and so on. It will primarily be tasked to advise the Government on how best to fulfill the broader “cultural” dimension of Hong Kong public libraries’ mission, particularly on how best the Hong Kong Central Library could take a leading role in fostering Hong Kong’s cultural identity.

IV. Social Enterprises

- On promoting the development of social enterprises (SE) in districts, we should also adopt the people-based approach and count on the creativity and entrepreneurship of different sectors of the community. SE seeks to achieve social objectives through business operations. They are often required to explore and introduce new business concepts, taking into account the local market situation and the needs of the community. We do not mean to adopt a dogmatic approach.

Rather, we seek to provide genuine assistance to people with employment difficulties and help them re-join the job market.

- The Enhancing Self-reliance Through District Partnership Programme administered by the Home Affairs Department (HAD) has provided grants of some \$38 million to over 40 new SE projects in various business areas, including household services, fitting-out works, recycling, etc. HAD is currently processing another 53 applications. This shows that there is no lack of interest and commitment from non-governmental organisations to run SE projects.
- Fostering a tripartite partnership among the community, the business sector and the Government is crucial to the development of SE. We plan to hold a Summit on SE later this year to provide a forum for different sectors of the community to discuss the development of SE and to enhance greater understanding on SE. The Government will take into account views and experience of different sectors of the community when formulating initiatives to promote the development of SE.

V. 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events

- The 2008 Beijing Olympic will be the first Olympic Games held on Chinese soil. We are honoured to co-host the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events (the Equestrian Events). This helps demonstrate to the international community the success of "One Country, Two Systems", further arouse public's interests in sports, and strengthen our position as Asia's world city. The Equestrian Committee (Hong Kong) of Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of XXIX Olympiad would like to take the trial equestrian event, "Good Luck Beijing – HKSAR 10th Anniversary Cup", in August this year as a thorough test on the "hardware" and "software" of the Equestrian Events to be held in 2008 and on

the impact of Hong Kong's weather on the horses. The preparation has been in good progress and on schedule.

- We have developed a comprehensive cultural, educational and community involvement programme. From now till end 2008, we will work closely with major stakeholders such as the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China, the Hong Kong Paralympic Committee and Sports Association for the Physically Disabled, the Hong Kong Jockey Club, the Hong Kong Equestrian Federation, schools, the business sector and tourism organisations to co-organise a series of cultural and community involvement activities to educate the public on Olympism and the Equestrian Events, and to encourage their participation and support for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, particularly the Equestrian Events co-hosted by Hong Kong .
- To promote sports in the community, to develop elite sports and to make Hong Kong a major hub for international sports events, we will continue to invest in sports and work with all sectors of the community with a view to fostering a strong sporting culture in the society. We will particularly focus on the development of mental and physical health of the youngsters who will be encouraged to establish a healthy and positive lifestyle and stay away from undesirable habits like drug abuse.
- From this financial year onwards, we will provide an additional funding of \$40 million annually to enhance the support for elite athletes. By now, out of such additional funding, we have decided to allocate \$20 million to enhance the direct financial support for elite athletes and \$6 million to enhance the training for elite athletes. We have also invited the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China to develop a comprehensive retirement scheme for athletes. It is expected that athletes upon retirement will be provided with opportunities to pursue tertiary education and support in career

planning and development.

- We have embarked on the redevelopment of Hong Kong Sports Institute. We plan to seek approval from LegCo for funding for the main works in the 2nd quarter of 2008 with a view to commencing the construction works in the 4th quarter of 2008. We hope that world-class training facilities can be provided for elite athletes in Hong Kong as soon as possible.

VI. National Education

- In addition to culture, arts and sports, promoting national education among youth is another key area of work of HAB. When attending a celebration activity of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR two weeks ago, President Hu Jintao stressed that we should foster a strong sense of national identity among the young people of Hong Kong and promote exchanges between the young people of Hong Kong and the Mainland. We share fully the President's views. The Commission on Youth and the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education under the purview of HAB have made great efforts to promote national education outside schools, such as sponsoring community organisations to organise study tours and visits to the Mainland every year and enhancing young people's understanding of the motherland through youth magazines, tele-stories and interactive dramas, etc. The Commission on Youth, which started its new term in April 2007, has set up a new Working Group on National Education for Youth. The Working Group is tasked to formulate strategies and plans on the promotion of national education among young people to enhance their understanding of and care for the motherland. At the same time, we will continue to encourage them to maintain exchanges with overseas organisations so as to broaden their international perspective.

- We are very concerned about youth development. HAB is constructing a Centre for Youth Development in Chai Wan to provide facilities and venues for activities on youth development. HAB and the Commission on Youth hope that the Centre will become a landmark facility for youth development work and activities in Hong Kong, and will accord high priority to youth exchanges with both the Mainland and overseas countries.

VII. Legal Aid

- Lastly, I understand that some Members are concerned about the transfer of the Legal Aid Department (LAD) to HAB. I would like to reiterate that the transfer will not affect the daily operation of LAD or its independence in the delivery of legal aid services. The Director of Legal Aid will continue to process legal aid applications independently and handle legal aid cases in accordance with the relevant legislation in a fair and impartial manner. HAB and LAD will continue to review various aspects of the legal aid policy.

VIII. Closing Remarks

- Members are welcome to give any comments and views on the major work plans I have just mentioned. The Permanent Secretary Mrs. Carrie Yau, the two Directors and I will be happy to answer any question that you may have.
- This is the first time Members and I meet. I look forward to exchanging views on matters of mutual concern and enhancing cooperation with Members in the coming five years.