

**For information  
on 5 December 2006**

**Legislative Council Panel on Security**

**Street deception**

**Purpose**

This note sets out, in response to Members' request, the number and nature of street deception cases in the past three years and the measures adopted by the Police in combating such crime.

**Nature of street deception cases**

2. The most common types of street deception include "spiritual blessing", "borrowing mobile telephones", "dropped money" and "low-value electronic parts". These four categories accounted for 90% of street deception cases during the first ten months of 2006.

*Spiritual blessing*

3. "Spiritual blessing" has been the single most common type of street deception in recent years. In such cases, usually a group of about three to five persons would approach the targets to entice them through staged trickery to engage in some kind of blessing ritual. The victims would be asked to get their valuables or cash for use in the ritual. Their properties would then be swapped with a worthless bag.

*Borrowing mobile telephones*

4. "Borrowing mobile telephones" usually involves the culprits asking to borrow from the victims the latter's mobile telephones, on the excuse that the culprits' own mobile phones are out of order or the batteries are flat. The culprits may then just walk away with the victims' phone and disappear, or in some cases they may pass their own "phones", which are fakes, to the victims for "safekeeping" before disappearing.

*Dropped money*

5. "Dropped money" cases normally involve gangs of two to three culprits. Gang members would stage a "discovery" of bags of apparently

genuine foreign notes together with the victim. The victim would then be duped into “sharing” the “profits”. The culprits, by excuse that they would need to first leave the scene to withdraw cash to effect the sharing, would first (pretend to) “transfer” the notes in the bags found into briefcases (which they would buy nearby), and then lock the briefcases up, giving the briefcases to the victims while holding the keys to the briefcases. As guarantees, they would then request the victims to deposit with them 50 per cent of the value of the money (or other substantial amount of cash), pending their return. The culprits never return, and the victims are left holding briefcases without the money purported to be inside them.

#### *Low-value electronic parts*

6. “Low-value electronic parts” cases work in a way similar to “dropped money” cases above, except that the scam involves lowly priced electronic parts. The victim is first paid a small amount of money to keep watch on some electronic goods while the first culprit leaves the scene. While keeping watch on the goods, the victim is approached by a second culprit who would persuade the victim to purchase the electronic parts with him together from the first culprit for a high value when the first culprit returns. The victim would only realize that he had considerably overpaid after the culprits are gone.

#### **Number of street deception cases**

7. There has been a decreasing trend of street deception cases (both in the number of reported cases and the amount of reported losses) in recent years. The number of cases and the amount of losses involved in such cases from 2004 to 2006 (up to October) are summarized below :

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006 (Jan - Oct)</b>
<b>Number of reported cases</b>	479	393	171
<b>Reported losses</b>	\$28 million	\$21 million	\$11.4 million

A detailed breakdown of cases reported by the modus operandi is at the **Annex**. It can be seen that all modes of street deception are on the decrease. In particular, there is a 46.2% drop in the number of cases in the first ten months of 2006, compared with the corresponding figure in the first ten months of 2005.

## **Combating street deception**

8. The Police adopt a three-pronged strategy to combat street deception – prevention, intelligence-led operations, and prompt and effective investigations, as follows :

### *Prevention*

- (a) The Police seek to increase the awareness of members of the public by alerting them to the modus operandi adopted by culprits through proactive publicity efforts, by making use of various media such as television, radio, broadcasts at public transports, etc.
- (b) The Police have established District Response Teams to maintain liaison with banks within the respective district proactively. Banks are encouraged to contact officers of the Teams if they come across elderly customers withdrawing / depositing unusually large sums of money, for example. This has enabled the Police to prevent and detect the scams at an early stage.
- (c) Given that the elderly are very often prey of street deception culprits, the Police maintain proactive liaison with elderly day care centres and other places frequented by the elderly to increase their awareness and alertness.

### *Intelligence-led operations*

- (d) Intelligence-led and proactive operations targeting known personalities and black spots are regularly mounted.
- (e) Regular liaison is maintained with the Immigration Department to enable monitoring of the activities of suspected fraudsters when they enter Hong Kong. Regular contact is also maintained with the Mainland authorities with a view to dealing with Mainland-based syndicates at source.

### *Prompt and effective investigations*

- (f) Where appropriate, cases of street deception would be handled centrally at regional / district levels. With centralized experience, expertise and resources to deal with these cases, this would enable more effective investigation of such crimes.

**Security Bureau  
Hong Kong Police Force**

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**Breakdown of Street Deception Cases by Modus Operandi**

<b>Modus Operandi</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2005 (Jan -Oct)</b>	<b>2006 (Jan - Oct)</b>
<b>Spiritual blessing</b>	212	179	154	107
<b>Borrowing money/ mobile phones</b>	124	99	70	26
<b>Low-value electronic parts</b>	51	38	27	16
<b>Dropped money</b>	57	66	56	5
<b>Fake gold items</b>	0	1	1	1
<b>Bracelets valuables</b>	1	0	0	0
<b>Medicine/herbs/pills</b>	17	7	7	16
<b>Foreign money exchange</b>	8	1	1	0
<b>Others</b>	9	2	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>171</b>